

# ONE VOICE

TOGETHER IN PRAYER FOR AN **END TO POVERTY**

## **'I saw the wonders of God'**

**Yandang was stuck. He's a farmer, but everything on his land had stopped growing. The soil was getting worse and the rain became increasingly erratic. But the glory of God never fails...**

Yandang\* lives in Chad with his wife, Nadji\*, and their seven children. He remembers a time when the rain was plentiful and the harvest was abundant. But years of bad farming practices made the soil less fertile, and several species of plants disappeared. Combined with the climate crisis, which brought changing weather patterns such as less frequent rain, things began getting worse.

'Even I, personally, did not see the importance of the trees and other natural resources around me, but only the space to make a big farm mattered to me,' says Yandang.

### **Rooted in the word**

His church was a Tearfund partner, and they began sharing a different story with him.

'I saw the wonders of God through Bible studies and I realised that God is good and he gave me everything. He made the earth available for me to cultivate and protect the trees as it is said in his word,' shares Yandang.

Yandang was then invited to take part in training on composting and how to protect the environment. He was shown new farming techniques to help him achieve better results. 'That's how I started planting trees all around my compound and at the same time protecting other species in my fields.'

### **Branching out**

All of this had a remarkable impact on Yandang's life. Now everyone comes to him for advice – something he never saw coming. 'I have never been consulted, considered or respected as someone important... When my trees became visible, some people came to me for advice, and this gives me joy.

Now Yandang produces seedlings for not only his plantation but others too. He's planted more than 30 trees of different varieties: Neem, Acara, Cacia, Mango, Guava, Cashew.... They are bearing fruit and he's looking forward to harvest time, when he can sell the fruit and invest the money to help his family.

### **PLEASE PRAY**

Take a moment to reflect – like Yandang did – on the wonders of creation and how it impacts your life, and the lives of those around the world. If you are able to, you may want to go on a walk in your local park or sit in your garden to do this.

*\*Names changed to protect identities*

### **A note from...**

'Yandang and Nadji's story shows how bad farming practices can destroy our environment, but that our actions as individuals can turn this around. It is more important than ever to think about our impact on the world we live in. We must work to preserve the forest and species that God has entrusted to us.'

**Honorine Deounon, Acting Country Director for Chad**

## **Restoring hope and dignity after severe flooding in Burundi**

**It was the evening of 19 April when Burundi's Ruzizi River started to overflow. It had been raining heavily for several days. Nearly 7,000 homes in the area surrounding the capital Bujumbura were flooded.**

Thousands of families were forced from their homes – people who are already facing the effects of the coronavirus outbreak. More than 400 hectares of crops were destroyed, leaving people with very little food for the year ahead.

Tearfund and our partners were on hand to help.

In Gatumba city, more than 1,200 families were given cash vouchers to help them buy what they needed most.

'The cash helped us very much,' a young mother called Renilde told us. 'We bought some food with the money. We were relieved – our children were starving. We really are grateful.'

### **Responding to needs**

Vulnerable families were also provided with clothes, cooking items, blankets and soap. More than 800 women and girls received packs containing menstrual products.

To help stop the spread of coronavirus, we also set up handwashing facilities and distributed bars of soap.

When people face a disaster like this, they are more vulnerable to abuse – particularly women and children living in temporary camps. As part of our response to these floods, we have been helping people understand the dangers of sexual and gender-based violence, and how to prevent it happening.

### **Ongoing support**

Across Burundi, 1.7 million people don't have access to life's essentials such as food or a permanent home. It's a nation prone to the worst effects of the climate crisis, including unpredictable rains leading to flooding. With many of the borders closed to neighbouring countries, it has made access to food even more difficult.

Desire Majambere, who leads Tearfund's work in Burundi, says: 'We have been facing the consequences of the climate crisis for some time now. There are droughts in parts of the country, erratic rainfall in other areas, leading to flooding.

'Vulnerable communities, who already don't have enough food, are worst affected. Despite this, and with the added challenges of Covid-19, we are committed to supporting our communities.'

### **PLEASE PRAY**

- Praise God that we were able to respond quickly to the floods and restore hope and dignity to many vulnerable people.
- Pray for people affected by the devastating consequences of the climate crisis. May lasting solutions be found.
- Pray for people who have contracted coronavirus, and for the pandemic not to continue spreading in a country where access to health facilities is challenging.

## **Poverty makes people a target for human trafficking**

*Warning: This article contains mentions of sexual and gender-based violence that some readers may find upsetting.*

**'I was just nine years old when I was sold into a brothel in India,' says Alisha. 'I was not aware about human trafficking.'**

Alisha\* had been living and working for her sister in Kathmandu, Nepal when she was targeted by her sister's work colleague. She was told she could earn more money, as well as food and a place to live, doing the same kind of housework she was currently doing for her sister.

The offer was appealing, but the promises were empty. Alisha was sold into slavery.

'I did not understand what was happening and asked the brothel owner to call my friend so I could go home,' shares Alisha. 'The brothel owner told me that I had been sold and was not allowed to leave until I had paid back her debt, which was the amount the brothel owner had paid for me.'

'I was not even aware that India existed until I was told that I was there.'

### **Survival**

Every morning, starting at 7.00am, Alisha and the other girls had to line up on the street outside the brothel to wait for their customers. They were forced to wear make-up and dress in a way that was appealing to their male clients.

Many, like Alisha, were just children.

Within two months she was sold to another brothel, twenty minutes away, where she suffered even more abuse.

'If the women and girls refused to take a customer, they were brought into a separate room where the brothel owner would hit them,' recalls Alisha.

Punishments like this were common. They were often refused food, locked in the toilets, hit by the brothel owner, as well as many other forms of torture and punishment.

On an average day, the women and girls would have anywhere from 35-40 customers between the morning and the afternoon, and another two to three customers during the night.

### **Rescued – but not free**

Police raids at the brothels were frequent. But the owners would just hide the girls. Then, finally – after three and a half years of working there – Alisha was rescued.

It happened during a mass raid on the brothels in the area carried out by the police, where 500 other women and girls were rescued. Many of them were from Nepal – like Alisha – or from Bangladesh. But, because they had no formal identification, they were unable to travel home.

With nowhere to go, the girls were forced to stay in a prison in India for the next seven months. Many of the girls either died in the jail, or tried to escape.

During this time seven Nepali organisations had been advocating on behalf of these women and girls to allow them to be able to return home. It proved successful, and the surviving 128 women and girls were brought back home to Nepal.

### **Different**

Alisha was reunited with her family. But word got out in the community that she had been trafficked, and also that she was living with HIV. She had contracted this at the brothel.

'While my family welcomed me home, my community discriminated against me,' says Alisha. She was not allowed to go to the temple, and no one would eat the food she would make.

'I went to play on the swing but afterwards, no one else would touch the swing as the community believed if they touch the swing the HIV will be transmitted to them,' she shared.

'Our community then pressured my family that they either had to disown me, or leave the village with me. I made the choice to leave the village myself so that my family would no longer suffer the discrimination along with me.'

### **Starting again**

Life continued to be a struggle for Alisha. She tried running her own business – a tea shop – in a new village, but soon gave up. Men would continue to harass her while she was working because she was single.

Alisha decided to get married to avoid the abuse. She was just 16.

When Alisha was six months pregnant, her husband went abroad to work. She never saw him again. When he left, she was kicked out of his family's home. Alisha was forced to move again to find a new place to live.

Then, when her daughter was nine months old, Alisha made the decision to move back to Kathmandu – where there was more work – so she could support her daughter.

### **'I finally met a friend'**

In Kathmandu, Alisha met Shanti, who became her mentor and like a sister to her. 'She took me to an organisation... which became my turning point in life,' explains Alisha.

The organisation – the Shanti Foundation – is supported by Tearfund's local partner in Nepal. It is doing incredible work with survivors of trafficking. Staff and mentors from the foundation work with survivors to help them build up their skills and confidence, as well as advocating for their rights, and helping them to integrate back into society.

'I started to develop myself; I saw a hope for my daughter,' says Alisha. 'Shanti Foundation has always taught me that women like us also can make a difference.'

A few years later, Alisha joined the foundation as a board member.

'This foundation is not just a foundation, but groups of heroes formed with tears, pains and sufferings, which show that people like us can also make a difference, and our voices matter.'

### **Strengthening communities**

In Nepal, four of our local partners are doing amazing work on the frontlines to prevent trafficking, and to advocate for survivors. Tearfund and our partners are also working within communities to build awareness of the crime. This includes working with local faith leaders so they can use their platform to promote and share crucial messaging.

Many women and girls often feel unsafe in their own home because they suffer violence at the hands of their family. They also fear forced marriage. It is not uncommon for them to flee home, which then makes them easy targets for traffickers.

This is why Tearfund and our partners are inviting men, women and young people to join new community groups. These will be safe spaces to gather and talk about issues that are affecting them. It also is a chance to challenge some of the harmful social norms and behaviours around gender, which can lead to violence.

One of the ways it will do this is by using Tearfund's *Transforming Masculinities* programme. This seeks to improve conversations and behaviours around gender equality by addressing these harmful norms. This will help to promote positive relationships among participants in their places of worship and communities, enabling more people to live lives free from abuse and violence.

### **Free for good**

It is almost impossible to know the true extent of how many people are trafficked because of the hidden nature of the crime. Recent studies estimate that there are around 40.3 million victims worldwide – millions of women, men and children exploited for profit and for personal gain.

Human trafficking robs people – like Alisha – of their freedom and their dignity. To end human trafficking, we must tackle a root cause of the crime: poverty.

Traffickers take advantage of people's circumstances and often their desperation. When you have a family to feed and no way to earn an income, offers of employment and new opportunities are hugely inviting.

This is at the heart of Tearfund's work – we're helping people to lift themselves out of poverty. Through our partners and our programmes, we run training courses, so that people can learn new skills and ways to earn an income. This enables them to free themselves of poverty for good.

When people can earn an income independently and provide for their families, it makes them less of a target for traffickers. It also means children no longer need to work so the family can survive.

**Today (30 July) is the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. Will you join us in praying for an end to human trafficking and the cycles of poverty that perpetuate this awful crime?**

#### PLEASE PRAY

- Cry out to God on behalf of the millions of people who have been trafficked and who are now trapped in modern day slavery. Pray for God's comfort and his protection. And pray that they will be safely rescued.
- Lift up people – like Alisha – who are survivors of human trafficking. Pray they will get the healthcare and support they need to begin rebuilding their lives.
- Thank God for the work Tearfund and our partners are doing in Nepal and around the world to address the root causes of human trafficking. Pray for the success of this work. And pray for an end to human trafficking.

*\*Name changed to protect identity*

### Pray for the world

 Afghanistan remains one of the deadliest conflicts in the world for civilians – particularly for women and children. Children are vulnerable to being recruited to fight. Ask for God's protection over them. Pray for the successful progress of the peace talks, which resume soon – that they will lead to prolonged peace, so communities can begin to recover and rebuild.

 It is estimated that 5.9 million people in Ethiopia will be in need of food assistance from July to December. The lack of rainfall, combined with locust infestations have devastated crops, and lockdown restrictions have left many unable to work. Pray for provision, and for the work Tearfund is doing to assist vulnerable communities, which includes delivering food packages to those in need.

 There has been an increase in deadly attacks in the last few months on communities where Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso share their borders. Families have been left with no choice but to flee their homes to escape the violence. They are now without shelter, food and water, and are vulnerable to coronavirus. Pray for their safety and protection. And pray for peace.