

ONE VOICE

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

DEFENDER OF WIDOWS

'A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.' (Psalm 68:5)

Losing a spouse is heartbreaking under any circumstances. But when you're living in poverty, facing one of the worst droughts on record, it becomes a challenge we can scarcely imagine.

Kiyar*, from rural Ethiopia, is the sole provider for her five children. Her husband died a year ago.

The family used to own a herd of cattle. They made a decent living selling milk and butter. However, a prolonged drought killed every one of their fifty-strong herd. 'We lost everything,' Kiyar says.

Moreover, the drought tripled the price of food, meaning Kiyar was often unable to feed her children. 'Life has been getting tougher in our area in general, and in my household in particular,' Kiyar says. 'I never had such a stressful experience in my entire life.'

A burden lifted

Yet now, if you were to meet Kiyar, you would see an energetic, youthful woman with a wonderful smile.

Tearfund's local church partner has been helping communities going through especially hard times by providing cash grants. As one of the most vulnerable members of her community, Kiyar was given a grant to help her and her family.

'I am very happy with the cash that was provided to me,' she says. 'I have received 2,400 ETB [roughly £65] for two months. I have used the money to purchase food for my children, which I couldn't otherwise.'

The grant got her family through the worst of the crisis – relieving a burden that no one should have to face alone. 'I would like to thank [the church] for supporting me and my children at this critical time,' Kiyar says.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray for Kiyar and her children. Pray for God's continued protection and provision for them.
- Pray for an end to the drought that is having a devastating impact on parts of Ethiopia. And pray that communities will have the opportunity to rebuild their lives.
- Thank God for our local church partners, and pray that they will be able to support many more families through this crisis.

**Name changed to protect identity*

A NOTE FROM...

'Natural disasters such as the drought in Ethiopia take a terrible toll. But as long as there are local churches willing to offer a helping hand, people like Kiyar can have hope. Please continue praying with us for vulnerable communities in Ethiopia.'

Oenone Chadburn, Head of Humanitarian Support

PEACE DEAL BREAKTHROUGH FOR THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Years of conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) could be coming to a close after a major peace deal was agreed over the weekend.

Talks have been taking place between the CAR government and 14 rebel groups in Sudan's capital Khartoum. They were mediated by the UN and the African Union (AU).

AU commissioner, Smail Chergui, said: 'This is a great day for Central African Republic and all its people.'

A violent past

Since the latest conflict began in 2013, more than a million people have been forced to flee their homes as a result of the violence.

Last month armed groups attacked the town of Bambari, killing five people and leaving 20 wounded. The attack also led to hundreds of people fleeing the area.

Peace and provision

Tearfund works alongside a number of partner organisations in CAR. Together, they tackle sexual and gender-based violence, providing literacy and numeracy training, empowering women with business and vocational skills, and promoting good hygiene practices.

'It has been hard to be without peace since 2013', says Athanase Ndayisaba, Tearfund's Country Director for CAR. 'We're praying that this agreement will be respected by both sides. Our hope is that we can deliver support to the most affected communities, as we start to rebuild together.'

The government of CAR says the peace deal will be signed in the capital city Bangui soon.

PRAYER FOCUS:

- Pray for the peace deal to hold and for the nation to find a new hope and bright future.
- Pray for people who have lost loved ones or homes, and who feel hopeless – that they will find healing and comfort at this time.
- Ask God to continue to protect Tearfund's team, partners and all humanitarian workers in CAR.

SAYING 'YES' TO GOD IN THE GANGLANDS OF HONDURAS

Naomi lives in a part of Honduras where gang violence and organised crime is rife – one of the most dangerous areas in the country. But God spoke to her and told her she was going to help turn things around. So she said yes.

When things aren't going so well, it's easy to get despondent. As an unemployed, single mother, Naomi felt weighed down by her problems. She hadn't had a job for over a year, but she found the courage to choose a positive attitude.

Through her church Naomi decided to serve the youth of her neighbourhood, to help them realise that joining a gang wasn't their best or only destination in life.

Serving with courage

The Living in Love and Faith church is based in Flor del Campo, Tegucigalpa – described by the media as 'the most dangerous city in the world'. The church has received financial support and training from Tearfund. It's also part of the Micah Network, a regional initiative helping to prevent violence.

As a nation, Honduras has one of highest number of murders globally. In a country of 8 million people, it's thought there are around 7,000 – 10,000 street gang members.

The gangs in Flor del Campo are recruiting boys and girls as young as seven years old. Naomi and the leadership of her church sat down to talk and plan what they could do to stop this.

They wanted to be a positive influence among children and young people, and so formed a youth group called Jovenes Sembradores de Paz which translates as 'Young Peace Sowers'.

'As a church we want to be a family that provides a space for recreation and acceptance, not crime or violence,' says Naomi. 'The church doesn't look at the gang members with condemnation, but accepts them and loves them as they are.'

From despair to care

Naomi believes God has given her a specific calling: 'He spoke to me and inspired me to serve and support the young people. Now my financial problems are forgotten because I really enjoy being with them. I visit them, and when I cannot go for security reasons, I call them.

'If I have a day of struggle and depression, I listen to the voice of God, who tells me to get up! The enemy doesn't want me to work with the young people, but the voice of God is stronger.'

'We know that some of the young people in the group are still part of a gang, but if we do not accept them and give them hope, who will?'

'Naomi's life has inspired and challenged me; she is an inspiration to so many children in her community. It is a joy to support her,' says Alexis Pacheco from Tearfund's Latin America and Caribbean team. 'I ask for your prayers in order to continue supporting Naomi's ministry, and others like her in Honduras and across Central America.'

PRAYER FOCUS:

- Thank God that even in the midst of hardship and despair, God still has a plan for us and wants to help us to help others.
- Pray for young people caught up in gangs in Honduras, that they will find church youth groups like the Young Peace Sowers to inspire them
- Ask God to bring peace to the hearts of those who perpetuate crime and violence in Honduras.

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



The Yemen peace agreement made in December in Stockholm remains fragile. As the humanitarian crisis continues, pray that the ceasefire around the port of Hodeidah will hold. The port is a lifeline for hundreds of thousands of Yemenis receiving food and medical supplies.



You might remember our emergency appeal for people affected by food shortages in Burundi, a few months ago. Enough was raised to help more than 10,000 families! Praise God for this, and please continue to pray for vulnerable people there and for our partners still hard at work.



Extreme winter weather has hit refugee camps in Lebanon. Several camps have been flooded, while heavy snow has created treacherous conditions – especially for children and the elderly. Please pray that the weather will improve, and that aid groups working in the camps will be able to provide for those in need. *(Please do not share this online)*