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Winter 2019

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To experience the best things in life fully, we have to experience their opposite, it seems. We can only truly experience deep joy once we have known sorrow. Perhaps we can only truly experience God's peace once we have lived through a lack of it. Our faith, after all, is 'refined in the fire' (1 Peter 1:7).

As you'll see on page 6, we were thrilled to host a recent visit by Dr Alia Abboud, Chief Development Officer of our partner LSESD in Lebanon. Here, the church has entered a new season of powerful ministry – as it has faced up to a painful past and learnt to forgive.

Likewise, on pages 3–5, the story of Jemanesh, a member of our self-help groups in Ethiopia, is as much a testimony of patient endurance and perseverance as it is about her personal 'happy ending'. Development is always a long-term project: we are in this for the long haul because there is no other way to attain deep-rooted transformation and break cycles of generational poverty.

Transformation takes time – contrary to the instant gratification of TV makeovers. As sometimes it's the learning that we gather along the way that makes the end result all the more precious and powerful. We are transformed too as we wait on God and trust him: we become more appreciative, more compassionate – and more effective.

So we continue to trust God that he will lead us according to his will and purposes. And we praise him that so many faithful and generous supporters like you are committed to this journey of transformation with us.

Thank you!

Niamh Daly

Niamh Daly
Editor
Marketing & Fundraising Manager

TEARFUND IRELAND

We are bringing hope and demonstrating love to the most vulnerable and marginalised people – through the local church.



Cover photo: Jemanesh Dachew, member of 'Melkam Mignot' Self Help Group, Ethiopia, September 2019 – Tearfund Ireland

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Photo: Jemanesh Dachew, member of 'Melkam Mignot' Self Help Group, Ethiopia, September 2019 – Tearfund Ireland

THE SLOW PACE OF MIRACLES



The transformation from 'before' to 'after' can be a waiting game but it can also help us appreciate how far we've come, as our self-help groups in Ethiopia illustrate perfectly.

Written by Katie Lynch

Jemanesh has come a long way. Today, she runs a successful business selling *injera* (Ethiopian flatbread). It's all a far cry from her early childhood when, as orphans, she and her sister didn't know where their next meal was coming from.

But the journey has not been easy and this is not a simple 'before' and 'after' story. The years in between are a story of suffering, patience and endurance – and they matter just as much.

Jemanesh, her husband and their three sons live in Boditi town in southern Ethiopia.

She had a difficult start in life. When Jemanesh was just five years old, both her parents died, leaving her and her sister to fend for themselves. They had a roof over their head but no way to feed themselves.

For a time, they relied on the kindness of neighbours but soon Jemanesh had to get a job. By the age of ten, Jemanesh was baking *injera* and earning 4 Birr (12 cent) a day. Her employers allowed her to take two flatbreads home each day: one for her, one for her sister.



Photo: Jemanesh working outside September 2019 – Tearfund Ireland.

Having to earn a living meant Jemanesh left school after grade eight. She still cries as she remembers how hard those days were.

Like many girls who drop out of school, Jemanesh married when she was only 15 in 2008. Her husband is 20 years older than her and had been widowed. She doesn't say much about those first years of marriage, except: 'Life before I joined the self-help group was very difficult.'

Change afoot

Nine years ago, Terepeza Development Association introduced self-help groups to the area, in an initiative supported by Irish Aid and Tearfund Ireland. Jemanesh heard about the groups early on, through a local facilitator who was recruiting people to join.

The project, based on the savings-and-loan scheme model, had big ambitions for its members: economic empowerment, food security, climate change resilience.

For Jemanesh, it meant saving a few coins regularly and pooling her resources with new friends who gathered excitedly around the idea of working together, building friendship and trying to make their lives better.

Jemanesh's first loan was 50 Birr (€1.50), which she used to pay an older woman to look after her twin boys when she was at work. With her next loan of 100 Birr, she bought hens and started selling their eggs. The latest loan she took out was 4,000 Birr (almost €125) and Jemanesh is now the proud owner of two sheep, one goat, two hens and a cockerel.

The group also has income-generating activities of its own. They buy teff, maize and butter

wholesale then sell it to their members for a small profit. Thanks to such enterprise, the group now has 27,000 Birr (€840) as capital. Jemanesh, meanwhile, has savings equivalent to €64 and has almost finished paying back her latest loan.

Jemanesh runs her own business now and it's proving very successful. She bakes her own *injera* and fries pieces of meat that her customers buy raw from the butcher across the road. She serves these up with a hot chilli sauces called *datta*, and charges 15 Birr (50 cent) per serving.

On Saturdays, in the busy months after harvest, she can sell up to 70 pieces of *injera* a day, and needs an assistant to help her keep up with demand.

Confidence for the future

One of the most important benefits from the group for Jemanesh is the feeling of belonging, of having people alongside her who are looking out for her and working together to build better lives.

'They're like next of kin to me,' she says. 'We've grown close to one another.'

Jemanesh is planning now to buy her own house. So there are other benefits too, some intangible but nonetheless precious: security, stability, hope. All these she appreciates all the more because once she didn't have them.

Tearfund Ireland is committed to standing alongside people like Jemanesh for the long haul, because we recognise change is often slow and transformation takes determination and hard work.

But the rewards are worth the wait...

LEBANON'S COMPASSION BORN OF PAIN

The Syria crisis has forced the church in Lebanon to confront a painful past – but learning to forgive has helped it respond to Syrian refugees with deep compassion.

Written by Niamh Daly



Photo: Susan Heaney, Redcross Church Wicklow, Dr Alia Abboud, LSESD, Emma Lynch, Tearfund Ireland. Credit: Tearfund Ireland.

The Syria crisis has had a profound impact on the whole of the Middle East but, as a host nation for about 1.5 million Syrian refugees, Lebanon has felt it keenly.

Yet, the overcoming faith of the Lebanese church is one of the brightest sparks of hope in the midst of an ongoing crisis, as our partner in Lebanon, LSESD, can bear witness.

We had the huge privilege of hosting LSESD's Chief Development Officer Dr Alia Abboud, on a recent visit to Ireland, and hearing inspiring accounts of how thousands of Syrian refugees are turning to the church in Lebanon for help.

This has not been easy for Lebanese Christians. Syrian armed forces occupied Lebanon from 1976 to 2005 and many Lebanese suffered greatly. As one Lebanese church leader put it, 'God has been teaching us many things through this crisis and the first lesson is forgiveness.'

'God is doing an incredible work through his people. Churches are expressing their faith through love – welcoming strangers, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, protecting and educating children and comforting the grief stricken,' Alia says.

One Syrian refugee spoke of the transformation she has seen in her daughter since they started attending the LSESD Learning Centre: 'Before, she didn't smile and was very lonely. Now she is playing and laughing because of the friends she has made, the crafts, games and care of the teachers. She loves to come here. I feel she is respected and has value.'

Alia shared some of these stories as she travelled with us from Dublin, to Carrick-on-Shannon, Drogheda and Wicklow to meet supporters, church leaders and youth leaders. Please ask God to bless Alia, the rest of the LSESD team and the Lebanese church as a whole as they bring hope and restoration to shattered lives.

Travel to Lebanon with us

In March 2020, a small group of Irish supporters and church leaders will travel with us to Lebanon for six days to see LSESD's work first-hand. If you are interested in coming too, contact Emma Lynch on 01 878 3200 or on emma.lynch@tearfund.ie

HOW A HOUSE BECOMES A HOME

Foster carers in rural Cambodia offer a compelling model of loving family care, challenging assumptions that orphans belong in orphanages

Written by Katie Lynch



Photo: Chanleap and Samnang, outside their home. Credit: Katie Lynch, Tearfund Ireland.

From under the protective arm of Chanleap, a little girl snatches a peek every few minutes. She is curious and meets my grins with a bashful smile, before retreating to the sanctuary of her foster mum's embrace.

The child is one of two children Chanleap and her husband, Samnang, are fostering in their home in Cambodia's Kandal province. The children have come from an orphanage and a background of institutionalised care that our partner in Cambodia, M'lup Russey, believes does long-term harm to children's development and social relationships.

I ask the little girl if she is happy living here and she tells me how much she's learnt, both at school and at home. She loves helping around the house, and she feels safer here than she did before. I decide not to pry, not wanting to bring up trauma or bad memories. She tells me she likes to play in this house, and she's made new friends.

It's not easy for foster parents like Chanleap to care for children like her: in institutions, such children have to build walls around their hearts, as a matter of self-preservation. They need love, even if they don't always know how to express it.

In the same village, Pen Chanda and Kea Thol are currently fostering two girls, aged nine and 14. The sisters have been with them for a year and a half.

Chanda, the father, talks a lot about the power of simply *being* in a family. The couple have three children of their own too and Chanda believes that the best thing he and his wife can do is to show their foster children what family *should* look like.

Peppered throughout our conversation, Chanda makes comments like: 'In this family we don't shout at each other,' or, 'In this family we don't use physical violence,' or 'In this family we help out in the kitchen.'

The more he talks about this, the more I understand. The changes they will see in these foster children are small and take a long time. They know they can't remove the trauma overnight. They can't rewrite the past or dictate the future. But they can offer a home that is a solid, secure and safe place.

The Latin origin of the word family – *familia* – means 'household', a concept encompassing much more than just a unit of people related by blood.

The move away from institutional care, championed by the likes of M'lup Russey, is not a criticism of orphanages. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that, for children to thrive, they need more than just their basic needs met.

Krish Kandiah, founder of the adoption and fostering charity Home for Good, wrote about alternative orphan care in a recent article in *Christianity Today*. He says that, while we might be tempted to believe the best of institutions, 'we must face up to the facts, research any allegations, and ensure we are putting the welfare of children before our own ego, mission or dreams'.

Meeting the two foster families in Cambodia convinced me that children do not belong in institutions, but within loving family units. More than that, it filled me with awe and amazement, humility and hope.



Photo: Chanda & Thol – Katie Lynch, Tearfund Ireland

CALLING FOR COFFEE MORNING HOSTS



Photo: ramonem1978/AdobeStock

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Yemen

HOPE IN HER HAND

The suffering in Yemen continues and hope is hard to find – so a solitary egg can bring huge comfort to a desperate family like Abida's.

Written by Niamh Daly



Photo: A beneficiary of the chicken farming project in Yemen, September 2019 – Tearfund.

Abida crouches by her clucking hens waiting to see if there's good news. Today, thank God, there are eggs.

Life is still precarious for Abida and her family – as it is for millions of Yemenis who have been caught up in a bitter proxy war and propelled to the brink of famine. Three-quarters of the population (24.1 million) are in need of humanitarian aid or protection; 14.3 million need immediate help to survive.

But now at least, Abida has one reliable source of food: her chicken coup. Hers is one of more than 100 households benefiting from our Yemen Appeal to Irish supporters and churches, which funded a six-month nutrition and health programme, alongside food distributions, this year.

As well as receiving food packages for four months and nutrition, health and hygiene training, Abida's family have been trained in poultry care, given the materials and training to build a coup, and provided with hens and a cockerel.

They've suffered a great deal. Abida, her parents and siblings have lived in a single room in a home owned by relatives since Abida's father lost his government job and they were evicted from their rented home.

Abida nearly lost her baby daughter to malnutrition last year. 'I was too weak to breastfeed and there was hardly any food in the house,' says Abida. The child only survived thanks to six months' treatment at a local health clinic.

Now, at least, they have the knowledge they need to stay healthy and clean. And they have eggs: enough to feed the family, and sometimes enough to share or sell. Abida's mother told our partner: 'Your assistance was a relief from God, and I did not believe I would receive such kind support.'



PEDAL POWER!

Our Pedal Against Poverty saw cycling stalwarts totting up thousands of kilometres in support of our work overseas – all at their own pace. Will you saddle up next year?

We're all familiar with the fundraisers designed for serious cyclists. You know the ones I mean. You train for months, you spend a fortune travelling to an exotic destination, and find yourself struggling to keep pace with a group of Tour de France wannabes. Pedal Against Poverty was designed to be an antidote to all that.

Throughout July and August, cyclists of all abilities saddled up and set off, in response to the theme of 'in your own town and in your own time'. We explored trails along the Royal Canal, the Grand Canal, the Waterford Greenway, the Great Western Greenway, the Old Rail Trail and many a back road and country lane across Ireland.

So far, 24 people have taken part in Pedal Against Poverty, cycling more than 7,000km and raising almost €7,000 (and counting).

We had three distances for cyclists to choose from, each representing a Tearfund Ireland overseas project : 750km for self-help groups in Ethiopia (see pages 3–5), 1,000km for children in families in Cambodia (see pages 7–9) and 145km for educating Syrian refugee children. The lengths represented distances, there and back, from our partners' in-country offices to the project sites.

Do your own thing

Everyone did it their own way – and that was the point.

- Members of Donabate Presbyterian Church set out every Saturday morning for five weeks for a 50km spin.
- Some individuals tackled ambitious solo distances: David Lynch from Clontarf, Dublin, for example, cycled 1,800km.
- Members of Solid Rock Church in Drogheda are determined to cumulatively cycle the distance between Drogheda and Beirut – which adds up to 3,939km! Nick Park, senior pastor of Solid Rock Church, visited our work in Lebanon last autumn and was hugely impacted by the experience.
- But the award for the most creative challenge goes to Ashla Copeland, a fifth-year student who, rather than cycling, completed 750km by kayaking!

The Pedal Against Poverty fundraising campaign is still open for donations, so if you'd like to contribute you can make a gift through the Tearfund Ireland website or through our office.

We're already looking ahead to Pedal Against Poverty 2020, so if you'd like to be involved, please get in touch. Whether you cycle, walk, run, kayak – or something more creative – we'd love to hear from you!

Here are a few comments from this year's Pedal Against Poverty participants, to inspire you to get involved next year!

'Tearfund supports very effective and valuable projects so it's easy to get support for such meaningful work.'
Tim Gaston, Donabate Presbyterian Church

'Setting the personal goals was a great incentive as I couldn't commit to an overseas venture but this allowed me to participate and bring awareness to Tearfund.'
Ingrid Brennan, Holy Trinity Rathmines

Photos: Tearfund Ireland Supporters, Casfotoarda/Adobestock

LET'S PRAY...

NOVEMBER 2019

ORPHANS

'And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father or mother.' Esther 2:7

Tearfund Ireland is part of a growing global movement to keep children in families, rather than placing them in orphanages which, studies show, can harm their development and relationships.

Organisations from across the world came together in the International World Without Orphans Conference last month, to encourage one another, share knowledge and skills and to gain fresh vision. Pray that all those who attended will work with fresh passion to create a world where every child has the opportunity to grow up in family-based care.

Thank God for foster parents such as Chanda and Thol in Cambodia (see pages 7–9) who believe wholeheartedly in the 'power of simply being in a family'. Thank God for the transformation they are seeing in their foster children as they learn new life skills and make new friendships.

Thank God for our partner M'lup Russey who provide training, vetting and support to foster families in Cambodia; pray for strength for their team in this important work.

DECEMBER 2019

REFUGEES

'When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt..." Matthew 2:13

Countless millions remain far from home, refugees in foreign lands or displaced within their own nations. Many have also experienced trauma due to conflict and gender-based violence.

As children in Ireland look forward to their Christmas holidays, Syrian refugee children in Lebanon will be wishing they had the chance to attend school at all. Thank God for our partner MERATH and churches in Lebanon who are finding innovative ways to keep children in education.

Over 1 million refugees have fled to Uganda from South Sudan due to ongoing conflict. Give thanks for Connected Church partner PAG Uganda, working with local churches and within the camps to care for refugees, with a particular focus on peacebuilding in host communities. Pray that God will raise up those who can act as peacebuilders in the camps and back in South Sudan.

JANUARY 2020

CARE FOR CREATION

'God saw all that he had made and it was very good.' Genesis 1:31

Our partners overseas report that the rainy season is coming at unpredictable times, storms are getting more severe and extreme weather events more frequent.

Thank God for the international Renew Our World campaign that Tearfund Ireland is part of. Give thanks for the tens of thousands of Christians globally who have been mobilised and consider prayerfully if there are some actions you could commit to.

Give thanks for the Paris Agreement through which most countries have come together to address the causes and impact of climate change. Pray that international leaders will keep their promises to act in line with the Agreement.

Pray that a new Tearfund Ireland resource to equip youth leaders to explore climate and faith with young people will be widely used in churches.

FEBRUARY 2020

UMOJA

'See I am doing a new thing! ... I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.' Isaiah 43:19

In Cambodia, churches are working with their communities to see the lives of the most vulnerable transformed through the Church and Community Mobilisation process (Umoja).

Umoja gives people more than skills: it inspires hope and self-confidence as people realise their God-given potential. One woman dreamt of becoming a leader, but didn't think she could: she now facilitates training for hundreds of people. Ask God to use Umoja to help even more people to believe in themselves.

Before Umoja reached Pastor Voeurn's village, an NGO gave them seeds, nets and fertiliser. But without knowledge and training, they weren't used. Praise God that now that villagers understand God's purpose for their lives and have been trained, they have started a long-term planting project. Ask God to bless them with good yields.

Tearfund Ireland's self-help groups in Ethiopia empower people to improve their lives, without being dependent on aid. Pray for the thousands of self-help groups across the region and for their expansion into new countries.

'YOU WILL BE CALLED REPAIRER OF BROKEN WALLS, RESTORER OF STREETS WITH DWELLINGS.'

ISAIAH 58:12

God is in the business of restoring, rebuilding and transforming lives.

It can take time. But we're in this for the long haul.

Please consider making a regular gift so we can see communities' stories of transformation right through to the end.

If you give €250 or more in a calendar year (or €21 a month), we can make your gift go even further by claiming tax relief. On donations of €250 we can claim back tax of €112.32, so your giving becomes worth €362.32 – or 45 per cent more.

Whatever you can give, we will make every cent count where the need is greatest. Thank you!



Photo: City of Aleppo and destroyed building in Syria 2019. Smallcreative/AdobeStock

Visit tearfund.ie/donate or call 01 878 3200.

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