

Winter 2020

teartimes

tearfund
Ireland

DEVELOPMENT UNDONE?

How COVID threatens progress on poverty

THE END FROM THE BEGINNING

Believing for better for young people coming out of care

LEARNING TO PIVOT

What a precarious year can teach you

Be part of a miracle

www.tearfund.ie

Welcome



'Constant change is here to stay.' I could never have imagined what a charge that quote could have...

2020 has been a time of huge hardship for millions, including many in our own nation. Our partners overseas have had to shift their focus, sometimes quite dramatically, to help communities respond to the pandemic and protect themselves from the virus and its fallout.

In many developing nations, it's been the impact on local economies and people's livelihoods that has been most devastating. As Bayoush's story from Ethiopia (see pages 3–5) shows, even those whose lives seemed to be on a firmer footing thanks to involvement in our Self Help Groups have had the rug pulled out from under them. And life has only got harder for Syria's long-suffering refugees in Lebanon (pages 7–9).

But I hope the story of Matha in Cambodia will encourage you that, with persistence, perseverance and hanging on to hope, change is possible. Matha's future didn't look bright – but God raised her up and turned things around.

Because he sees the end from the beginning and we trust God that this too shall pass...

As an organisation, we have had to adapt and pivot furiously (see pages 16–17) – and lean on our Heavenly Father like never before. But, if we've learnt anything in 2020, it's that God never changes, that he is faithful and worthy of our trust.

We've also been moved by the generosity of our wonderful supporters who've continued to give, run, knit, bake, campaign and pray for us, despite the uncertainty in their own lives. It's been truly humbling – and we can't thank you enough.

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: In Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, a young boy adjusts his face covering outside his tented home. His family received soap and other hygiene products from Tearfund's local partner MERATH (Middle East Revive and Thrive)

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HOPE DEFERRED

Life had always felt precarious for Bayoush but in recent years the family had started to feel that things were on a firmer footing – until the coronavirus pandemic began.

Written by Niamh Daly

Bayoush is proud of her kiosk and the business she runs from it. Her little grocery sells staples such as grain and flour – and her neighbours' custom has kept her busy.

It may be a small enterprise but Bayoush's business has made a huge difference to the family finances. For years, they had relied on her husband's income as a day labourer: he worked as a carpenter, painter and mason in their neighbourhood in the Golla area of Soddo town, Ethiopia. They struggled to meet even their most basic needs.

So Bayoush's income has given the family a bit more security – and a huge boost to her sense of self-worth.

But now, COVID-19 is now threatening to undo all her hard work.

'We cannot earn a living sitting at home; if we don't work, we can't sustain our livelihood,' says Bayoush.

'CORONA HAS DENIED US OF BOTH OUR FREE MOVEMENTS AND OUR STRUGGLE TO EARN A LIVING'

The grocery is the fruit of Bayoush's involvement in one of about 700 Self Help Groups across Ethiopia facilitated by the local church and supported by Tearfund Ireland. The project has attracted international analysis and research because the groups have been so effective in bringing whole-life transformation.

Bayoush joined the Rehoboth Self Help Group when it was first set up two years ago: its name means 'open spaces' in Hebrew. By saving together, pooling their resources and sharing advice, the group was able to offer its members loans and enable them to set up small enterprises.

With her first loan, Bayoush started off selling charcoal and firewood and vegetables. Then after four more loans ranging from 150 Birr to 10,000 Birr (about €3 to €222), she set up her grocery kiosk.

Now with two income streams, the family were able to build a house whose three rooms they rented out separately at 300 Birr each (about €7 a month). Things were looking up... until the first cases of COVID were registered in Ethiopia.

Demand for Bayoush's goods and produce dried up, almost overnight. Most of her customers had been day labourers whose work evaporated and who began to leave the area. Bayoush's stock, which she had previously replenished weekly, began to pile up, unsold for months.

The construction industry ground to a halt because of social distancing restrictions and the soaring costs of building materials. So Bayoush's husband lost his monthly income of about 2,000–3,000 Birr (€44–€67).

And, for three months in a row, the family's tenants were all unable to afford their rent so they eventually left, without paying. The prospects of getting new tenants are slim.



Photo: Bayoush with some of her children.

The future looks bleak for them, and for many other families like theirs. Bayoush's husband is even suggesting that the family move out into a more rural area where they have relatives... but coronavirus infection rates are higher there. They feel stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Perfect storm

COVID-19 has spread across the globe, sending billions of people into lockdown. At the time of writing, there had been more than 54 million cases of the virus worldwide and 1.3 million deaths; Ethiopia had more than 102,000 confirmed cases – the highest caseload of any East African country.



Photo: Mulugeta Dejenu Haile With Self Help Group members in Gunono.

In economic terms, coronavirus has hit the poorest and most vulnerable communities hardest as lockdowns have devastated livelihoods.

And, in Ethiopia, coronavirus has collided with other crises. Flooding in September displaced 200,000 people, exacerbating food insecurity and malnutrition, according to Associated Press. And all year, Ethiopia has been battling what the UN food agency (FAO) describes as its worst locust invasion in 25 years. From January to late-October, the swarms had devastated an estimated 200,000 hectares of land, according to CNN. More recently conflict has broken out in the Northern Tigray region which is prone to droughts and food insecurity.

'Swarms of locust devastating large tracts of land since late 2019, further deepening of the coronavirus into communities and now the threat of qualla qualla birds are undermining the development gains of our target population and thus Tearfund Ireland's work,' says Mulugeta Dejenu Haile, our Regional Programmes Coordinator in Ethiopia. 'The most vulnerable people need to be supported to manage through these multiple crises.'

In a society without the social safety nets we in the West can count on, the Self Help Groups that Tearfund Ireland supports in Ethiopia have proved a lifeline to communities such as Bayoush's.

Our local partners have used the groups as a channel to communicate accurate public health messages about handwashing and social distancing. These networks are vital in communities where access to radio and the internet are low (40 per cent and 15 per cent of the population respectively), and where misinformation spreads quickly. The SHGs' networks have also been used to distribute hygiene products such as soap and essentials such as food.

Through our network of 1,400 local churches, we were also able to distribute posters and leaflets in local languages to communicate guidelines recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). These measures have helped communities protect themselves from the virus, and from destitution – for now.

We've been able to harness the power of these networks to strengthen communities during the pandemic, but without ongoing support they are likely to suffer long-term hardship, which could also fuel instability and other problems.

As Mulugeta says, all the development gains we've worked so long and hard to achieve could be lost, unless we help support communities like Bayoush's over the longer term.



Photo: Bayoush in her grocery kiosk.

**'THE ETERNAL GOD IS
YOUR REFUGE, AND
UNDERNEATH ARE THE
EVERLASTING ARMS.'**

DEUTERONOMY 33:27

COVID-19 is hitting the poorest people hardest. Amid government restrictions, and without social safety nets, people are losing their livelihoods and going hungry.

The threat of the virus spreading is high in areas without proper handwashing and hygiene facilities. Without proper healthcare, the risk of dying is heightened too.

2020 has taught us that nothing is certain – apart from eternal God.

Can you show God's ever-faithful, unchanging love by making a gift today to help vulnerable communities like Bayoush's protect themselves from COVID-19?

**Please give what you can.
Visit www.tearfund.ie/donate
or call 01 878 3200.**

Photo: oneinchpunch/stock.adobe.com



STRANDED IN TIME

For years now, home for Najwa has been a tent she shares with nine others in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Interviews she gave to our partner MERATH in January and April show how life has become even tougher this year.

29 January, 2020

'We have been living in this tent with my husband's brother, his wife and their three toddlers for the past four years. My husband and I have two daughters and a son. Before the war, we were living a normal life in our houses and our husbands were working the land. We even had sheep! We were comfortable and able to support ourselves. But when the war started, our whole lives fell apart. There is nothing left of our homes and land.'

About two months after ISIS took control of our village, we escaped and came to Lebanon. We could no longer live a normal life in Syria due to the shelling and slaughter. They would never allow women to leave their homes, even if they were dying or if their children were sick. It was a very scary time and we were imprisoned in our own houses.



Photo: Najwa's daughter washes her hands with soap provided by Tearfund's partner MERATH (Middle East Revive and Thrive).

husbands can still manage to find some work so we can survive.'

Three months on: 30 April, 2020

'We learnt about the new coronavirus in the news. It seems to be spreading more and more, and this frightens us a lot. We are very afraid for ourselves and for the children, that we would not be able to afford any treatment if one of us catches the virus.'

Since the start of the lockdown we have been forbidden to leave the tent and for anyone to visit us. But thankfully the people from the church managed to bring us a lot of soap, tissues and some hand sanitiser, so that we can disinfect our hands and stay clean and safer.

I feel that the economic situation is getting worse and worse, in Lebanon in general and for our family in particular. There is no work at all and we cannot buy as much food as we used to. Everything is becoming so much more expensive! A bag of sugar used to cost 15,000 Lebanese pounds (about €8), and now it costs 73,000 (about €40). So now we can only buy small quantities of food at a time and it is not enough for our entire family.

We just hope the virus will disappear, that we could find work, and that prices will go back to what they used to be...'



Photo: Najwa's children play near their home in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

Life as a refugee in Lebanon is very difficult. It took us about a year to get used to living here. At first, we felt like complete strangers. Our husbands work seasonally in the vineyards, but what they get is not enough to cover the cost of our most basic expenses. We pay \$100 (about €85) of monthly rent for this one-room tent. That does not even include water and electricity. Everything is very expensive, especially now. With the economic crisis, prices have increased enormously.

The winter is especially hard on us, because of the harsh weather and because there is no work at all. Any time it rains, we have water inside the tent. During winter, we really suffer from the cold. The children are freezing.

We thank God for the help of our brother, Mazen, from the church. He has been helping us for three years now. He brings us two food boxes every month. Inside the boxes there is bulgur, rice, lentils, beans, oil, tea, sugar, cheese and many other things. Some months it is almost enough to feed us all! He also gave us mattresses and blankets this winter, as well as milk and nappies for the little ones.

Although we have nothing left in Syria and our houses are destroyed, our dream is still that things will get better there so we can go back to our country, our land and our families. But in the meantime, we remain thankful to be living in peace in Lebanon with our children, and that our

Lifeline of love

The huge generosity of Tearfund Ireland supporters has meant refugee families such as Najwa's have received loving care and practical support, despite ongoing complex challenges for their host nation.



Photo: Since fleeing Syria in 2016, Najwa has been sharing this tent with nine others.

Najwa and her family are among the many Syrian families whose difficult lives have been made just that little bit easier, thanks to you.

Our partners in Lebanon have been adapting to COVID restrictions and working with church volunteers to make 'home' deliveries of food and essential supplies. These have included hygiene kits which contain products such as soap and hand sanitiser to help families protect themselves from the virus – a vital complement to our partners' work promoting public health guidelines and advice.

'We've been moved and humbled by the generosity of our supporters who have given so faithfully since the start of the pandemic in March,' says Niamh Daly, Marketing and Fundraising Manager.

Kindness and compassion can make a difference in the context of Lebanon's ongoing and intractable problems. It continues to shoulder the extra burden of about 1.5 million Syrian refugees against a background of civil unrest and the country's worst economic crisis in decades. The devastating blast in Beirut's port on 4 August killed more than 200 people and left an estimated 300,000 homeless.

Before the pandemic took hold in Lebanon, Tearfund Ireland was supporting the work of MERATH in providing education opportunities to Syrian refugee children living in makeshift accommodation. Thanks to the determination and flexibility of the teachers, the project has continued, using a basic literacy and numeracy curriculum to try to ensure Syria's children, including children like Najwa's, do not become a lost generation.

MATHA'S FUTURE IS SEWN UP

Making the transition from institutional care to joining society as an adult can be hugely challenging – unless young people receive support, writes Niamh Daly.



Photo: Matha working at her dress designing business that Tearfund's partner in Cambodia, M'Lup Russey, helped her to set up.

Things are coming together well now for Matha. At 31, she is planning her wedding and her small business is booming.

She owns her own shop in Cambodia's Siem Reap province and sells clothes that she makes herself. She can save for her future, and has a keen sense of her own skills and capabilities.

But things could have gone very differently for her. A few years ago, she was living in an orphanage and facing the very real prospect of 'failing' as an adult.

What made the difference for Matha was the life skills and vocational training she received, thanks to our partner M'Lup Russey (MRO).

She met MRO through a youth club it was running in the orphanage, just before she left care. She attended several life skills training sessions, preparing her for 'life on the outside' – and for reintegration back into her family.

For, like most children who live in orphanages, she did have family: 80 per cent of children in care, in fact, have a parent who is still alive.

Later, she applied for training because it has always been her goal to be a tailor and dress designer. Last year, MRO provided the equipment she needed to open up her own shop.

Matha is keen to give back, in gratitude for the opportunities she herself has been given. So she also helps children in her village by sharing what she has learned from MRO trainings.

'Now Matha is safe and is included in the life of her new community, it's time for her to leave the programme,' says MRO. 'But Matha wants to help others and so will be becoming a member of a Youth Peer Network we support near her village.'

Alternative models of care

Sadly, the number of children in orphanages in Cambodia is rising, even as poverty rates decline. There were 16,579 children living in such institutions in Cambodia, according to a 2017 survey by the Cambodian government and Unicef. According to Friends International, the number of orphanages has increased by 60 per cent between 2005 and 2015, and it believes 'voluntourism' – combining tourism with humanitarian work – is a key driver of this trend.

For several years now, Tearfund Ireland has been highlighting the problem of institutionalisation and promoting more holistic, family-based care.



Photo: Matha is visited by staff from Tearfund's partner in Cambodia, M'Lup Russey

To this end, we continue to discourage volunteering in orphanages. Work is well underway in the development of a new Irish Aid-funded resource to help youth leaders explore these issues in creative and interactive ways with the young people they work with. We hope to launch the resource in 2021.

A number of other agencies have generously given their time and expertise to the project including Bishops' Appeal, Comhlámh, Nurture Africa, Maintain Hope and Serve.

In the same vein, we recently endorsed the Global Church Pledge to work to see children thriving in safe and loving families through our programmes.

'We believe God designed families as the best environment for children and young people to receive the love, belonging, and protection they need in order to flourish,' the Pledge reads.

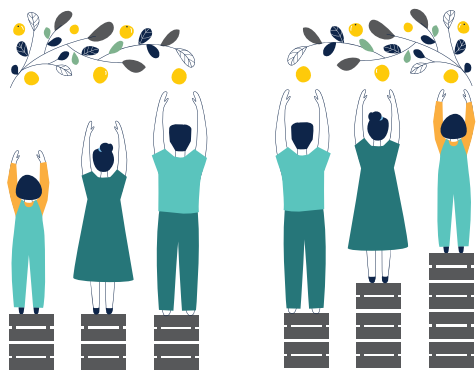
'Therefore, on behalf of vulnerable children around the world, we commit to support efforts which strengthen families, invest in family-based solutions, and combat the root causes of their vulnerability.'

Find out more here: www.globalchurchpledge.org

COVID-19 update

Lockdowns and government restrictions during the pandemic have caused a rise in domestic violence and child abuse so MRO has shifted its focus towards child protection, emergency support packages, and intervention in child abuse cases referred to them by local authorities. The MRO team have also been training communities to protect themselves against domestic violence and spreading public health information.

KEEPING DISABILITY OUT OF INSTITUTIONAL CARE



Equality Vs Equity

This year, Tearfund Ireland joined an EU-funded project called VIVID, a consortium of organisations working towards disability inclusion in the EU humanitarian and volunteering sector.

The two-year project brings together in a 'community of practice' six organisations from Finland, Belgium, Italy and Ireland. We will be learning how to become disability-inclusive in all our work, as well as sharing expertise across the coalition and with the general public.

Tearfund Ireland's distinct contribution to the VIVID Project is our expertise in the area of deinstitutionalisation and the global move away from orphanages, and towards family and community-based care.

Alarmingly, children living with a disability are 17 times more likely to be placed in institutional care, research has shown.

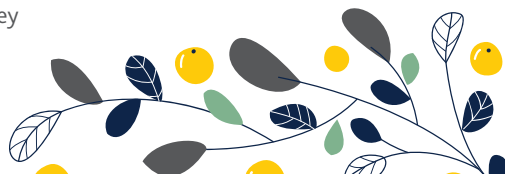
This makes our work on deinstitutionalisation absolutely vital, says Katie Lynch, EU Project Coordinator. Here, she shares some of the key principles in disability inclusion:

'The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines persons with disabilities as "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".

It's important to recognise, as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities does, that these barriers are the problem, not the disabilities. Barriers can be attitudinal (such as stigma), environmental (eg physical barriers), and institutional (written into policies and cultures). We can all be guilty of putting up barriers: it can be as subtle as talking about a person with a disability as particularly inspiring or unique – or assuming they are incapable or somehow weaker.

Our primary goal in disability inclusion must be accessibility, permanently changing an environment so everyone can access and use services and facilities without extra effort. This can apply to buildings or transport systems, communication or access to information – but the end goal is independence and dignity for all.

We often talk about equality as a positive goal but, as the illustrations show, the concept has its flaws. Equality implies we all have the same starting point, which we don't: society is set up to function as if we are all able-bodied. In contrast, equity offers varying levels of support depending upon people's needs, to achieve greater fairness of outcomes.'



CHRISTMAS GIFTS WITH A BIG HEART

Crafting has undergone something of a revival during the pandemic – but for some it's been a lifelong passion. Many of our supporters are now generously donating the fruits of their labours by selling them in aid of our work... Christmas shopping is now sorted!

Yona's yarns for Yemen

When Yona Borel from Wicklow learned about the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Yemen, she wanted to do something to help. Yona had picked up knitting during lockdown and so decided to use her new hobby to support Tearfund.

Yarn for Yemen is her first online business, making handmade beanies and donating all her profits to our work in Yemen. Yona says, 'I love supporting Tearfund's work because it is helping local people be the change in their own community.'

Yemen needs all the help it can get: it remains the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. Some 80 per cent of the population (24 million people) require humanitarian assistance, while it is estimated that 17.8 million people do not have access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation/hygiene.

At the time of writing, there had been 600 COVID-19 deaths in Yemen reported to the WHO. But the actual number of people infected is expected to be significantly higher since testing capacities are limited.

Tearfund's programme in Yemen is located in the outskirts of the Sana'a Governorate where public services are scarce and the vast majority of residents rely on water tanker trucks to deliver water to various collection points.

Thanks to the support of people such as Yona, 100 households have benefited from COVID-19 and cholera awareness training conducted door to door by trained community health workers. Households have also received a hygiene kit containing a soap bar, washing powder and jerry cans, as well as monthly food packages. Priority is being given to the most vulnerable, including those who are malnourished, female-headed households, and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.



Purchase one on Yona's beautiful hats online here:

<https://www.etsy.com/ie/shop/YarnforYemen> or email Yona on borelyona@gmail.com

CHRISTMAS GIFTS WITH A BIG HEART

Janet's silks for stress-free shopping



Drop into the Cork Craft and Design shop in Douglas and pick out a silk scarf, card or framed piece of art, all individually hand-painted on 100% silk, as a Christmas gift – and support Tearfund at the same time!

Janet Lane, a long-term supporter of Tearfund, has been carefully making beautiful silk items for a number of years, inspired by the beauty around her and also by the vibrant Canadian colours when she visits her family in Ontario.

Janet's profits go towards Tearfund's work, beautiful gifts helping to bring hope and transformation.

Betty's knits warm the heart – and the pot

Betty Wolfe from Ballydehob, Co. Cork, has been knitting tea cosies in aid of our work with forgotten children since 2015: beautiful cosies knitted with love and a big heart for others.

A faithful Tearfund supporter, Betty has raised almost €4,000 for Tearfund programmes to date!

Her terrific tea cosies are *normally* only available for purchase in local Christmas markets in Ballydehob but, since there is nothing 'normal' about 2020, you have a unique opportunity to purchase one for yourself or as a gift for someone you love.



How Heather's helping us cover up in style

Heather Corrigan is a nurse from Kildare. But, when she is not on shift at St James' Hospital, she loves to sew. Lately, she has found herself making face masks for colleagues and friends.

Heather says, 'I had asked the Lord one day what I could do to help in this difficult time and I had a sewing machine and lots of material scraps. So it was a case of using whatever was in my hands. Then everyone wanted to give me money, which I hadn't asked for, so it has become an 'accidental' fundraiser for Tearfund.'

Place your orders with Heather by contacting her direct on hrcorrigan@yahoo.com

MASKS
Face coverings in a range of beautiful fabrics, €4 each



€20k IN 2020

2020 will be remembered for a lot of things. Why not remember it as the year you did something different to help the poorest on the planet? Shaved your head, climbed the equivalent height of Kilimanjaro on your stairs, walked, ran or cycled a distance you never thought was possible?

Help us to help people living in poverty who will face the challenges of coronavirus more severely than we will. Choose an activity and get your friends to show their support by sponsoring you, perhaps setting up an online giving page to keep things simple. By raising money, you will help us spread the message of good hygiene practices and provide hygiene kits for people who need them desperately, helping communities protect themselves against the virus.

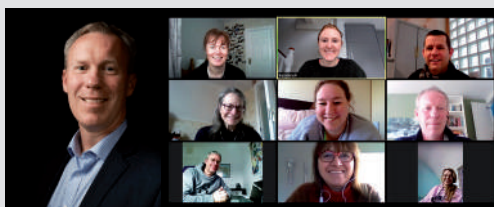
We can provide all the ideas and resources you need to start your fundraiser. Get in touch on 01 878 3200 or visit <https://www.tearfund.ie/get-involved/fundraise-for-us/>

Cork Craft and Design Shop is at 27a St Patrick's Woollen Mills, Douglas, Cork, Ireland.

You can contact Betty's daughter Freda by email to place your order freda@intelligenttea.ie

REFLECTIONS ON A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

It's been a strange year but also a special one, thanks to our wonderful supporters, creative fundraising, new partnerships and fresh opportunities, writes Acting CEO Sean Copeland.



**Irish
Emergency
Alliance**
SAVING MORE LIVES TOGETHER

**tearfund
Ireland**

Dear friends

It has been one year since our last *Tear Times* and the period between then and now has been unlike any other. In the midst of a number of challenges, Tearfund Ireland has had a positive year. Our staff team has gone through some changes. Our CEO has been on extended leave and the Board have appointed me as Acting CEO in her absence. Additionally, one of our part-time staff members left to pursue a full-time role elsewhere.

Coronavirus has impacted every aspect of our work. Like all organisations, our staff in Dublin and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, made the necessary adjustments to work remotely – and learn a deeper appreciation for the term 'pivot'!

On top of the immediate challenges of coronavirus, the Dublin office suffered major water damage in May and our colleagues in Ethiopia experienced disruption caused by public disorder on two occasions over the summer. Thankfully, they and their families remained safe.

In our programmes, our partners were able to pivot their activities to incorporate the WHO public health guidelines and coronavirus prevention measures.

And, wonderfully, you responded with great generosity, enabling us to provide support for the most vulnerable.

Many of you joined us in the pivot to virtual fundraising! You climbed virtual mountains, achieved creative feats in back gardens, cycled or ran long distances, sold your crafts, revamped your hairstyles and many of you participated in our weekly Quiz Nights. Not only did those events help us raise much-needed funds, they provided a chance for us to deepen relationships and form new friendships.

We've also had to adapt much of our engagement with supporting churches in Ireland. We've visited your online gatherings, pre-recorded updates and even spoke at a Drive-In Church in Kilkenny! We adapted our Development Education programmes to provide virtual workshops for our Global Justice in Youth Work programme and, we're working with the Church of Ireland Youth Department and the Girls Friendly Society to update their Global Connection Badge with a focus on climate justice.

This season also provided opportunities to deepen relationships with our institutional donors. We were able to agree with Irish Aid a revised co-funding arrangement for the next phase of the Ethiopia project. In addition, Tearfund Australia and Cedar Fund in Hong Kong each committed to increase their co-funding to this project over the next two years and we continue strengthening our partnership with the Church of Ireland's Bishops' Appeal. We are deeply appreciative of these Kingdom-minded peers.

In recent weeks, with help from media partners RTÉ and Virgin Media, the Irish Emergency Alliance (IEA) was launched. Tearfund Ireland is proud to be a founding member of this alliance and we have been working behind the scenes on this initiative for nearly three years. The IEA operates similarly to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) in the UK and is the first formal coming together of six aid agencies in Ireland. Participating in this alliance enables us to align with other agencies to create efficiencies in national fundraising for an international emergency response.

Everything we do in Tearfund Ireland is made possible through the generous financial giving, prayer and involvement of all our dedicated supporters and donors. With the uncertainty of the global pandemic and resulting economic impact, our priorities have been the continuation of our programmes and longevity of the organisation. I would like to publicly recognise the staff who rose to this challenge with diligence and significant personal investment. Along with the Board and, particularly, the increased support of the Audit and Risk Sub-Committee, we were able to make necessary adjustments to pivot. For all this, we acknowledge, with humility and gratitude, the faithful provision of our Father in heaven.

Yours sincerely,

Sean Copeland, Acting CEO

LET'S PRAY...

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.' John 14:27

Christmas is a time for friends and families to gather together, but such opportunities have been limited this year. As this uncertain year comes to a close, we can take comfort from the words of Jesus from John 14:27.

Christmas is a reminder that God is with us and sent his one and only Son as a blessing for the

whole world. Thank God for the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank God for uniting Christians across the world during this very difficult and troubling year for many. Pray that he will strengthen people who have turned to him in their time of distress, giving them a fruitful New Year.

LEBANON

'My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.'

Psalm 121:2

COVID-19 represents a 'crisis within a crisis' in Lebanon, as it comes on top of the country's worst economic crisis in decades and civil unrest. The devastating blast in Beirut that made hundreds of thousands of people homeless last August only compounded its woes.

Please pray for the Syrian refugee children who are being supported to access education with funding from Limerick and Killaloe Dioceses. Pray that the trauma care initiatives that have been integrated

into the curriculum this year will help the children to cope with their many challenges. Pray for school managers and teachers in Lebanon, that they will have grace, strength and stamina to adapt to changing circumstances.

Thank God for the outreach of our partners to reduce hunger, improve nutrition, and help 840 households protect themselves from coronavirus. Pray that this winter they will have the resources they need to continue their outreach.

CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

'Take this baby and nurse him for me.' Exodus 2:9

'We believe God designed families as the best environment for children and young people to receive the love, belonging and protection they need in order to flourish. Therefore... we commit to support efforts which strengthen families, invest in family-based solutions, and combat the root causes of their vulnerability.' The Global Church Pledge www.globalchurchpledge.org

Tearfund Ireland has endorsed the Global Church Pledge and committed to work to see children thriving in safe and loving families through our programmes. Please pray that God will enable us to do more in partnership with others to keep vulnerable children out of institutions and in family-based care.

Volunteering in orphanages has all but ceased due to coronavirus. Please pray that this season will give an opportunity for people to reflect on this unhelpful practice and to redirect their support towards initiatives that keep children in families.

Pray for M'Lup Russey, our partners in Cambodia (see pages 10–11), as they work with young adults now too old to be supported through the child welfare system; pray that vulnerable young people will become part of supportive, life-giving networks that help them transition into the community as adults.

ETHIOPIA

'With God all things are possible.' Matthew 19:26

With changing weather patterns causing drought and unpredictable rains, traditional methods of farming were not yielding enough food for Mattheos and Amarech to feed their family.

Tearfund Ireland partners are teaching farmers more effective ways to farm using the conservation farming approach. As a result, Mattheos and Amarech have doubled their harvest yield. Amarech expresses her gratitude to God, saying: 'With God all things are possible.'

Thank God that conservation farming has been able to continue despite COVID-19 restrictions and for the increased yields that have transformed life for so many farming families. Please pray that the harvest will be good this year. And pray for success for Ethiopian farmers who are learning new business and marketing skills and are trialling nutritious, easy-to-grow and climate-resistant crops.

Pray also for the new phase of Self Help Group development this year. Pray that hundreds of new groups will be established.



SEE THE END FROM THE BEGINNING

Matha had a bad start in life, inside an orphanage in Cambodia.

But that wasn't the end of her story.

Today, thanks to our partner M'Lup Russey, she's had training in life skills and tailoring. Now, she's sharing what she's learnt with other vulnerable young people.

We want to see vulnerable people's story right through to their happy ending. Will you help us?

Please consider making a regular gift.

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

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.

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

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