

Winter 2021

# TearTimes

 [tearfund.ie](https://tearfund.ie)

## A sense of belonging

How Self Help Groups are strengthening community



**tearfund**

**Ireland**



**At the heart of the Christmas story is a vulnerable, new family. As Tearfund Ireland, we too are family: working as a small team, in relationship with churches across Ireland, to be salt and light for our global neighbours.**

We trust that God who 'sets the lonely in families' (Psalm 68:6a) would approve of our Self Help Groups that are bringing people like Aster out of isolation (page 3) – and that he'd also take

delight in our efforts to ensure orphans have families (pages 4-5).

Family matters also bring our attention to Dublin, as well as Ethiopia.

In the spring, we said farewell to our dear friends, Niamh Daly, who worked as our Marketing, Communications and Fundraising Manager for eleven years, and Markus Köker, who was our International Programmes Manager for nine years. Both, through their passion and commitment, have been key in shaping Tearfund Ireland into what it is today – and we will miss them.

But we're delighted to welcome two new colleagues this autumn: Sophie Moreno, our International Programmes Manager, who joins us from Concern Worldwide; and Freda Owens, our Finance Manager who has extensive experience in commercial business. In addition, Amanda Prather had been working with us as a part-time Communications and Marketing Officer but is now our Communications and Fundraising Coordinator.

We pray that Sophie, Freda and Amanda will experience joy and peace – and we pray the same for you, our supporters and members of our wider Tearfund Ireland family.

Sean Copeland, Acting CEO

Tearfund Ireland

### **Tearfund Ireland**

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

### **Get in touch with us!**

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 Cover photo: Elfinesh from Bethel Self Help Group, Ethiopia, happily shows off her abundant potato farm. Credit: Tearfund Canada.

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# Belonging to something bigger



Photo (left): Aster and her son harvesting honey for her beekeeping farm. (Right) Aster feeding her milk cows. Credit: Tearfund Ireland/WK-IC-TDA.

**The many Self Help Groups we have helped facilitate are building vital support networks and skills in some of Ethiopia's low-income communities.**

For years, Aster Getachew lived on the margins, looking on as other families in Sodo improved their livelihoods.

She was ambitious – but the family's finances were dire. For years, Aster tried to secure a small business loan but without success.

Then, six years ago, she heard about a Self Help Group (SHG) being set up her in city in southern Ethiopia. 'That day was a turning point of my life,' she says.

**'Joining a SHG brought new hope.'**

Since she joined Siquwa SHG, she has been able to pool her resources with other members and take a low-interest loan from the group fund.

From small beginnings, she has expanded her business to include poultry-rearing, fattening livestock, beekeeping and selling dairy and animal products. She now has a diploma in accounting too.

The group has given Aster new friendships, new skills and new confidence: she has become a voice for SHGs, even lobbying government officials for social improvements.

COVID-19 restrictions have devastated many small businesses like Aster's as their trade has dwindled. But members are supporting each other through the SHG's social protection funds. Our cash injection project, funded by the Irish Emergency Alliance and individual donations, has enabled families to stay in their homes and has rescued their small businesses.

With your continued support, we're committed to facilitating many more Self Help Groups in Ethiopia, helping thousands more people like Aster lift themselves out of poverty.

Young adults raised in orphanages are  
**10 TIMES** more likely to fall into sex work,  
**40 TIMES** more likely to have a criminal  
record and **500 TIMES** more likely to take  
their own lives than their peers.<sup>1</sup>



Graphics: Amanda Prather/Tearfund Ireland.

# Rethinking care for vulnerable children

At Tearfund Ireland, we believe children belong in families. Through a recent conference, and new resources, we are making the case to reform institutional care and overseas volunteering.

Love, nurture and support are vital to the well-being and flourishing of our children. But all too often, children who are already vulnerable are deprived of these vital inputs because they are taken into institutional care such as orphanages.

There could be as many as 8 million children in care worldwide according to Rethink Orphanages. Due to stigma and lack of community services to provide support to families, Unicef reports that children with disabilities are up to 17 times more likely to be placed in institutions than other children.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, many fear overseas volunteering in orphanages is propping up an outdated and potentially damaging system. Decades of research have shown that growing up in an orphanage has a negative effect on a child's health, development and long-term life outcomes. We believe it's high time for a system overhaul – with greater efforts made to reintegrate orphans into families and communities.

This May, we held an online global conference, 'Beyond institutional care: rethinking how we care for vulnerable children', which explored the topic of care reform and why volunteering in orphanages is changing.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/oct/24/jk-rowling-urges-students-not-to-volunteer-at-orphanages> Pashkina (2011). Sotsial'noe obespechenie, 11:42-45. Cited in Hansen J, Kristofersen LB, Myrvold TM eds. Orphans in Russia. Oslo, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR-rapport 2003:1).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/eca/children-disabilities>



**‘We all want to see a better future for vulnerable children, but this can only be achieved by listening to those with lived experience of care, learning from one another and working together.’**

**Tearfund Ireland’s Emma Lynch**

As one speaker, Peter Muthui, put it memorably, ‘Taking care of the hardware (shelter, food, water, etc) is not enough: we have to take care of the software (love, care, attention) too.’ Peter himself grew up in care in Kenya.

Our expert speakers from all over the world discussed current attitudes to institutional care and highlighted different perspectives calling for alternative care options, from NGOs to young people who grew up in orphanages.

The engagement of governments is key to policy reform but Tearfund Ireland believes that other key sectors need to be reached too. That’s why we have developed a range of educational resources to help raise awareness of and support for care reform:

- **Just care: Just volunteering**

This new youth work resource funded by Irish Aid uses Development Education approaches to explore the impact of volunteering in orphanages and institutional care on the lives of vulnerable children.

Built around activities and reflections, it is aimed at youth workers, youth leaders, teachers, group facilitators and development education practitioners working with young people and others who may be considering volunteering overseas.

- **Biblical reflection companion**

This set of three short reflections is intended to accompany the ‘Just care: just volunteering’ resource above. Each reflection includes a Bible reading, thoughts about the passage, questions for group discussion or personal reflection, and a prayer.

- **‘Rethinking how we care’ email series**

Our new five-part email series takes readers on a learning journey to understand the potential problems of residential care and the benefits of alternative family-based care. It includes the perspectives of young people who have left care.

**‘The public has this perception that children end up in institutions and orphanages because they are orphans, that’s not the case.’**

Ruth Wacuka,  
Care Leaver and Global Advocate



# Everything comes from the Lord

**Lebanon is struggling with multiple crises, not least an influx of 1 million refugees from Syria. Yet, the Lebanese church have welcomed these neighbours and shown them God's love.**

Our local church partner, MERATH, have answered God's call to 'love their neighbour', providing many families with food supplies and cash vouchers. This outpouring of love and support is all the more humbling because Lebanon and her church are suffering themselves. The country is in the grip of an economic crisis: spiralling inflation has caused food prices to soar, and the supply of petrol, medicine and electricity

is erratic. Hope too is in short supply. 'We are thankful for our local church partners who are reaching out to their neighbours – and for the local church in Ireland who are helping the people of Lebanon amid their own struggles,' says Amanda Prather.

**What can you buy with 10,000 Lebanese pounds?**



## Reflections on rain

**We love to talk about the weather in Ireland. Will it rain today? Shall we hope for the sun that was forecast today?**

Let's face it... Rain is not something we struggle with here.

But in many places in sub-Saharan Africa, rains are failing, devastating livelihoods. Many rely solely on their harvest for their food and their income. If the harvest fails, there is no safety net.

That's why it is such a privilege to be part of a project that is teaching farmers in Ethiopia's Damot Sore district how to adapt to changing rainfall patterns.

Forty-eight-year-old Elias Kelta is one of them. The changing climate meant that for all his hard work in the fields, his yields were shrinking. However, through our local partners, Elias has learnt conservation agriculture – a sustainable type of farming which doesn't require invasive digging or chemical pesticides but, with the use of natural mulch, produces high crop yields.

Recently, he carried out an experiment, growing some maize (corn) using his traditional methods, including costly fertilisers, and some using conservation agriculture methods.

The maize grown using old methods failed to mature because the rains failed. It was only good for animal feed. By contrast, the crops planted using methods of conservation agriculture had two or three ears of corn per stalk – a three-fold increase on usual yields, despite the poor weather.

Like Elias, many small farmers have seen the benefits of conservation agriculture and are changing their approach to farming. We are privileged to be a part of how God is providing for these farmers who are reliant on their crops. We may get plenty of rain, but with your continued support, Elias, and farmers like him, will have plenty of food even if it doesn't rain.

Amanda Prather



📷 Elias Kelta displays the crops he planted using conservation agriculture methods in Ethiopia. Photos: Mulugeta Dejen/Tearfund Ireland.



# Our Father...

**“Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out with weeping carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy...”**

**Psalm 126:5-6**

**In every country where we work there are challenges to overcome. Yet the church is showing God's love in so many ways.**

God promises that the tears of these churches will reap songs of joy. Tearfund Ireland is faithfully committed to creating lasting and transformational change, knowing that sown seeds will produce fruit.

## **Please join us in prayer:**

For the Tearfund Ireland Board, staff and implementing partners, as we work through the church to bring holistic transformation and restoration to those experiencing poverty and injustice. Please pray that the resources we're developing will be circulated widely and used to facilitate awareness, understanding and action toward biblical justice for all who engage with them.

## **For specific countries:**

**For Ethiopia**, where thousands of women participate in our Self Help Groups. They are experiencing whole-life transformation, but the impacts of coronavirus continue to threaten their progress. On top

of the dire situation in the Tigray region, the nation faces yet another food shortage because of failed harvests due to lack of rainfall.

**For Lebanon**, where our church partners continue to serve the displaced Syrians who fled their homeland. We hear many stories of God's provision. But, increasingly, the entire population is in need of intervention as the economy suffers. Pray that the newly-established government will progress the necessary restoration. Pray that our partner, MERATH, will have all they need to continue their work.

**For Cambodia**, where our church partners have been working to locate children who were placed in orphanages so they can be reunited with their families. Pray that this difficult and sensitive work can happen swiftly and safely for all.

In all that we do, across the world, we pray that the will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Until this is the case in every nation, situation and circumstance, we fix our eyes on Jesus.

Amen



# Tis the giving season

Photo: Our partner MERATH assisting with emergency food meals for those affected by the blast in Beirut. Credit: MERATH

## As Christmas beckons, why not look beyond gifts and gadgets and choose a gift that can transform lives?

Our Living Gifts are perfect for the person who has everything – and provide life-changing help for people overseas who really need support.

We have a range of gifts to suit different budgets eg:

- €32 could provide a family with anti-trafficking awareness training
- €90 could provide four families with hygiene kits, providing them with essentials such as soap, washing-up liquid, shampoo and toothpaste
- €220 could provide materials to assist a family fleeing from conflict

Start your Christmas shopping at [tearfund.ie/living-gifts](https://tearfund.ie/living-gifts)

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