

Winter 2023

TearTimes

† tearfund.ie

‘...love your neighbour as yourself’



tearfund

Ireland

The injustices in the world hit us hard. In Tearfund Ireland’s work, we are constantly exposed to extreme hardship, witnessing millions of people suffering because of famine, conflict and war. But through our work, we are also constantly exposed to the many ways in which the Church demonstrates the goodness, love, and justice of God.



We are privileged to participate in what God is doing through His Church - responding to emergencies and helping people on the brink of famine in East Africa or fleeing their homes because of conflict. In Lebanon, for example, we help provide shelter, warmth, and hygiene products to hundreds of people who have left all they know in search of safety. And we are privileged to help change mindsets towards orphanages. In Cambodia we support families to stay together, challenging the societal norm that suggests vulnerable families would be better off sending their children to an institution.

I frequently reflect on Ephesians 3:10, which speaks of how God works through His Church to display His wisdom on earth. I often wonder how different things could be if the whole Body of Christ caught a glimpse of our potential to change the world in practical, tangible ways.

In no way do I consider Tearfund Ireland to have all this figured out. But as you read the contents of this *Tear Times*, I invite you to give thanks to the Lord for all that His Church is currently doing, and to join with me in asking what more we can do, as the people of God, to display the wisdom of God.

With Blessing and Peace

Sean Copeland
Tearfund Ireland CEO

Tearfund Ireland

Demonstrating God’s goodness, love and justice to the most marginalised and vulnerable people around the world.

Get in touch with us!

Tearfund Ireland, 2nd Floor, Ulysses House
22-24 Foley St, Dublin 1, D01 W2T2
info@tearfund.ie
Tel: 01 878 3200
f /tearfundireland
X @TearfundIreland

📷 Cover photo: Ethiopian man standing among his harvest in his field. Credit: Tearfund Canada.

Tearfund Ireland is a signatory to the Dóchas Charter and Code of Conduct on Images and Messages. Names of beneficiaries have been changed where required to protect their identity.



A Family for Every Child

📷 Photo: A group of supporters for the Comhlámh 'End Orphanage Volunteering' campaign gathered at the Dail. Credit: Comhlámh.

by Emma Lynch, Church Engagement and Education Manager and Co Convener of the Comhlámh working group to End Orphanage Volunteering

On 25 January 2023, we met members of the Oireachtas to call for an end to international orphanage volunteering and the institutionalisation of children around the world. We joined with childcare reformers across Ireland and NGO activists who are members of Comhlámh¹.

At least 5.4 million children are growing up in childcare institutions around the world today. Research from several countries tells us that at least 8 in every 10 of these children have at least one living parent. Studies show that poverty is the number one reason why children are placed in care around the world. As an organisation that seeks to see people lifted out of poverty in all its forms, Tearfund Ireland believes that keeping children with their families must be a priority.

Over the past seven years, we have been working with partners to enable more children to grow up in their families and communities rather than in institutions.

Over this time, we have come to recognise that working with our overseas partners is only one part of the challenge. Overseas volunteering has also been found to be a strong driver of institutional care around the world.



¹ Comhlámh is the Irish Association of Development Workers and Volunteers

Did you know that the number of orphanages in Cambodia rose by over 75 per cent between 2005 and 2010? This was due to increasing demand from overseas donors and tourists for volunteer placements in orphanages.

Tearfund Ireland is committed to raising awareness with individuals, churches, educators, and even the government here in Ireland to change the way we volunteer.



Photo: Tearfund Ireland Church Engagement and Education Manager, Emma Lynch, presents at the Dail to seek steps to end orphanage volunteering. Credit: Amanda Prather, Tearfund Ireland.

In a presentation to Oireachtas members in the Dáil AV Room, I highlighted that in a 2019 resolution, the UN General Assembly recognised the harm of both institutions and of orphanage volunteering and called for the end to both practices. I said to the members: *'Ireland supported this resolution, and we now need to show this resolve by working to end orphanage volunteering and tourism from this country and supporting care reform in our overseas aid programmes.'*

‘Every child deserves to have that one person who is madly in love with them to call “Mum” or “Dad”.’

Former resident of institutional care,
Stephen Ucembe

Stephen Ucembe, a care reform expert and Regional Advocacy Manager with *Hope and Homes for Children in Kenya*, grew up in an orphanage and now works to eliminate the institutional care of children. Joining by video link, Stephen shared, ‘I was placed in an orphanage when I was about five years old after I lost my mother. I was separated from my siblings and my extended family. The fundamental lesson in my personal life, after spending 15 years of my childhood in an institution, is that no child should grow up without the love of a family and isolated from the community. **There is a family out there for every child, related by blood or not.**’

In Ireland, we have taken steps to reform how we care for children, moving away from large-scale institutions towards supporting families to prevent separation; we have developed foster care and kinship care as alternatives. Stephen Ucembe called upon Ireland to support similar efforts in other countries, stating: **‘Children in Africa are not that different from those in Europe; rights are universal.’**

Tearfund Ireland will continue to raise awareness about this issue. Since that meeting in January, we are happy to report that the Department of Foreign Affairs has recently updated their online travel advice for backpacking, volunteering, and adventure tourism with links to international codes of good practice that call for an end to volunteering in orphanages.

To find out more about our work to keep children in families, please get in touch through our website or scan the QR code!



Learn more HERE



The Ukraine and Syria Emergencies

by Sophie Moreno, International Programmes Manager

Photo: A woman and her child flee Ukraine. Credit: Integra/Jana Čavojská.

On 24 February 2022, I woke up to the news of conflict in Europe: Russia was invading Ukraine. I didn't believe this would happen; who would have? The following days, we were enveloped in the news that violence and fear was driving millions of Ukrainians from their homes. Fast forward a year, to the morning of 6 February 2023, and I woke up to

the news that a massive earthquake of 7.8 magnitude had destroyed vast areas in Turkey and Syria. I lived in Turkey; friends living in the earthquake-affected regions were now sitting in their cars, unsure if they could return to their homes. ‘Are you okay? How can I help?’ were my first texts to them.



Photo: Men unloading items to help those impacted by the Syrian earthquake. Credit: Local partner in Syria.

When scenes of disaster and conflict fill our social media feeds and TV screens, we feel overwhelmed by the scale of what we see. Our hearts immediately go out to the people affected, even if they are complete strangers to us. Suddenly, we are confronted with how much we have, and how much people in crisis have lost. And empathy and compassion don't seem enough. We want to help; we want to do something!

For many of us, our first instinct might be the desire to send practical help: canned food, clothing. People have lost everything, and we want to give! However, delivering donated items (such as clothing and blankets) to a country hit by an emergency is complicated: items will have to be sorted, cleaned, and transported across borders where customs rules and regulations must be followed. All these tasks require time and resources that could be spent in other ways. Even though it might not feel like 'helping', donating

money allows relief organisations, like Tearfund Ireland, to buy items locally, which is quicker, usually less expensive, and ensures quality; this also supports the local economy (which has been hit hard).

Since February 2022, the wonderful generosity of our supporters has enabled Tearfund Ireland to provide more than €230,000 of humanitarian aid to people affected by conflict in Syria and Ukraine. With these funds, our partners have assisted more than 43,000 people in Syria through emergency food baskets, emergency hygiene kits, and winter assistance (such as blankets). In Ukraine, our partner has supported 310,000 people with basic food and non-food items, psychosocial support and accommodation.

Thank you to everyone who donated! Your generosity and prayers are a demonstration of God's goodness and love.



Share a Cuppa with Your Neighbour

by Amanda Prather, Communications and Fundraising Coordinator



Photo: Attendees at the Sligo Presbyterian Coffee Morning. Credit: Malak and Fiona.

On a quiet street corner, a group of women gathered in the hall at Sligo Presbyterian Church. Around the room, there were people from ten different nationalities, each sharing food and other aspects of their own lives and cultures. Though they were all from different countries, they gathered that morning with a common purpose: to support the Tearfund Ireland Coffee Morning. This coffee morning was one of several hosted across the country in support of Tearfund Ireland.

The Tearfund Ireland Coffee Mornings are a great way to spend time together—catching up with old friends, trying new coffee, and meeting new people. It's enjoyable, but ultimately, it's for a deeper purpose. Tearfund Ireland wants to see God's call to 'love your neighbour' extend beyond borders and culture, to reach communities that are most marginalised and vulnerable.

We were privileged this year to have two colleagues from our office in Ethiopia – Mulugeta and Genet – come over for our

week of Coffee Mornings. We enjoyed our time with them, hearing updates from their families, laughing together, and giving them tips for what to see in Dublin. Most importantly, we had the opportunity to hear about the work of our partners. We heard of moms struggling to feed their children more than once a day. We heard about drought-stricken communities facing daily struggles for food and water.

But we also heard stories of hope and resilience. Mulugeta and Genet shared with us how women in Self Help Groups are encouraging and celebrating each other's victories; their stories of hope in the midst of immense challenge touched us all.

Tearfund Ireland Coffee Mornings are about connection. Whether we grow up in Ethiopia, Ireland, New Zealand, Mexico, or Ghana, the essential elements of relationships are the same everywhere. We may have different experiences and challenges, but we also have a lot in common. The neighbour down the road in Athlone, who is trying her best to care for her children, has similar worries to a woman looking after her children in Lebanon.

At a Tearfund Ireland Coffee Morning, we can all come together, share a cuppa, and care for our neighbours. Together.





Photo: Denge surrounded by his family. Credit: Tearfund Canada.

Denge's Story

by Amanda Prather, Communications and Fundraising Coordinator

When an elderly man shuffled up to Wayne Johnson, Tearfund Canada CEO, his bright orange beard immediately caught Wayne's eye.

Wayne knew of Denge – but he wasn't expecting to see the man standing in front of him.

Nine months previously, when the Tearfund Canada team first arrived in Denge's village in the Borena zone of southern Ethiopia, the terrible smell

of deceased animals filled the air, overwhelming their senses. As they passed a vulture feeding off one of the many livestock carcasses, the stark reality of the three-year drought – in which there had only been rain for seven days – was brought into sharp focus.



Photo: Denge and Tearfund Canada CEO, Wayne Johnson. Credit: Tearfund Canada.

A river that was historically 100 metres wide and 10 feet deep was completely dried up. Women were digging into the bottom of the river, down six feet, to collect water between grain sands to fill up coffee cups and jerry cans of water. Government officials from the region said 68,000 families had lost all their livestock: their source of food, and their income. A nearby community tripled in size in six months as tens of thousands of people fled Borena in the hope of surviving.

In Denge's village, the team found Denge lying on a blanket in his small, dark hut, his gaunt face framed with a bright orange beard. Denge was not well; his herd of 90 cattle and 10 camels had all died, taking with them Denge's main source of income as well as food and milk.

By the time the Canadian team arrived, Denge's last supplies of food were almost gone, and his body was slowly giving up. His family was doing its best to care for him, but with scarce food, there was little hope. When the team spoke with Denge,

he was able to share how he had spent his whole life drinking a glass of milk a day – until the drought hit. Denge told the team he didn't think he'd ever drink a glass of milk again.

A major relief operation

In response to the severe drought affecting the Borena zone, Tearfund Ireland partnered with Tearfund Canada to provide food aid for six months for 13,000 people. Monthly food packages included corn, beans, cooking oil, and salt. Additionally, supplementary food to combat malnutrition was provided for pregnant and nursing mothers and children under five.

When Wayne visited Denge's village (nine months after the initial team visit), he was uncertain of what he would encounter. But upon arriving, Denge had only three words to say. In the only English he knew, he said, 'Thank you, Tearfund.'



Join with us in prayer

We know that God is with us and is working through his Church. In the face of global challenges and struggles, we lift our eyes to our Father who is aware of all things and able to guide us through them all. Please partner with us in prayer as we demonstrate God's goodness, love and justice to the most vulnerable and marginalised people across the world.

Father, we pray

- for the Tearfund Ireland staff and Board of Directors as we pursue our vision for flourishing communities to be free from poverty. Pray that we can deepen relationships with churches in Ireland who share our passion to invest in creative solutions to effect long-lasting change.
- for those continuing to be impacted by the changing climate, who acutely feel the deep distress caused by drought. Pray that food and water will continue to be supplied to those struggling to survive. Please pray for crops and fresh water and for the restoration of hope for communities that have seen their livelihoods diminish.
- for vulnerable children who are currently living in institutional care. Pray that they will be strengthened, comforted, and feel the immense love of God until they can be reintegrated back into family-based care. Please pray for people working in the community to help children remain in their homes. Pray for parents who feel that their only choice is to place their child in institutional care. Please pray for wisdom for government leaders and those advocating on behalf of these vulnerable children and their families.
- for us to continue to love and care for our neighbour. Pray that our eyes and hearts are open to the needs of those around us. Pray that we continue to seek ways to support people facing challenges. Pray for staff and volunteers in our projects as they continue to work together to strengthen their communities and see God's hand in their lives.



Photo: Members of a church in Ethiopia worshipping together. Credit: Tearfund Canada.

'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.'

Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV)

If you would like to join with us in prayer each month, sign up for our Monthly Prayer Bulletin with our QR code here:



Pray with us **HERE**

Would you like to know more about Self Help Groups?
Do you have questions about alternative care?
Have you ever wondered what life is like for a refugee?

Take part in a Learning Journey!

We have created three Learning Journeys, and each is a five-part series that will give you a more in-depth look at an area of our work.

- You'll receive a weekly email filled with info, stories and resources.
- You can go on a Learning Journey for your own personal reflection and understanding, or use the Learning Journey in a small group or Bible study discussion group.
- Get your questions answered and journey with us in demonstrating God's goodness, love and justice.



Sign up today at tearfund.ie or scan the QR code



Sign Up Here

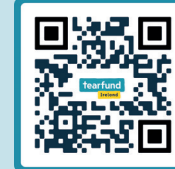
Listen to us on the radio:

Tearfund Ireland is delighted to partner with national and local radio stations throughout Ireland. In our segments, we share updates on projects, programmes and events and give details on how you can get involved. Tune in to Spirit Radio, UCB online radio, or Life FM in Cork to hear members of our team discussing projects such as our Self Help Groups, work in alternative care, and our emergency responses.

Have you missed any of our updates?



You can find some of our past interviews on our website, or scan the QR code here!



Listen **HERE**

Your giving makes a world of difference

Monthly giving

Our vision is to see communities flourish – free from poverty and justice. Your support is instrumental in this becoming a reality. To help more communities flourish, would you prayerfully consider investing in the work of Tearfund Ireland on a monthly basis?

Your monthly support would effect holistic transformation.

You can give by donating in monthly amounts:

€21 a month could train two people on Sustainable Organic Agriculture or Conservation Agriculture

€40 a month could help sustain 13 Self Help Group in Ethiopia

€100 a month could help provide 14 refugees impacted by the Syrian earthquake with food and hygiene assistance

Thank you for partnering with Tearfund Ireland.

If you give €21 a month, the yearly total will meet the €250 needed for us to benefit from Revenue's charitable tax scheme. At no additional cost to you, we can potentially receive an additional €112.32 from Revenue, increasing your yearly donation to €364.32!

Similarly, if you give €40 a month, we could benefit from an additional €224.64 from Revenue, increasing your yearly donation to €704.64!

Matching Gifts

Are you an employee of a company or organisation that participates in a matching gifts programme? Many companies (including large multi-national companies) have a matching gifts programme – with some even doubling the matching gift to make a €150 gift turn into €300!

By using a matching gifts programme, your support of Tearfund Ireland's work can go even further. Chat with your company today to see if they offer a matching gifts programme. If you would like to enquire about how your company can begin participating in a matched scheme, please contact us on info@tearfund.ie

tearfund.ie

Tearfund Ireland, 2nd Floor, Ulysses House,
22-24 Foley St, Dublin 1 D01 W2T2

T 01 878 3200 E info@tearfund.ie [f](https://www.facebook.com/tearfundireland) [i](https://www.instagram.com/tearfundireland) [X](https://www.x.com/tearfundireland) /tearfundireland

Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in Ireland 323619. Revenue Authorisation No. CHY 8600.
Charities Regulatory Number 20021337

tearfund

Ireland