

Winter 2025

# TearTimes

† [tearfund.ie](https://tearfund.ie)



**'Rejoice in the Lord  
always; again I will  
say, rejoice.'**

*Philippians 4:4*

**tearfund**

**Ireland**

I am one of those people who tends to see things from the perspective of the glass being half-full. I have often said to people, “Even a ‘drop in the ocean’ will cause some ripples.”



Sometimes, the challenges in our world can seem so big that our efforts to bring about change can feel like a ‘drop in the ocean’. If we are not careful, we can even begin to doubt if the effort is worth the time, energy, and expense. But I ask you, please do not give into that thought.

Yes, the shift in geo-politics is prompting questions to be asked about what organisations, and which governments, should provide funding for overseas aid and development. Yes, people are entrenching themselves into deep chasms of polarised debate. Yes, there are increasing, large-scale humanitarian needs across the world – many driven by conflict, erratic weather events, and migration.

But, in the middle of these challenges, God is good; he has a mission, and he continues to build His Church. We – his children, his servants, his friends – are a light shining on a hill, revealing his goodness, love and justice to the world.

With only a few people on the staff team, Tearfund Ireland is a small organisation. Regardless of our size, through reliance and dependence on God, we can make a substantial impact in the lives of vulnerable people: helping them to overcome poverty, withstand crises, and transform their communities.

This is the heart behind our Small but Mighty campaign. As you read this Tear Times, I invite you to reflect on how God can work through small things to make a big difference. I believe that our small actions, with your support, create ripples that bring substantial impact.

Sean Copeland  
Tearfund Ireland CEO

#### Tearfund Ireland

Collaborating with key partners so vulnerable individuals can overcome poverty, withstand crises, and transform their communities.

#### Get in touch with us!

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Cover photo: A member of an Ethiopian Self Help Group.  
Credit: Sean Copeland, Tearfund Ireland

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.

Dóchas



## Addressing crises

Photo: Leila, a refugee from Syria, and friend in front of her home in Lebanon. Credit: Local Christian partner.

### ‘What problem are you trying to solve?’

This question from the man standing in front of me caused me to pause. He and I were guests at a wedding and we struck up a conversation. Most people I meet are far less direct with their questions about my work, but this gentleman seemed genuinely interested. So, by referring to Tearfund Ireland’s mission statement, I told him how we come alongside key partners so vulnerable people can overcome poverty, withstand crises, and transform their communities.

I shared examples and unpacked how we are:

**...overcoming poverty:** Poverty is multi-layered, so a multi-faceted approach is required when helping people overcome poverty. People living in lower income countries do not have access to social services in the same way as people living in higher income countries. Tearfund

Ireland chooses to work with some of most vulnerable people on the planet who have been left isolated and without hope because of injustice and poverty. And one of the key ways in which we do this is through the Self Help Group approach in Ethiopia. Through Self Help

Groups, marginalised people are able to lift themselves out of economic hardship by courageously taking a risk and learning new skills. They become more resilient to erratic weather patterns as they learn new agricultural practices and they undertake community-wide planning to prepare how they will respond to a natural disaster. All these elements recognise the dignity and agency of the individual and gives them the tools to build trust with one another which deepens relationships, strengthens community, and overcomes isolation.

**...withstanding crises:** The world is full of crises, and geo-political crises seem to be increasing. Tearfund Ireland is not a political organisation, so we don't involve ourselves in political debates, but we do invite the Church to demonstrate justice and, with the compassion of God, provide aid for those in need. We believe all people are created in the image of God and that the Lord has commanded us to show our love for our neighbour, for those in need, and for those who may consider us their enemy. We continue to respond to the humanitarian needs in Lebanon and Gaza, and we continue to pray for the needs of the people in such areas as Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar, and Afghanistan.

Crises take many forms. Erratic weather patterns create shocks which are experienced more detrimentally by those living in lower income countries with less ability to protect themselves. Lack of rain, or flooding, leads to poor crop growth, which leads to hunger and poverty, – all of which are interlinked causes of migration. The global crisis of mass displacement

is ever-worsening. By the end of 2024, more than 304 million people around the world had migrated from their country of birth. Of these, more than 123 million had been forcibly displaced, and had become refugees, or asylum seekers.\*

**... and witnessing the transformation of communities:** We know the work we do is having a life-changing impact on individuals and communities. We hear stories of how women's self-esteem is growing as they invest themselves in the Self Help Groups in Ethiopia. We see young people come out of orphanage care, learn critical life skills, and commit themselves to helping other children follow in their footsteps. We witness the lives of refugees in Lebanon being turned around as they receive care, support, and opportunities from church-based partners who see 'the other' as one worthy of dignity, respect and love.

My new acquaintance seemed genuinely moved. 'You guys really are solving some of the world's problems.'

As I reflect on this conversation and upon Tearfund Ireland's new strategy, I am confident that we are making an impact on the lives of people. Over the years Tearfund Ireland has seen thousands of lives and communities transformed. But this has only been possible through partnership.

As we embark on a new strategy period of 2025-2030, we look forward to all the Lord will enable us to do as we partner with Him, with you, and with those who implement projects in partnership with us.

\* <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/top-statistics-global-migration-migrants#humanitarian>

**Quiz**  What small creature is helping Ethiopian farmers increase their income? (see answer on page 14)

## Rethinking Care for Vulnerable Children



Photo: Im Chetra speaking at the Rethinking Care for Vulnerable Children conference. Credit: Amanda Prather, Tearfund Ireland.

In March, we facilitated a discussion on how we can help children stay with their families at our conference 'Rethinking Care for Vulnerable Children'. Tearfund Ireland works alongside M'Lup Russey, a partner in Cambodia that specialises in child protection. M'Lup Russey works with churches and the Cambodian government to improve safeguarding measures for children in care. A core component of their work strengthens families and communities, so parents have alternative options to sending their children to orphanages.

Conference attendees heard from Im Chetra, Executive Director of M'Lup Russey, and Tony Lewry, leader of the Homecoming Project, which helps churches in the UK think through what they can do to enable children to grow up in loving, safe families.

Chetra shared examples of how local churches are being equipped to strengthen families by learning about the importance of safeguarding measures, being trauma-informed, and creating networks of support so parents never have to make the heart-wrenching decision to separate from their children because of poverty or hardship.

Tony shared practical strategies of how faith communities can support families in crisis and how churches can become

places where vulnerable children and their parents are supported.

Tearfund Ireland CEO, Sean Copeland, spoke about the biblical foundation for keeping children in family-based care.

Attendees engaged with the material, asked insightful questions, and shared their own experiences. Participants left equipped with resources and actionable ideas to use with their own churches in order to better support orphaned and vulnerable children.

We understand this is a complex topic. If you would like more information, we have created an FAQ resource which is available here



 Scan Me





# Small but Mighty

Photo: Arba displaying his worm compost. Credit: Freda Owens, Tearfund Ireland.

In the heart of southern Ethiopia, you might not notice life alter much from day to day. But year on year, small actions are paving the way for seismic change that is impossible to miss.



Photo: Mihret sitting in her coffee shop, Mercy Coffee. Credit: Terepeza Development Association.

Mihret's life once felt stuck in a cycle of frustration and hardship. Each day brought new uncertainty about how she would make enough money or have enough

to eat. Thinking too far ahead brought nothing but fear. It was too costly to dare to hope that things might change. But hope arrived on the day Mihret joined a Tearfund Ireland Self Help Group (SHG), facilitated by our local partners. At first, Mihret could only contribute a small amount of savings – merely a few cents was all she could afford at each meeting. Yet week by week, this 'small' amount became her foundation. With support from her SHG and business training delivered by our partners, Mihret started a tiny business. And with a huge amount of determination, she grew it.\* Today, she is a source of encouragement for other



women. What began with a few coins has blossomed into self-respect, a thriving coffee business, and a spark of hope for others following in her footsteps.

Arba once struggled with failing harvests and mounting debt. When he learned about a Tearfund Ireland project teaching farmers to use simple earthworms to make compost, he was deeply sceptical; but he had nothing to lose.



As Arba took part in the training, his neighbours watched on, unable to hide their doubts. But then, in just one season, Arba's harvest almost tripled. As his crops grew, his debt began to diminish. Suddenly, his neighbours were curious, and eager to learn!

\* You may recall reading about Mihret during our Lent series. We have since learned that Mihret has expanded her coffee business even further by moving into a larger premises and employing more staff.

Now, Self Help Groups in the area are raising and selling worms, creating new streams of income for more than 200 families. Arba's small beginnings have attracted the interest of the local university which have led to the Ethiopian government granting \$4 million to fund further research at the university and expand the impact of vermiculture across the region.



Healthy crops, increased finances, and improved livelihoods are spreading hope across the region – all as a result of the small, humble worm.

These are just two examples that show us that small beginnings matter when they are sown in faith. Mihret's savings, Arba's handful of worms: these little things can powerfully stand against generational poverty.

Will you join our Small but Mighty campaign? Together, every donation, no matter how small, can light a flame of hope and spark change in the world's darkest places. Through Tearfund Ireland's Small but Mighty campaign you can help people like Mihret and Arba transform their communities.

We'd love you to learn more and join in today.



# Strategy Launch



In April 2025 we held an evening event to launch our strategy for 2025-2030.

Built on the foundations of prayer, Scripture, and the collective discernment of staff, board, committee members, partners, and supporters, we have identified four strategic pillars, and five strategic enablers that guide the outworking of our vision, mission, and objectives. A copy of our strategy document can be viewed here:



Learn more [HERE](#)

## Pillar 1 Transformation

First and foremost, we remain committed to meaningful and measurable change at individual and community levels; this is at the heart of our long-term vision to see flourishing communities free from poverty and injustice. We continue to invest in initiatives that empower vulnerable individuals, build resilience amid crisis, and inspires local people to catalyse broader transformation.

## Pillar 2 Relationships

By strengthening ties with key partners and supporters, we multiply our capacity to deliver lasting change. Whether through church engagement, partnership with local development agencies, or collaboration with allied organisations, we see relationship as the foundation for ethical and effective work.

## Pillar 3 Resourcing

We are purposefully developing tools — learning journeys, seminars, videos, study materials, prayer guides, Harvest Packs, and other materials — that inform, inspire, and mobilise our supporters, volunteers, and the wider Irish public, to act with justice and compassion. Your engagement fuels our collective impact.

## Pillar 4 Culture

Good governance and a healthy organisational culture underpins our uncompromising commitment to stewarding resources well, ensuring compliance, driving innovation in digital and internal systems, and cultivating a workplace culture marked by faith, justice, adaptability, and excellence.

Our strategy retains its Christ-centred vision and mission: *to walk alongside key partners so vulnerable individuals can overcome poverty, withstand crises, and transform their communities.* We have sought to simplify our language — not our ambition — in order to clarify that ‘walking alongside’ means true partnership is rooted in respect and mutual benefit, with a focus on the world’s most vulnerable people.

Six months on from the launch, we are making foundational steps in this strategic direction:

- We have recruited a new member of staff to increase our capacity in the critical area of supporter and church engagement.
- We are in the final stages of revamping our website – updating the content and making it more user friendly.
- We are addressing critical challenges with our outdated CRM system to better manage our internal processes and improve communications with our supporters.
- We are also reviewing our fundraising approaches and planning for succession in staffing, committees, and board roles.

These next five years will be very important for Tearfund Ireland. We know that we can only accomplish this vision in partnership with you, with local churches, with local partners, and — most importantly — with God guiding us every step of the way.

Thank you for walking alongside us as we walk alongside our partners. Our prayer is that God would continue to empower and equip us to demonstrate his character and nature so **vulnerable individuals can overcome poverty, withstand crises, and transform their communities.**

## Responding in Emergencies

**Middle East:** In Gaza our partners have delivered medical supplies and medicines but many of their follow-up shipments have not been allowed into Gaza. At least one container of time-stamped supplies was redirected to Lebanon so the supplies would not be wasted.

Our partners in Lebanon are reporting an increase in the number of refugees coming over the border from Syria following recent attacks on different people groups. Please consider contributing to our Emergency Fund to enable us to respond as needs arise.

**Myanmar Earthquake:** Alongside Tearfund Australia, we were able to support an emergency response to those impacted by the earthquake. The earthquake added to the multi-layered challenges facing people in the region. Please continue to pray for the local partner as they respond to the needs of their own community.





Photo: Praying during a church service in Ethiopia. Credit: Tearfund Canada.

## Join with us in prayer

‘Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy.’  
Psalm 126:5

**Prayer is integral to everything we do. It is a privilege to come to our heavenly father and talk with him about the needs we see, placing them in His gentle, wise, and just care. We know that God is good, all the time.**

Will you join with us as we lift our challenges and hopes to our loving and merciful God, asking for His wisdom and grace each step of the way?

**Please join** us in prayer as we continue to implement our new strategic direction. Pray for God’s wisdom for our staff and Board as we pursue our vision of flourishing communities, free from poverty

and injustice. Pray that every decision we make is rooted in our mission and guided by His purpose. May our partnerships with local churches and supporters deepen, and may we faithfully steward the resources entrusted to us to have the greatest impact. Pray that we remain courageous, creative, and faithful in finding solutions to effect long-lasting change.

- **Please pray** for an end to all conflicts around the world. Pray for a softening of heart within those who direct and determine conflict. Pray for wisdom and compassion from governments and world leaders who can influence an end to the cycles of violence. Pray for the safety and well-being of all the innocent victims caught up in the violence. We pray that obstacles to peace would be removed, that hope would be restored, and that love would cast out fear.
- **Please pray** for our dedicated partners in Cambodia, who work to ensure every child grows up surrounded by loving families. Pray for their steadfast commitment as they reunite families and support young adults leaving care to re-integrate into society. We ask that churches would increase their skills in being agents of change – informing and educating their communities, and advocating for the best ways to care for vulnerable children. We ask that God would bless our partners as they empower parents, train church leaders, and help transform communities through family-based care.
- **Please join** us in praying for Self Help Groups as they transform lives across Ethiopia. Pray that God will strengthen every Self Help Group and bless the members’ savings, businesses, training sessions, and relationships with one another. Pray for continued creativity, protection, and opportunity for these groups to multiply their impact, so that they can bring lasting transformation to individuals, families, and entire regions of Ethiopia.
- **Pray** for those who have faced sudden emergencies and ongoing hardship due to changing weather patterns. Pray for families and communities that have lost homes, livelihoods, and security because of floods, droughts and earthquakes. Pray for God’s comfort to surround those who have endured trauma and loss. Pray that practical aid in the form of food, shelter, clean water, and psychological support will be given to every person in need.
- **Pray** for those facing increasing hunger and uncertainty around the world, particularly in Africa and West Asia. Pray for vulnerable children and families facing starvation and malnutrition. We know there is enough food in the world to feed everyone: we call out for mercy from world leaders, asking God to change their perspectives and give them a desire for justice. Pray for generosity and that barriers to aid will be removed so support reaches all who need it.

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



Pray with us HERE



# Deepening our relationships around Ireland

## 1. New resources for development education!

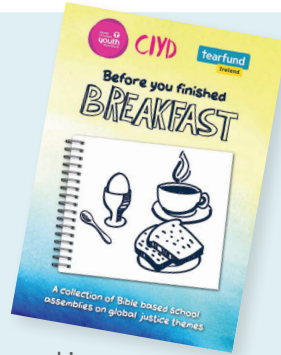
We have received Irish Aid grant funding to provide your team with interactive workshops on global justice themes.

During Lent, we piloted a four-week Global Justice in Youth Work series online to resource the Church of Ireland Youth Department and Girls Friendly Society youth leaders. We also ran workshops for churches, school chaplains, educators, university students, NGO staff and school groups.

Since then, we have developed a series of talks that can be used in school assemblies and youth groups called 'Before You Finished Breakfast'. We have also developed a FAQ resource called 'Rethinking How We Care'.

And we're getting ready to launch a new Monthly Conversations series on our website that will explore global justice themes thanks to the input of partners and experts from Ireland and around the world. We'd love for you to join us.

Scan the QR code and get in touch to find out more!



Learn more HERE


## 2. Caring for Children Overseas

**“God sets the lonely in families...”**

(Psalm 68:6)

At Tearfund Ireland, we work alongside our partners to help strengthen vulnerable families so children can thrive in a nurturing home. This autumn, we launched a survey to better understand how churches and individuals in Ireland provide support for children overseas. Thank you for contributing to this research! We have been gathering the responses and collating the data. We anticipate publishing the results of the research early in the New Year.



**Quiz**  The four pillars of our new strategy are: transformation, relationship, culture and what? (see answer on page 14)

## 3. Ploughing Championships

Thank you to everyone who visited the Tearfund Ireland stand at the 2025 National Ploughing Championships! We are so grateful to the Meath-Kildare Dioceses for inviting us to be a part of the Church of Ireland tent.

Our 'Guess the Number of Ethiopian Coffee Beans' contest was a big hit! Congratulations to our three winners:

1. Laura F.

2. Nelson M.

3. Fran M.

We hope you enjoy your Tearfund Ireland travel mugs.

It was a joy to meet so many of you and share about our work. We loved talking with you, answering your questions, and handing out our Tearfund Ireland pens. Thank you for your encouragement and support and for promising to prayerfully stand with our partners in Ethiopia, Cambodia and Lebanon. We look forward to seeing you again at future events!



## 4. Church relationships

We are delighted to welcome Ella Switzer (left) into the team! Ella joined us in early October to fill a new role of Public Engagement Coordinator. Ella will help us improve the ways we relate with churches by rebuilding our Church Champion programme. You'll also see her at events growing our network of supporters and helping people deepen their understanding of our work. We are excited for the new opportunities ahead as we connect more deeply with communities across Ireland.

If you'd like to schedule a Tearfund Ireland church talk, you can do so here:



Learn more HERE

 Photo: Reverend Dr Trevor Gribben, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and Emma Lynch, Tearfund Ireland Church Engagement and Education Manager, at the 2025 Ploughing Championships.

## 5. Goodbyes in the Tearfund Ireland Team

In recent months, we have said goodbye to two colleagues who were a part of the team for several years. Chrissie and Orla have made significant contributions to Tearfund Ireland since joining in 2011 and 2017 respectively. We are grateful for their time with us and we wish them every blessing as they pursue their next chapter in their journey of faith.

Many of you will know that Phil Lindsay joined the Tearfund Ireland team as a part-time secondment from Tearfund Australia during Sophie Moreno's maternity leave. With Sophie's planned return to the role of International Programme Manager in January, Phil will return to his full time role in Tearfund Australia.

## 6. Thoughts on Tearfund Ireland

*'From a young age, I heard a lot about the work of Tearfund Ireland as it is one of the mission partners of my church, Trinity Church Dublin. During my Transition Year, I spent a week on work experience in the Tearfund Ireland office because I wanted to gain an insight into the work of an international relief and development agency. Through that experience, I grasped for the first time the centrality of social justice to the Christian calling, which in turn informed my decision to study law. The work of Tearfund Ireland is fantastic. They take the call to love our global neighbour seriously.'*

Emma Bowie

PhD Candidate, University of Oxford

*'Tearfund Ireland has really helped us to stay broad in our perspective and vision... Through their visits to us and our efforts to fundraise, we are always reminded of the huge challenges and struggles going on in our wider world that we, as followers of Jesus, are called to pray for and help with. Together, as part of this alliance of churches all serving together, we have been able to develop some understanding and see our small efforts contribute to making a real difference for good.'*

Rev. Dr. Keith McCrory,  
Maynooth Community Church

**Quiz d** Who were the three speakers at our 'ReThinking Care for Vulnerable Children' conference? (see answer below)



Photo: Worship at the night of prayer event.

**Answers**  
d. A Worm  
b. 4,373 km  
c. Resourcing  
d. Im Chetra, Tony Lewry  
and Sean Copeland

## 7. Pedalling against poverty!

Over the past year, a team of five people from Limerick Baptist Church – Baxter, Bruce, Sybren, Elizabeth, and Edwin-collectively cycled 4,737 km in support of Tearfund Ireland's Pedal Against Poverty. With every kilometre, they raised both awareness and funds to help transform the lives of vulnerable and marginalised people. We are deeply grateful for their efforts. And quite impressed- that's an average of almost 950 km per person!

Tearfund Ireland is committed to collaborating with key partners to transform communities, overcome poverty and withstand crises. Pedal Against Poverty is a great opportunity to get involved and help us towards our vision of flourishing communities being set free from poverty and injustice. We are incredibly grateful for our Limerick cyclists' effort, dedication and heart for Tearfund Ireland. Thank you for believing with us that together, small acts can have a mighty impact.



Photo: Sybren Oggel and Edwin Tutty riding their bicycle.



Photo: Liz Tutty riding her bicycle.

## 8. A Day of Prayer for the Middle East

The ongoing conflicts in the Middle East can leave us feeling overwhelmed and unsure how to respond. As Christian organisations, Tearfund Ireland and 24/7 Prayer believe deeply in the power of prayer as we seek God's wisdom, justice, and healing in these challenging times.

On 27th June, we came together for a day of prayer focused on the situation in the Middle East – to pray for peace, provision of humanitarian needs, for local churches in the region, and for those in leadership. People from across the island joined two online prayer sessions in the morning and afternoon, and social media users were also called to prayer through a series of posts. In the evening, Trinity Church offered a beautiful space for worship, lament, intercession, personal reflection, and creative interactive prayer.

Throughout the day, short videos from people living and working across the region gave powerful insights into the complexity of the conflicts and the urgent need for humanitarian support.

We are grateful for everyone who joined us in person, online, or through prayer on social media. Please continue to pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

# Your giving makes a world of difference

## Monthly giving

‘Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.’

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Our vision is to see people flourish, free from poverty and injustice. People like Amina, a Syrian mother who fled her home with nothing but her child in her arms, now seeking safety in Lebanon. With support from Tearfund Ireland’s partner organisations, local churches are providing vital shelter, food, and essentials to families like hers, demonstrating Christ’s compassion in times of crisis.

Please consider giving regularly, so we can continue showing God’s goodness, love, and justice to thousands in urgent need for people like Amina and her child.

**€18 a month** could provide school books and learning materials for one child in Lebanon each month

**€45 a month** could help provide emergency assistance to a family in need in Lebanon

**€100 a month** could help provide emergency food and hygiene assistance for up to 12 people in Lebanon



## Thank you for partnering with Tearfund Ireland.

If you give €21 a month, the yearly total will meet the €250 threshold 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 up to an additional €215.65 from Revenue, increasing 45%!

## Living Gifts

Looking for a life-changing gift for someone who has everything? Tearfund Ireland’s Living Gifts help some of the most vulnerable people across our world overcome poverty, transform communities, and withstand crises. Give the gift of hope and help bring lasting impact today. If you would like more information, please contact us on 01 878 3200 or email [info@tearfund.ie](mailto:info@tearfund.ie)

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