
Quick Start Guide: Catalyst Groups

This short guide will give you a brief overview of Tearfund Catalyst Groups, and how to start your own.

A Chorus of Catalysts

Tearfund works to end oppression, relieve poverty, and advocate for justice across the world. The bulk of this work is done on the ground in some of the world's most vulnerable countries, through our network of local partners; this is essential work that meets the immediate needs of the world's vulnerable.

However, we also want Tearfund to be a **hub for facilitating Kiwis to advocate on behalf of the poor and to live lives of justice**. We believe in the power of ordinary New Zealanders using their everyday choices for good. Our **Catalyst Groups** are made up of concerned global citizens, people following in the footsteps of Jesus, who generally want to make a positive contribution to the world. They meet regularly to learn about and discuss justice issues, and make small (or large) lifestyle changes that address some of the systemic factors that contribute to poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation.

A cup of coffee can change the world

Well ... perhaps *that's* a little over-enthusiastic. But it's certainly true that if enough New Zealanders changed our consumption habits to support ethically-sourced coffee, vulnerable communities across coffee-producing countries would be better protected from exploitation. This is the core idea behind Catalyst Groups, the idea that by gradually changing our habits and choices, we can challenge the systems of inequality and exploitation that keep much of the world oppressed.

Taking the first step

Give yourself a pat on the back, because if you're reading this guide, you've already taken the first step to becoming a Catalyst for change! The next steps are just as easy. Get in touch with our office at advocacy@tearfund.org.nz, and we'll set you up in no time.

- If you want to join an established Catalyst Group, we'll see if we can match you up with a group in your local area.
- If you want to start your own group we'll send you some resources. Perhaps you already have a church group or a group of friends who are interested in justice. We could even come in and provide a kick-start to the group and/or a workshop on justice to your church.

Once your group is registered, we will send you a starter pack of resources to use in your meetings. You can run your meetings however you want - you might want to focus on human rights issues, or environmental issues, or biblical justice. If you'd like, you can align your Catalyst Group with one of Tearfund's causes:

- Restore: disaster and conflict response and prevention
- Protect: anti-trafficking
- Nourish: water, health and sanitation
- Empower: enterprise and empowerment
- Sponsor: child sponsorship

Tearfund has a large range of resources, and we can provide you with different small-group studies and booklets to support your interests.

**Catalyst Groups are
incubators for action.**

Building and holding momentum

The structure of your Catalyst Group is entirely up to you; you could meet weekly, fortnightly, or monthly. We suggest having one person dedicated to leading each session - this might be the same person each meeting, or you could decide on a rotational schedule so each of your members gets a chance to lead a meeting on their interests.

The structure of your gatherings is flexible and decided on by the group. We suggest

- including a Bible study and prayer,
- sharing or learning about an issue of injustice, and
- doing a practical action.

But there is no prescribed formula – groups are free to plan their own gatherings at a time and location that suits the members. Gatherings could happen over a meal at a member’s house, over coffee at a local café or in a different location each time.

Making the Change

Our hope is that being part of a Catalyst Group will encourage individuals to make gradual lifestyle changes that will challenge the systems of inequality that keep many of the world’s people oppressed. Each of our study guides has practical suggestions for how to respond to an issue. For example, members of your group might choose to drive their car one less day a week, in order to reduce their impact on the environment, which is a driving force behind many natural disasters.

In addition to making these lifestyle changes, your group might chose to take action in other forms. These might include:

- Running a fundraiser
- Writing to or meeting with your local MP about an issue
- Plan an education event
- Invite a Tearfund speaker to your group
- Participate in a Tearfund campaign – fan favourites include the Poverty Cycle and Live Below the Line
- Host a debate about a global issue
- Beginning to support a local group addressing an issue.

Natural Growth

It is natural for your group to wax and wane with time. Encourage the members of your group to bring their friends, and encourage each person to become involved and engaged in the group. This could take the form of leading a session, taking ownership of an event, or maybe simply leading a prayer at the end of the session.

Keep in touch!

Please do keep in touch with us, we love to hear about what our groups are studying and any lifestyle changes your members might have made.

Please contact murray@tearfund.org.nz for any enquiries relating to Catalyst Groups, or give us a call on 0800 800 777