

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, standing in front of a purple brick wall. The boy on the left is wearing a blue and black striped shirt and has a bindi on his forehead. He is holding a glass of milk and has a wide, open-mouthed smile. The girl on the right is wearing a blue dress with a red and gold floral pattern. She is also holding a glass of milk and smiling. In the top right corner, there is a white circular logo with the word "tearfund" in blue. Overlaid on the center of the image is the text "INTRODUCTION" in white capital letters and "Farming and Enterprise" in a large, white, cursive script font.

tearfund

INTRODUCTION

Farming and Enterprise

Introduction

At the heart of our Farming and Enterprise work is food! Currently (2020) there are 7.8 billion people crammed onto our earth. The population is predicted to hit 9.7 billion by 2064.

While our Farming and Enterprise projects are not just about helping people to provide food, it is the most basic need that people must prioritise with their incomes. We believe people have a right to make a living and provide for themselves and their families, so we help to resource them to do so. By providing communities with the resources and education to become self-supporting, they are empowered to find local, long-term solutions to poverty. It's difficult to climb out of poverty alone, but when a community comes together, their many hands help to lift each other up. We see our role in this work as resourcing and educating communities through our partners.

Climate change

Climate change is causing environments to change and more extreme weather patterns to occur. As these patterns become more frequent, dry areas will get dryer and wet areas will get wetter. The result is that it becomes harder to farm the land and sustain a livelihood.

For example, in 2019, over 135 million people in 55 countries faced a food crisis requiring urgent assistance, according to the *Global Report on Food Crises 2020*. The figure is the highest in the past four years. Over half of the affected populations were in Africa. The Covid-19 crisis will also impact food crises in many countries, especially those hit with droughts, locust plagues, natural disasters and conflict.²

Conflict

Conflict drives people from their land—sometimes permanently. At the moment, we are seeing unprecedented levels of internally

Global food sources face multiple threats.



Photo: Sophie Rice

1. <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/world-population-2020-overview>
2. www.docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114546/download/

displaced people and refugees in the world—many as a result of conflict. According to the UN Refugee Agency, at the end of 2019, there were 79.5 million people forcibly displaced of these 47.5 were displaced internally.³ Among this number are many farmers who are unable to farm whilst forced from their land. This further reduces the amount of available food.

Land Ownership

Land ownership is changing, affecting food availability. To bolster their food security in the future, or to produce bio-fuels, richer nations are buying land in poorer nations. The result is that small-scale farmers are being pushed off their land, reducing domestic food availability. The alternative for these poorer nations is to import food. However, this leaves the country vulnerable to price fluctuations. Commodity speculators are also in the mix here—these individuals profit from price fluctuations through bets on the future value of the commodity. All too often, the result is that staple foods become too expensive for those living in poverty.

Farm subsidies and trade barriers in high-income countries also disadvantage farmers in poorer countries often making it impossible for them to export their goods to high-income countries. This limits farmers in poorer countries to local markets which are often saturated with low-cost imports from high-income countries. While free trade agreements can open up economies and helping them reduce these export barriers, the poorest farmers often remain unprotected from fast-paced changes that threaten their livelihoods and expose them to being squeezed by large commercial farms.

With little control over food sources, distribution and prices, people in low-income countries face many health problems not only from insufficient food but because the food available is not nutritious. Juxtaposed to this sobering statistic is the fact that in high-income countries, 1.3 billion tonnes of food is wasted per year.

Nearly one in nine people in the world went hungry in 2019.⁴



Photo: Andrew Finlay

3. www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html

4. www.who.int/news-room/detail/13-07-2020-as-more-go-hungry-and-malnutrition-persists-achieving-zero-hunger-by-2030-in-doubt-un-report-warns

Food insecurity is not caused by a lack of food so much as a lack of economic and political power that allows citizens to demand food in our global market. - Amartya Sen

The Bible has things to say about this...

Feeding the poor and hungry, and anger at structural injustice that keeps them poor and hungry is a recurring theme in the Bible.

In Isaiah, God tells the people “Share your food with the hungry and give shelter to the homeless.” In Amos, we see God challenge practices that “trample on the heads of the poor” and deprive them of economic and civil rights. James writes: “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? It is clear that it is God’s desire for those who have the means, to help those without, and to work against the unjust systems that keep them hungry.



Photo: Helen Manson

Our Approach

There are several ways Tearfund is joining with these poorer communities to hear from them and to help increase the power and control they have over their lives.

One such way is by working with these people to create sustainable livelihoods, using assets such as land, from which smallholder farmers collectively grow a variety of crops for markets. This seems like a no-brainer, but Tearfund's approach uses methods that give producers more control over the prices they receive. Smallholder farmers are being trained in the latest organic production techniques which allow them to grow more for less while looking after their environment. Some farmer groups are selling organically certified products, getting a premium for their products and they also add value by further processing rather than just selling a raw commodity.

Another way is by establishing Self Help Groups to empower people economically, so they can save enough within the group to establish a pool of funds to borrow from. Self Help Groups are mainly comprised of women. When we talk with some of these women they are very proud of the businesses they run. They describe how they have improved their income and talked of the loving community they have created around themselves. It is both striking and humbling to hear them turn and say to Tearfund, *"So, what are you going to learn from us?"*

The result of both these approaches is that people gain a sustainable income which means they can not only provide food and other essential needs for their families but often they can afford to send their children to school, pay for medical care and improve their housing.

Your Response

You can help us work directly in vulnerable communities and there are other ways you can effect change from New Zealand.

Learn

Check out the Church Mission – Farming & Enterprise study booklet to learn more about how Tearfund is working to empower communities.

Pray

One of our most powerful tools is prayer! Pray that world leaders will respond to food injustices. Pray that people in low-income countries will have an opportunity to create sustainable livelihoods. Pray for Tearfund's partners who work in this area.

Act

Tearfund's Farming and Enterprise cause helps families access enough nutritious food, benefiting their health and help them to create a sustainable income.

- Become a regular giver to our Farming and Enterprise cause or organise a fundraising activity.
- Be a part of resourcing the work being undertaken. Join Tearfund's Advocate Network, stay up to date with news and stories from our partners.
- Get active! Sign petitions which lobby powerful corporations and governments who are depriving the vulnerable of food and access to the market, or ask your supermarket to stock more fairly traded goods. If enough of us start asking, they'll listen.