

A photograph of a woman and a young girl sitting together in a makeshift shelter. The woman is wearing a yellow headscarf and a colorful patterned skirt. The girl is wearing a green dress and a green shawl. They are both looking directly at the camera with serious expressions. The background shows a wooden structure, a pile of sticks, and a striped pillow. A white circular logo with the text 'tearfund' is in the top right corner.

tearfund

INTRODUCTION

Disasters and Conflict

The intensity and frequency of natural disasters have been on the increase over the past two decades, and the majority of scientists believe that this is influenced by climate change.

Why Tearfund works in disasters

Disasters of all forms cause death, misery and hardship. Natural disasters force people from their homes, destroy their livelihoods and wipe out or set back community development projects.

Disasters affect those in poverty most heavily. High death tolls tend to be centred in low-to-middle income countries without the infrastructure to protect and respond to events. Even though attention may soon fade, for those affected, recovery takes years. Sometimes, the most vulnerable struggle to make it back to the stability they enjoyed before the disaster.

Man-made disasters, such as war, force people to flee for their safety across borders leaving everything behind. Often, they have seen loved ones die and are highly traumatised. Sometimes, these people can never return to their own homes. They may spend a lifetime in a refugee camp or attempt to forge a new life in a different country.

Disasters can strike anywhere but their impact is greatest in countries or communities with already vulnerable people. Tearfund responds to natural disasters and we are also active in areas of conflict because we see a great need.

We understand that long after the disaster has left our TV screens, affected communities will be struggling to piece their lives back together. The most pressing needs change too, as the recovery effort takes shape.

Our response, in collaboration with our partners, seeks to alleviate immediate needs after the disaster and also addresses long-term recovery and resilience.



Photo: Helen Manson

From 2000-2010 there were 3,496 natural disasters;
nearly five times the number in the 1970s.

All the weather-related disasters were influenced
by climate change.

Types of disasters

- **Natural disasters:** Earthquakes, tsunamis and cyclones have a sudden impact. These require both immediate and on-going responses. The international community mobilises supplies of medicine, food, water, temporary shelter, and search and rescue services.
- **Slow-onset disasters:** These disasters, such as famines, can be caused by a mixture of natural factors, which includes normal cycles of drought, and man-made factors such as deforestation, over-use of resources, and increasingly, climate change. Acting early can often contain their effects.
- **Conflict:** These are often (but not always) slow-onset disasters. The triggers are usually political factors and internal oppression, but also have less visible contributing causes such as resource competition, spikes in food prices and climatic factors.

According to the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) at the end of 2019, there were 50.8 million people displaced, and of these, 45.7 million were as the result of conflict. Often, conflict is the worst thing that can befall a country, killing citizens, destroying infrastructure and slashing GDP for years to come.

When a disaster or conflict strikes, we respond through the **Integral Alliance**: a global network of Christian organisations that collaborate and share resources to effectively and quickly help those in need to recover.



Our Approach

Disasters have a rhythm. Learn how Tearfund responds to natural disasters and conflict through our Disaster Response Cycle.

1. Assessment

Our first action when responding to a disaster is to undertake an assessment of the disaster. What is the nature of the event and how many are affected? What resources are most critically needed? What other agencies are responding and how can we fill a gap? Assessments take place with our local partner in the area and with the Integral Alliance.

2. Immediate response

After we've assessed the situation, we can provide immediate emergency relief supplies such as medical aid, shelter, rations and water. Our local partner usually takes on the distribution of supplies with Tearfund's assistance.

3. On-going support

After the immediate needs of affected communities have been met, we move to on-going support. This includes the relocation of affected people, reuniting family members, providing psycho-social support and continuing relief supplies.

4. Evaluation

Throughout our response phase, and at its end, we evaluate to ensure the response is achieving its goals and being financially efficient. We document what worked well and what didn't for future learnings.

5. Long-term Recovery

After the immediate response phase, we move to a focus on long-term recovery for affected communities. This usually involves restoring what has been lost and helping to create or recreate sustainable livelihoods to get communities back on their feet.

6. Future Resilience

We always have one eye on the future during a disaster. Ultimately,

we want to improve the resilience of communities so they are less affected when disaster strikes. We call this work Disaster Risk Reduction. We identify the risks and resource our partners to put in place measures to reduce those risks. As part of this, we also assist communities to adapt to climate change. This helps communities to build resilience to future events.

Your Response

It's natural to feel a compulsion to respond when a disaster strikes. Below we outline some of the best things you can do when there is a disaster... And before!

Learn

Equip yourself with knowledge about how climate change is becoming a major factor in the frequency and intensity of disasters. Research the damage conflicts cause and how peace-building efforts work. Read our study booklet *Church Mission and Disaster & Conflict* with your small group or a group of friends.

Pray

You can pray that disaster victims will receive effective aid that will help save lives. Pray also for our global leaders making decisions regarding emissions reduction measures. Pray for peace and reconciliation in worn-torn countries

Act

- Make the choice to look for opportunities to put your Faith in Action.
- Consider participating in a Tearfund fundraising event or organising your own. Your events can help resource Tearfunds partners working in the Disaster and Conflict cause.
- Join Tearfunds advocate network to keep up to date with activities, information and stories from Tearfunds partners. Share your learning with friends, family and networks.
- Look for opportunities to support refugees here in NZ and when disaster strikes get behind the effort to respond.