

tearfund



MPWAPWA DIOCESE, TANZANIA

Tearfund are working with churches in Mpwapwa Diocese, to see the poorest and most vulnerable in their communities find hope. Under constant threat from environmental disasters, they survive on little food and struggle to find work.



WHY WE'RE WORKING THERE

The Diocese of Mpwapwa is about the size of Wales and covers the Mpwapwa and Kongwa Districts in Central Tanzania. With huge plains, mountain ranges, fields in the north, and an area of almost desert in the south west, Mpwapwa has a varied landscape.

Far away from the main transport routes, Mpwapwa is isolated. This has contributed to the slow development of the area. Even today, the average mother in the diocese uses 80% of her time collecting water and firewood and travelling up to 10 km to her nearest markets and health services.

With rampant environmental destruction, high HIV/AIDS rates, gender inequality and a historic dependency on outside aid, local churches have their work cut out to reach the many people in desperate need. Most scratch out a living as farmers on small plots of land. But that life is full of challenges. The rains are unreliable, so you never quite know the best time to plant. Lots of farmers are unskilled, and don't know how to get the best out of their crops so many families go hungry. Children are unable to go to school because their parents can't afford it. They're trapped in a cycle of poverty and the situation feels hopeless.

POVERTY TAKES MANY FORMS

There is also a history of spiritual poverty. Many in the region are Christians, but they have no idea that God desires 'life in all its fullness' for them. Outside of Sunday mornings, the church doesn't have much relevance.

In Mlanje village, the women had a tradition of learning how to make clay pots as young girls. Even though they had these skills and passed them from one generation to the next, they lived in poverty, relying on the rains coming at the right time to water their crops and provide for them.

THE AIMS OF THE PROJECT

Mpwapwa Diocese wanted to address the poverty in their communities and the problems in their churches. So they began a process called Umoja - or Church and Community Mobilisation.

Umoja is a Bible-based approach that equips the church with practical tools for ministry. It helps church leaders to understand and live out their role in engaging the local community. The process also builds the confidence of the church and its leaders. They take a leading role in facilitating forums for the community. They come together to discuss their problems and possible solutions.

TAKING FIRST STEPS

As the Umoja process started in Mlanje local church, those involved were encouraged to start savings and loans groups. 15 women got together and formed Upendo savings and loans group. Most made ends meet by farming on a small scale, but after participating in a training session on resource mobilisation, the women realised that their dormant skills were a resource they could use.

As a group they decided to start making these traditional clay pots to sell. They made 200 pots to start with and have sold almost all of them. This has provided them with enough money to meet their personal and household needs. They could never have done this before.

'CCM HAS OPENED OUR EYES! WE SEE NOW WHAT WE DID NOT SEE BEFORE.'

CHAIRWOMAN OF UPENDO GROUP



Photo: Income generating project of making and selling pots by Sayuni savings and loan group in Mlanje village

PROJECT IMPACT

In the last year of the Umoja project, Mpwapwa Diocese reached 1,378 people. But the beautiful thing about Umoja is that it spreads!

After their initial success, the women of Upendo group are now planning to increase the number of pots they make each week and to try to access markets outside their village to sell the pots. They would also like to purchase a means of transport to bring raw materials to the village. The hope they now have is infectious and is spreading into their families and far beyond.

AN INDIVIDUAL PROCESS

The results of Umoja look different for every household and community. But for each the process is the same. First the church leaders go through the training, learning about how Umoja works. Sometimes they visit a community that has already been through the process. This helps them to get inspired!



Once they understand the process, the leaders take the church through the Bible studies. Then they get the wider community involved in understanding the challenges they face together.

THE RESULTS WE HAVE SEEN

The Umoja process has helped people start businesses, advocate to local government, and found self help groups. These results have all been instrumental in empowering those in poverty. Umoja has also helped unify communities. It has boosted self-esteem, cemented relationships between church and community, and stimulated economic growth.

THE FIRST FRUITS OF OUR LABOURS

Changes in agricultural practices have made a noticeable difference to the communities' harvests. Farmers have varied what they plant, now including sweet potatoes and sunflowers, as they can make more money selling those crops. They were also given training on conservation farming by the Diocese. This has increased their harvest of traditional crops like maize, beans, and cassava.

CHANGES IN THE CHURCH

Locally available resources are now a key factor in the development of the church, creating opportunities for the church to minister to the whole person - both spiritually and physically.

- Prayer groups are meeting more regularly now, averaging three times per week instead of only once before
- Bible studies using Umoja materials have been well attended. People are more interested in reading the Bible than before as well as learning about the topics being discussed
- Offerings in the churches have increased by around 150%
- Many of the churches are growing, with at least 50 members in each church compared to 35 when the process was initiated.



In the next year Mpwapwa Diocese will train 30 facilitators. This group will continue to guide five local churches and communities through the Umoja process. This team of facilitators will also lead in scaling up the process in the diocese in the next few years.

JOIN US

The Umoja process has started well and we are seeing some great progress. But there is so much more to do to see the people of Mpwapwa lifting themselves out of poverty.

- With 1,378 people benefiting directly from the CCM project in 2015-16, a gift of just £15 could change someone's life in Mpwapwa Diocese
- A gift of £696 could cover the costs of a CCM facilitators' training and support for an entire year
- A gift of £4,175 could fund the entire cost of mentoring training and support for the CCM process in a village in Mpwapwa Diocese

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Following Jesus where the need is greatest