

Tearfund Supporters meet with Welsh Regional Manager to Tackle the worlds biggest killer.

It claims the lives of three people every minute; it is contracted by nine million people every year, it kills 1.7 million people annually. One third of all Aids-related deaths are caused by it. Taken together, this makes it the world's biggest killer, ahead of Aids, killing 2.7 million people every year. What is it? It is KILLER TB.

Tearfund is appealing for money and prayer support from churches and organisations in Pembrokeshire as it launches a campaign to tackle tuberculosis that claims the lives of three people every minute, despite being a preventable and curable disease.

"Many people assume TB died out with their grandparent's generation but instead it's infected, spread and destroyed, earning its place as the world's most deadly infectious disease," says Tearfund's Regional Manager for Wales, Sion Meredith.

The overwhelming impact of TB is in poor countries, home to 95 per cent of new TB cases and 98 per cent of TB deaths. Future predictions are gloomy, with fears that in the next 15 years, 200 million people will contract the disease and 70 million will die.

"The problem is that while wiping it out in our own backyard, we left it to run riot in some of the world's poorest countries. We shut the gate and forgot the millions behind it, dying, with no money for a cure," says Sion Meredith.

Tearfund volunteers from 8 Pembrokeshire Churches, including St Mary's Roach & Haycastle, St. Peter's Church Goodwick, Broad Haven Baptist Church, Bethel Baptist Church in Sutton and Deer park Baptist Church Tenby, met with Tearfund's regional Manager, Sion Meredith, to look into how they can help tackle the problem of the world's biggest killer, TB. They found that there is hope as TB can be stopped. A simple eight-month course of drugs will drive it from the human body. But although many patients begin the treatment, poverty often prevents them from completing it, and they develop a potentially untreatable strain of the disease.

'It was great to meet up with Tearfund supporters from Churches all over Pembrokeshire. I found the Killer TB pack very informative. I hope it will be used in Pembrokeshire to raise awareness of the huge ill effects that TB has on many people and as a result we can work together to combat this problem.' Says Tearfund's Media Officer for Pembrokeshire, Sharron Hardwick.

TB and the work of the Diocese of Hyderabad TB Control Centre are highlighted in Tearfund's new church resources - *Killer TB* - a comprehensive package of materials for churches of all shapes and sizes to raise awareness and funds to tackle the disease.

Imrose, Chief Paramedic for the Diocese of Hyderabad TB Control Centre, a Tearfund partner in southeast Pakistan, says "At least three patients die each month because they took drugs from a private doctor and don't have the money to finish the course. Private treatment is very expensive and patients often cannot afford eight months' worth."

According to the World Health Organisation, the TB situation in Pakistan is one of the worst in the world. Every two minutes a person contracts TB. Every eight minutes it claims someone's life.

Featured in *Killer TB*, Kheair, 60, lost two of his children to the disease and his business in the process, selling all the stock from his small shop to pay for medicines. "We didn't know how TB was caught or how to deal with it. When they were ill we went to hospital and spent a lot of money on treatment," he says.

Unable to pay for the full 8-month course of drugs, the disease developed into a resistant strain, infecting two more of his children, his daughter Sangita, 18 and son Santosh, 24.

Lacking money for further treatment, Kheair heard about the free treatment and support provided by the Diocese of Hyderabad TB Control Centre. Santosh is responding well to treatment, but after three courses of unsuccessful treatment, Sangita has since died.

Despite being almost wiped out in the UK by the 1980s, today TB is back and spreading, infecting 7,000 people in the UK each year. Pembrokeshire's challenge is to join Tearfund in their campaign to control this killer disease.

If your church or organisation would like to get involved or would like to order Tearfund's *Killer TB* church resources, please call 0845 355 8355 or order online at www.tearfund.org/killertb or for a local contact call Sharron Hardwick on 07791646076. Together we can make a difference.

1b. Other Pictures available: Caption 1: "TB nearly killed Rano Ticho before Tearfund provided free treatment." Caption 2: "Sangita, 18, who lost her battle against TB earlier this year. Lack of money enabled an untreatable form of TB to take hold." Photo credits: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund.

2. *Killer TB* includes materials for all-age services, cell or small groups, creative and 'emerging' church groups, young people and children; worship tracks by Delirious?, Jack Ellis and Andy Flannagan; ready to use material for ten minute, 20-minute and full-services; as well as compelling photography, drama, quiz, posters, CD-Rom, OHP images and much more.

3. To order Tearfund's *Killer TB* church resources, please call 0845 355 8355 or order online at www.tearfund.org/killertb

4. Tearfund is one of the UK's leading relief and development agencies, working in partnership with Christian agencies and churches around the world to tackle the causes and effects of poverty. Tearfund is a member of the Disaster Emergency Committee. www.tearfund.org

For more information or pictures please contact:

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