

Tearfund challenge Pembrokeshire to help 'Work A Miracle'

A group of Tearfund volunteers from across Pembrokeshire, met up with Manager of Tearfund in Wales, Sion Meredith, on the 26th September to launch Tearfund's new 'Work A Miracle' Appeal.

'Tearfund has been working in poor communities for 40 years. But in the last 2 decades an invisible enemy has emerged to unravel the progress that has been made, it's the biggest human disaster of our time: HIV and AIDS.' Says Tearfund's Sion Meredith '

Tearfund's vision is to stop the spread of HIV in the poorest places where they work , by 2015. This years aim is to raise £2 million pounds, The over all aim is to raise £60 million by 2015.

'It's a big goal.' says Sion Meredith 'Money can't buy miracles, but it can buy clinics, it can buy education, orphan care and provide training for volunteers to do HIV testing and counseling' continues Sion.

Sion Meredith shared with the group the story of Malawi mother, Esther, and her daughter Alinafe, 10. Alinafe was born on Christmas day, her name means 'God is with us'.

Esther is HIV positive. Esther's main worry is that she has passed the HIV on to her daughter. HIV can be passed from mother to child during child birth. The 'Work A Miracle' pack includes a DVD of Esther and Alinafe's moving story. The DVD shows Alinafe getting her HIV test results, thankfully they are negative – she has a chance of a full life. This is not the case for 1 in 3 children born to HIV+ mothers.

'Today 1,600 babies, 1 every minute, will be born with HIV. Without intervention there is a 35-40% risk of a mother transmitting HIV to her baby. Simple treatment

can reduce the risk to 15% and a caesarean birth and decision not to breast feed, where a safe alternative is available, can reduce the risk of infection to 5%.' states Sion Meredith.

One of the ways that Tearfund hope to 'work the miracle' is to help mother's like Esther. For many HIV and Aids still hold a huge social stigma. The first step in reducing the risk of spreading HIV, is to get the mothers to go for a test. This is where the work of Tearfund partners is vital.

Eagles are one of Tearfund's church-based partners working in poor communities – including Esther's village, Fombi, in Malawi. Eagles offer support by encouraging women to go for HIV tests, giving them the confidence that, whatever the result, they will not be abandoned, but will receive the support and treatment they need.

'Tearfund want to hold the hand of mothers like Esther. To give them the comfort and support they so desperately need. ' says Sion Meredith.

Tearfund's second step is to encourage the mothers to seek medical attention from the local clinics, where they can be treated. Education is the third step, Tearfund want to work with the local communities, educating the people about the risks of HIV and AIDS.

So what can Pembrokeshire people do to help 'Work A Miracle'? Local Media Officer, Sharron Hardwick makes some suggestions:

'Tearfund's vision will not happen unless local people like us act. We can get involved. We can organise a fund raising event: from a cake sale to sponsored silence. You could make a giant Christmas card for your Church or organisation and charge to sign it, giving the proceeds to Tearfund's appeal. You could pledge £7 a month on a regular basis.'

Tearfund suggests that £7 can give a child the chance of a HIV free life. £7 enables Tearfund partners to provide support, advice and education to mothers, as well as giving them access to HIV testing and treatments.

'Pembrokeshire people could give alternative Christmas gifts this year: why not spend a little less on your presents and wrap them in red ribbon, write on the tags that this year £7 (or more) has been given to Tearfund's 'Work a Miracle' appeal, in their honour, to give a child a chance of a HIV free life. Tearfund also have 'Work a Miracle' ribbons which can be ordered from the web site and suggested donations are £1 each. What greater gift can we give this Christmas than the miracle of life?' continues Sharron Hardwick.

Tearfund's 'Work a Miracle' pack is available for all, you can get a copy of it by logging on to www.tearfund.org or call: 0845 355 8355

Help 'Work A Miracle' with Tearfund. Together we can make a difference

