

Monday 19th August

An overview of the Urban Poor

The urban poor comprise one of the biggest and fastest growing sectors of society across much of the globe, particularly in Africa and Asia where most Muslims live. Although accurate figures are hard to come by, one estimate is that there are already more than 250 million Muslims living in slums, shanty towns and poor urban neighbourhoods across the world; a number which will grow rapidly in the coming decades.



A shanty town in Jakarta, Indonesia, Asia

Christian workers in poor urban neighbourhoods often report an openness to the gospel. Many of the urban poor experience deep insecurity in their day-to-day lives, as even those things that are considered to be a basic human right, such as decent housing, jobs, education and medical provision are not guaranteed. As they face this insecurity without the support structures they have relied on in their

home villages, they can become receptive to new ideas and to joining new communities, such as those Jesus came to establish.

Listen to the song 'You're the God of this City' by Chris Tomlin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d61LamkXfwk> and pray:

- For the millions of Muslims living in city slums, that Jesus indeed would become their Lord.
- For the millions more who will join them in the cities in the coming decades.
- For many more workers to go and preach the good news in poor urban Muslim neighbourhoods.
- For many new communities of Christ-followers to be established.

Tuesday 20th August

India

There are more urban poor in India than in any other nation and 1 in every 6 urban Indians lives in a slum. Earlier this year a group of Frontiers workers spent several days in the mega-city of Mumbai, visiting urban slums like Dharavi (the setting for the film 'Slumdog Millionaire') with a population of over 1 million people, and praying for more workers for this harvest field. You can get a brief insight of what life is like for the people of Dharavi in this short YouTube clip [here](#).



Dharavi shanty town

Surprisingly our overall impression was not one of despair or desperation, despite the living conditions, but of the warm welcome we received wherever we went, the smiles on the faces of the children and the industry of the people running

the street stalls, shops and workshops which were found everywhere. Yet it was impossible to ignore the conditions people were living in, the exploitation of the weakest and the absence of awareness of a God who loves them and gave his life for them.

- Pray for Indian Muslims living and working in the slums of Mumbai and other cities, that they would be blessed.
- Pray for Christian workers, including Frontiers teams, to share the hope that is in Christ with poor urban Muslims in India.
- Pray for children and young people in these neighbourhoods, that they would have the opportunity to hear the good news that God cares for them.

Wednesday 21st August

Africa

Christian workers, including some in Frontiers teams, have been living and working amongst Muslims in poor urban neighbourhoods in African cities for many years. Life there can be tough, as the material and physical needs of the poor demand attention alongside their spiritual needs. Many workers seek to respond to the overwhelming needs in a holistic way – taking Jesus' own manifesto in Luke 4:18-19 as an example:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

One Frontiers team in a West African city has been involved in urban development work, including running literacy and education programmes, community health training, gardening projects, business training and much more, alongside the planting of small house churches. The goal is to see transformation through the gospel in individual lives, families and whole communities.

- Pray for Frontiers teams and others who are living and ministering amongst the urban poor in Africa.
- Pray for many poor urban African Muslims to experience the freedom Christ alone can bring.
- Let's ask for transformation in individual lives, families and communities as people embrace the year of the Lord's favour.

Thursday 22nd August

Business development

One of the challenges facing teams who wish to work amongst the urban poor is gaining access to their neighbourhoods, as governments are often suspicious of the motives of foreigners who spend time there.

Whilst some Frontiers teams carry out development work as part of their strategy to engage with poor urban Muslims, others choose to launch businesses, which enable them to meet and even provide employment, to local people. One such team has worked in a large Indian city for several years and they have set up a small factory in a poor urban neighbourhood which employs local people. Business strategies like this are often popular with local authorities, as the whole community benefits from the wealth they create.

There is no doubt that the most effective way to help people out of poverty is to help them find meaningful work, and one variation on this theme is to run micro-enterprise training programmes, which teach basic business skills to people to encourage them to set up their own small operations. One such programme has been run recently in a country in the Middle East, with the trainees launching successful businesses such as soap-making and yoghurt production.

- Let's pray for Christian workers, that they would have many creative ideas to access poor urban neighbourhoods and engage with the Muslims who live there.
- Pray for teams who are running businesses or business training programmes in poor communities, that they would have opportunities to share their love for Christ.
- Pray for national churches to become engaged in running business development activities amongst poor urban Muslims.

Friday 23rd August

Refugees

As a result of conflicts in the Middle East, South Asia and parts of Africa, we have become used to seeing footage of refugee camps on our television screens. Many of these camps, especially those that have become established, share many features with poor urban neighbourhoods: for example low quality housing, few job opportunities, inadequate schools and clinics, and above all the hopelessness of people who feel trapped there by circumstances.



Za'atri camp in Jordan

Refugees are not only found in camps, but in many cases migrate in large numbers to the urban slums, adding to the already existing pressure on local facilities. One Frontiers team working amongst Syrian refugees in a country in the Middle East, reported that the conditions in the slums were as bad as anything seen in Africa, and this was in the middle of a bitterly cold winter. However that team and the church they were partnering are also

bringing joy amongst all the sorrow. One of the refugees testified to just how much she enjoyed their visits, not only because they brought much needed assistance, but 'because they get down on the ground and play with our children'.

- Pray for Christian workers, including those in Frontiers teams, who are reaching out to refugees, bringing hope where it is desperately needed.

- Pray for Syrian refugees, many of whom are still scattered in cities and camps throughout the Middle East and beyond, that Christ would be the light in their dark world.
- Pray for Frontiers 'Rapid Intervention Network' which seeks to send out workers who can respond quickly to emergency situations, paving the way for future longer term efforts.

Saturday 24th August

More workers

At the beginning of this week of prayer for the urban poor, we stated that there are already more than 250 million Muslims living in slums, shanty towns and poor urban neighbourhoods across the world; a number which will grow rapidly in the coming decades. And yet, despite the overwhelming need, the number of Christians actively working amongst them is tiny.

The reasons are many - the work is hard and there can be a lot of emotional stress; the thought of living and ministering among the urban poor can seem overwhelming, especially to comfortably-off Westerners; the environment may appear alien and even threatening. Yet the biggest obstacle is probably that of ignorance – just like the priest and Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan, in the midst of our busy lives we simply don't see the need in front of us and hurry on by.

Yet the opportunities are many, and the reward is great. God's heart is for the poor, including the urban poor, and his Spirit will go with those who choose to serve him in this way. If you are interested in finding out more about working among poor urban Muslims please do contact us: [matt@frontiers.org.uk]

- Pray today that the Lord of the harvest would send many more workers into the harvest field amongst poor urban Muslims.
- Pray too that he would richly reward those who are already there.
- Pray for any people you know, perhaps you yourself, who are considering going to minister to the urban poor, that God would continue to stir hearts and minds for this work.