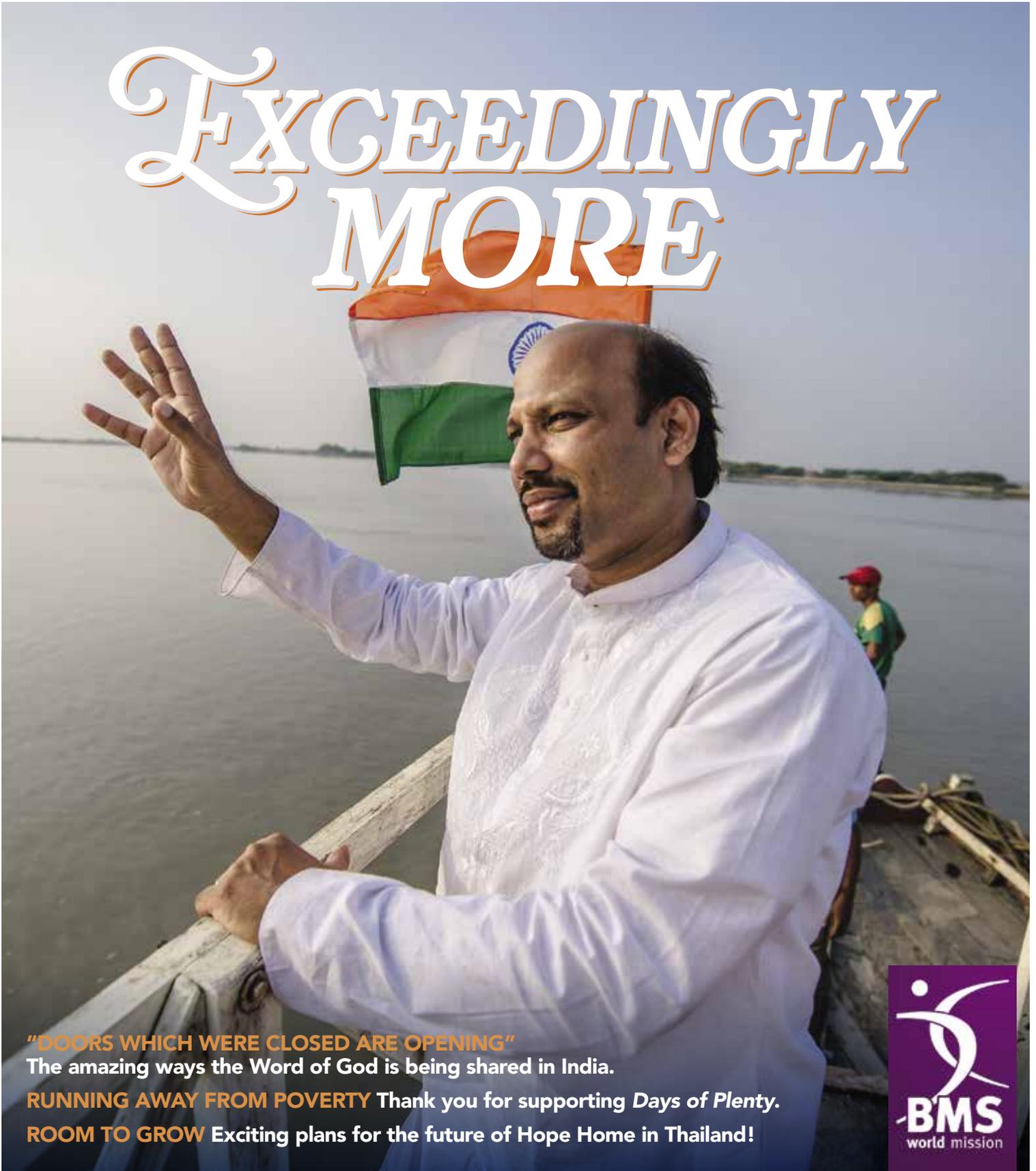


ENGAGE

The BMS World Mission magazine

EXCEEDINGLY MORE



"DOORS WHICH WERE CLOSED ARE OPENING"

The amazing ways the Word of God is being shared in India.

RUNNING AWAY FROM POVERTY Thank you for supporting *Days of Plenty*.

ROOM TO GROW Exciting plans for the future of Hope Home in Thailand!





WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

BMS World Mission is inspired by our heart to bring the gospel where it's not known, to bring hope to a troubled world and to bring help for the journeys of the displaced. We respond to suffering and injustice with the promise of abundant life in Christ.

Through your support and alongside our trusted partners, we send UK Christians and equip local disciples in over 30 countries across four continents. Our highest goal is to see people come to faith in Jesus Christ and experience life in all its fullness.

Have something to say in response to this issue of *Engage*?



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@bmsworldmission



Use the freepost envelope included in your mailing to send us a note, a cheque or anything else in response to this issue!

We look forward to hearing from you!



Editorial

THANK YOU FOR ANOTHER YEAR!

Laura Durrant

December 2023



This issue of *Engage* magazine is particularly special for me, as it marks an entire cycle of magazines completed. That's 24 stories told, roughly 20,664 words (I counted!), and around 57,000 magazines printed – thank you for being with me for all of it!

Issue 58 contains much cause for celebration, as well as stories that need your crucial prayers. Flip to page 4 for an exciting update from the wonderful Hope Home in Thailand, and on page 7 you'll see just how much of a difference your support has made for farmers in Uganda. For your prayers, take a look at page 16 to experience the challenges facing Christians in India today, as well as page 10, where you can find prayer requests from refugees taking refuge in Lesbos.

Along with all of this, you'll spot some new icons on the pages that follow. You'll hopefully remember them from our piece on 'Heart, Hope, Help' from Issue 57; you'll find them on each story in the magazine to let you know which ministry area the work comes under. Any story with a 'gender justice' or 'creation stewardship' icon (see key on page opposite) means that work has a particular focus on that area – but all aspects of our work are completed with the commitment to these crucial focus areas built in from the start.

Above all, this magazine contains a beautiful coming together of your generous support and God's faithful love, as they work in tandem to meet people in need across the world. As always, you can reach me on magazine@bmsworldmission.org if you have any feedback to share. I am always delighted to hear from you.

Finally, a very happy Christmas from me and all of us at BMS World Mission.

God bless,
Laura
Editor



Write to me at magazine@bmsworldmission.org



4.

News

Looking to the future at Hope Home in Thailand

5. The fundamental Christmas story

Dr Kang-San Tan on not missing the point this Christmas

6. Your support is making mission possible

Thank you for an incredible year of generous support

7. 'I'm running away from poverty'

How your faithful gifts to *Days of Plenty* have made an enormous difference in Uganda

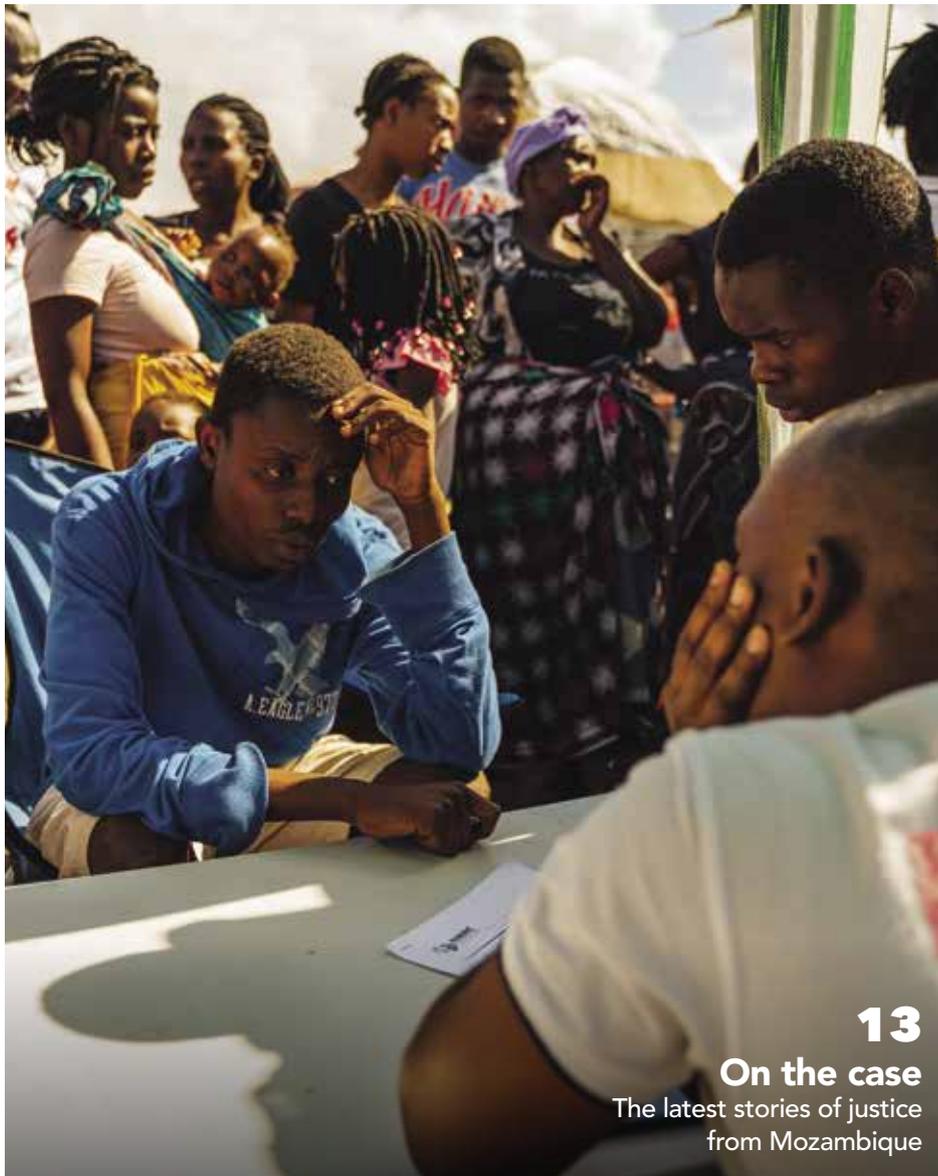
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Spreading the Word in spite of persecution in India

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On the case

The latest stories of justice from Mozambique

You might spot these icons on the pages of *Engage* – they're there to show you which ministry area the work comes under. Find out more in Laura's editorial on page 2!



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A priority for the space is ensuring that families from the community and Hope Home’s residents can play alongside each other, fostering connection and understanding.

NEW PLAYGROUND PROVISION FOR HOPE HOME’S CHILDREN

Please pray for BMS World Mission partner Hope Home as its children await the provision of an accessible playground.

The residential home in Thailand, which supports children and young adults with disabilities and complex needs, has placed a downpayment on an empty plot of land next door, planted with banana trees. BMS worker Judy Cook hopes that the playground will be a stimulating and fun environment for the children, where they can play and exercise in whatever way suits them best. Judy’s already planning sensory spaces for the home’s children based on their preferences and needs, such as rumble strips and miniature speed bumps for a boy called Sam*, who will enjoy zooming over them in his wheelchair.

With the purchase due to complete this month, the land needs to be cleared and levelled, after which the dreaming can really begin. A scoping visit to an accessible playground in the UK has given Judy inspiration for how to recreate elements using local materials

or bamboo, and a conversation with a green-fingered local means a plan to involve the children in gardening could, God willing, one day bear fruit.

“We could eat our own vegetables,” says Judy, “and if we grew enough, maybe we could even have a little market stall.” Seeing a member of the local community come alongside Hope Home’s children is just as exciting as imagining new ways for the children to flourish – part of Judy’s prayer to see them be ever more accepted in Thai society.

The desire to see Hope Home’s children integrate well becomes more pressing the older they grow. With limited opportunities in Thailand for adults with complex needs, Judy is already thinking ahead to a day when the land could accommodate a support unit for adults with disabilities. “Huge thanks for your support: financial, but also prayers and encouragement,” Judy says. You’re ensuring a future where these children, and one day, adults, have the best quality of life possible.

**Name changed.*

HOPE HOME FACTS

£4,800

given by BMS supporters to build the playground walls and gate

5 TO 26

The age span of the children and young adults living at Hope Home

20 x 30 METRES

The size of the plot of land



Participants in the project are hopeful that they'll be able to bring transformation to their own communities.

CHURCHES SET TO MOBILISE IN SIERRA LEONE

An exciting new project launching in 2024 will see churches in Sierra Leone bringing home-grown transformation to their communities. This important work aims to equip church families and their pastors to take a lead in tackling local issues, whether they be rooted in poverty, sickness, environmental care, gender-based violence or

spiritual need. Churches will invite local people to work together in finding life-giving solutions, through Bible studies and collaborative problem-solving. More than 30 churches across 13 districts have already been chosen to participate in the project, with ten new facilitators being trained up across the next few years – all made possible through your generosity!

FIVE CHURCHES IN FIVE YEARS

A bold vision to plant five new churches in the next five years has captured the hearts of evangelists at BMS' partner reaching out into North Africa. Seconded to the partner are Andrea and Ian, BMS workers with a special focus on creating evangelistic online broadcasts for a Muslim

audience. The programmes are shared on Facebook and YouTube, after which those wanting to know more can get in touch. The hope has always been that seekers can be connected to churches in North Africa. Please pray for this exciting strategy, looking to plant new churches for the first time.

From the
General Director

THE FUNDAMENTAL CHRISTMAS STORY

Kang-San Tan



"And she gave birth to her firstborn son... and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."
Luke 2: 7 (ESV)

The Christmas story could be summarised as: **God entered into human history in Christ.** The early church father Athanasius (AD 296-373) emphasised that Christ is both divine and human. This is the basis for our mission – as only God can save. No creature, no civilisation, no commercials can save other humans. This Christmas, let us renew for ourselves the fundamental meaning of the Christmas story:

- 1. Only God can save.
- 2. Jesus Christ saves.
- 3. Therefore, we acknowledge that Jesus Christ is God incarnate.

Is it possible that, as it was at Jesus' birth, we might be too busy, too comfortable and too preoccupied in our own concerns to find a place for God's firstborn? We might celebrate the festivity of Christmas for ourselves, but have we missed God's universal plan in Jesus Christ to bring flourishing lives among all nations? BMS World Mission is blessed to have so many faithful partners and supporters with hearts for the gospel, offering places of safety and rest for those in need this Christmas, and celebrating together that only Christ can bring lasting hope for the world.

Thank you

Your support is making mission possible



Summer of speakers

A massive shout out to all the churches up and down the country who hosted BMS World Mission workers on their home assignments this summer!

It's thanks to the support of

generous Christians and churches across the UK that all our work is possible. We're so glad that so many of you were able to host mission workers serving from Chad to Nepal to share a little

about their work with you in person. If you organised a mission worker visit, hosted a dinner, offered a room or a lift, or even if you just enjoyed a talk, thank you so much!

Your gifts will save lives



Benjamin is now fully healed and back at work, thanks to the help he received at Bardai Hospital.

BMS supporters raised an amazing £41,685 for the Bardai Hospital appeal, helping bring vital healthcare to the Chadian desert.

In Issue 57 of *Engage*, we shared with you Benjamin's story, and how, thanks to the amazing work done at Bardai Hospital, he was able to get vital treatment for a serious infection in his arm. We asked you to give to help make sure the hospital was always there to offer crucial medical care to this remote area of Chad – and you responded amazingly.

This incredibly generous sum could cover the cost of BMS surgeons Andrea and Mark Hotchkin's work at Bardai Hospital for over a year. It could

cover the cost of almost 3,000 pieces of specialist equipment. Or it could enable more than 1,500 people to have the cost of their treatment covered so they don't have to choose between paying for their medical care or buying food for their families. Most likely it will go towards a combination of all three, and most importantly, it'll go towards enabling Bardai Hospital to keep providing quality healthcare where it is so crucially needed. Thank you so much for choosing to give – and take heart at the number of lives you've saved through your gifts!

‘I’M RUNNING AWAY FROM POVERTY’



NEXT TIME YOU BUY A BANANA, THINK OF ESTHER.

AS YOU PEEL IT OPEN, PRAY FOR HER.

AND AS YOU TAKE THAT FIRST, DELICIOUS BITE, PRAISE GOD THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO BLESS HER TO BE A BLESSING TO MANY OTHERS IN NORTHERN UGANDA.

Esther sits on a reed mat that lays atop dry, dusty earth. She’s stitching a beautiful quilt, surrounded by bunches of bright bananas, some still on their stalks. Her banana trees stretch out into the distance behind her, full of fruit almost ready to be harvested. It’s a visual symbol of just how far Esther has come – with your support.

Of course, Esther’s banana empire hasn’t sprouted since your generous gift to BMS World Mission’s *Days of*

Plenty Harvest appeal. That would be nothing short of miraculous. But it has been lovingly cultivated thanks to your support for BMS’ work in northern Uganda over the last seven years. And it’s enabled Esther to lift herself and her family out of poverty. Now, thanks to the astounding generosity BMS supporters have shown in their gifts to our *Days of Plenty* appeal, many more farmers like Esther will have the seeds, skills and market access they need to follow in her footsteps.

The fact that Esther is now earning 300,000 Ugandan shillings (approximately £64) a month from her bananas – over and above the average salary for farmers in the area – and sometimes makes almost that much in a week, does, to be fair, seem pretty miraculous. Especially considering she nearly missed the chance to be part of the BMS-supported farming project altogether. Esther wasn’t at church the week the opportunity to access BMS-supported banana suckers and training was



Esther uses her banana farm to help the community as well as her family, training other farmers to grow successful bananas just like she does.

offered. Thankfully, though, her pastor decided to volunteer her. If he hadn't, she may never have had the chance to put her skills and dedication to such good use and earn the money she needs to support herself, her children and her three small grandchildren.

Esther still remembers that Sunday afternoon, seven years ago, when her pastor came and told her what he'd done. She wasn't just happy, she was thrilled. "It was something that I had been praying for," Esther says. "I wanted to plant bananas." She immediately got to work, slashing the grass in her field, ploughing her land, and then meticulously digging 200 deep holes in which to plant

her soon-to-be banana trees.

"I communicated back to my pastor that my garden is ready, the holes are ready," says Esther. "Then they brought me the banana suckers. I planted them... and then I kept monitoring and doing mulching. I kept the garden well, until the bananas grew.

"That first harvest, I took very big bananas to the church as thanksgiving and as my tithe," she says. "The rest, I kept selling."

Since then, Esther's banana harvests have grown year on year. Now, she's able to pay for her grandchildren's education, support her children, look after her own needs, and share with her wider community. People

“
**I FEEL EXCITED
 AND VERY HAPPY
 BECAUSE THIS
 HAS MADE ME
 EARN A LIVING**
 ”



DAYS OF PLENTY

THANK YOU FOR TURNING DAYS OF HARDSHIP INTO DAYS OF PLENTY

In a few years' time, there will be many more Esthers to tell you about. Women and men who have taken the seeds and support you've provided, and diligently built their futures with them. Every gift, prayer, fundraising event and service in aid of the BMS *Days of Plenty* Harvest appeal has made that possible.

Thank you for watching the *Days of Plenty* video, sharing the appeal with your church, praying and giving to help. You're amazing! In total, BMS supporters have raised **£101,391.17** so far for farmers like Esther in northern Uganda. Every pound will make a difference, helping families lift themselves out of poverty for good.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY.



“

**THANK YOU,
BECAUSE YOU MADE
ME WHAT I AM**

”

Esther wants to thank you for your support, and she prays that even more people like her will be able to do agricultural training like she has.

will often come to her for advice, which she freely gives, or for banana suckers to plant. If they can afford to pay for the crops, she'll charge them, but if they can't, she'll give them away for free.

"I feel excited and very happy because this has made me earn a living," says Esther. "And it's like I'm running away from poverty because I keep getting money out of this.

"I feel that I should be a source of help to the community. I feel good about that because it's like I'm bringing some of the community members to my level of farming. When they consult me, or pick suckers from my garden, I feel good."

Esther's pride at what she has achieved from those first baby banana plants is evident – and well deserved. She's now a model farmer. With every harvest, she builds a more secure future for herself and her family. And she's sharing the knowledge she's gained freely – in the same way she received it.

But equally present is her gratitude. To BMS agriculturalist Genesis Acaye. To his team. And to you. Because support for Esther didn't end when she was given that first training, or those first crops. Over the last seven years, Genesis and his team have continued to partner with



her – to encourage her, advise her and pray for her – and that's only been possible because of you.

"I need to thank [Genesis and the field team] a lot because they have been following up, encouraging me to continue doing well with the banana planting, and it has helped me a lot," says Esther. "I always pray for Genesis. And I pray for the donors as well.

"The message I have for people in the UK is: thank you, because you made me what I am. Thank you so much." •

Your support means that Esther can grow more than enough bananas to support her children and grandchildren.

**IT'S NOT TOO LATE
TO GET INVOLVED.**

If you want to support farmers in northern Uganda, head to www.bmsworldmission.org/daysofplenty

THE JOURNEY TO *new life*



Words: **Laura Durrant**

A regime of terror. Fleeing your home and travelling thousands of miles to protect your family. Spending years in a foreign land waiting desperately for it to be safe enough to return home. It's more important than ever to reflect on the parallels between the Christmas story and the stories of millions of refugees across the world – and to make sure their stories aren't forgotten.

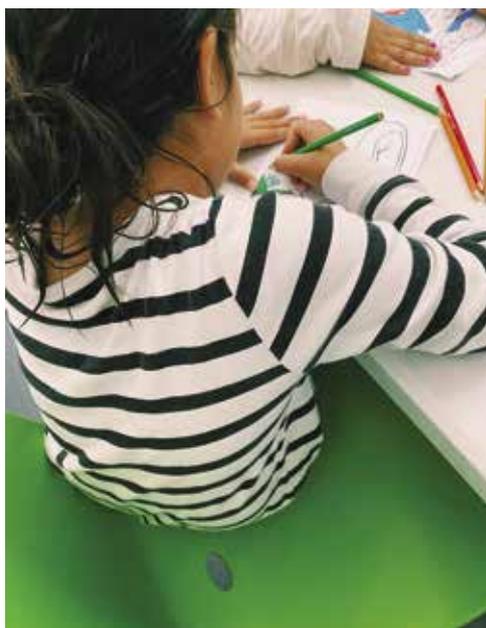
Some 2,000 years and almost 2,000 miles away from the site of Jesus' birth, Bibi* and her family were about to begin a similar treacherous journey. After the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in the summer of 2021, Bibi was forbidden to continue her job as a teacher, and schools for girls closed across the country. Two years on, Bibi and her sister-in-law can't even leave the house without being accompanied by a male relative, which left Ilham*, Bibi's brother, as the sole breadwinner for the household – including his elderly mother and four young children. The risk of famine and skyrocketing poverty rates across the country gave

the family no choice but to leave.

But leaving Afghanistan came with its own set of dangers. Without any mode of transport, the family spent most of the journey on foot. It hardly seems possible, walking from Afghanistan to Türkiye (formerly Turkey), but Bibi and her family had no other choice. Bibi's mother struggles with walking, so Ilham would often have to carry her on his back. They traversed over mountainous peaks in Türkiye, sometimes with only a single bottle of water to share between the seven of them. When they eventually

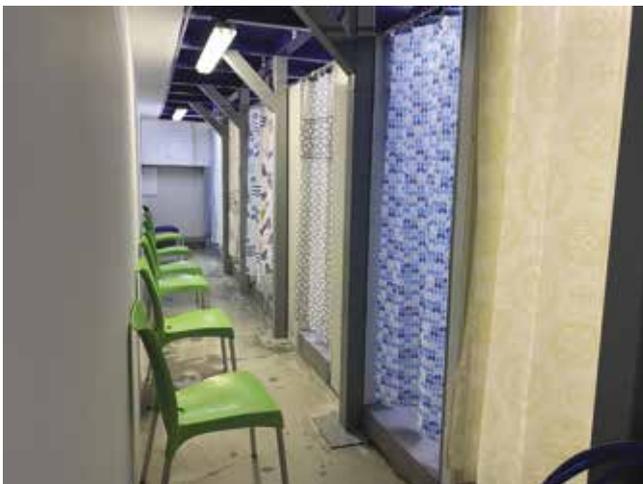
reached the Turkish coast, they were faced with crossing the ocean to reach a transit camp on the Greek island of Lesbos. Ten times the family attempted the crossing across the raging winter sea, huddled together in a boat filling with more water with every crashing wave. Eventually, after eight long hours, the family arrived at the Mavrovouni transit camp on Christmas night.

Bibi and her family may have found respite at the Mavrovouni camp, but the journey to a settled life was still far off. Thousands of people



The centre is a safe space for women to come and rest and experience community together.

“
**THE NUMBER OF NEW ARRIVALS HAS
 JUST BEEN INCREASING SO MUCH**
 ”



The centre is equipped with washing machines, showers and other necessities to provide the women with whatever they need during their stay at the camp.

from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Palestine and beyond wait in the camp for months for a decision on their asylum applications. They wait out the months in tents or containers called ‘Isoboxes’, and for the women of the camp, that’s often where they spend most of their time. For many of the camp’s families, it’s culturally more appropriate for women to stay inside their makeshift home. But cramped living quarters leave little privacy for women to wash and take care of themselves. Sadly, this means that many women don’t have the chance to clean themselves or their clothes properly, often leading to infections and cases of scabies. For women like Bibi, life in the camp becomes

incredibly isolating. Fortunately, just outside the camp is a sanctuary, where help is available for women just like her.

Just a few minutes’ walk from the camp’s entrance is a centre run by BMS World Mission’s partner All4Aid. They’ve been working on the island since 2018, and centre director Haniele is determined to do whatever she can to provide a safe space for the women of Mavrovouni. When Bibi first came to the centre, she found washing machines, showers, a Wi-Fi connection and space for her nieces and nephew to play safely. It might not seem like a lot, but for a woman with nothing, it’s a slice of humanity in a desperate situation.

“
**WE’RE HERE
 SHARING THE
 LOVE OF JESUS TO
 SO MANY PEOPLE.**
 ”

For Haniele, the centre is also a place where she can live out her Christian faith. Bibi visited the centre almost every week during her stay at the camp, and she and Haniele were able to build a strong friendship.



Life on Lesbos has been incredibly difficult for many refugees, especially since the previous camp on the island burned down in 2020.

Haniele recalls a day when she felt particularly downtrodden, and when Bibi saw her at the centre, she gave her a big hug and told her, "I don't speak English, but I love you." "That was just the Lord telling me, 'You are not here to do things. You are here to love people,'" says Haniele.

After eight long months, Bibi and her family were finally granted asylum in Belgium. "I had the privilege to drive her to the port with her family," says Haniele. "She was really sad that she was leaving, that she would have to start a new life again." And when Bibi shared her fears with Haniele, she encouraged her to lift up her anxieties to Jesus. We don't know what prayers Bibi might pray, but

we do know that a seed has been planted, and we pray that that seed will grow to become a faith she can depend on as she starts to rebuild her life.

It's heartwarming to hear of the relationship shared between Haniele and Bibi. But we know too that thousands of women just like her will be arriving on Lesbos in the coming months. "This year the number of new arrivals has just been increasing so much," says Haniele. Sometimes the centre will have 200 visitors a day, up from just 60 at the beginning of the year. And with ongoing conflicts in Israel-Palestine and unrest in Afghanistan and Sudan, the centre couldn't be more crucial. Which is

£12 COULD PROVIDE ESSENTIAL FOOD

items such as pasta, beans and rice for a family like Bibi's, nourishing them for a whole month.

£60 COULD PROVIDE VITAL HYGIENE ITEMS

such as soap, sanitary products and underwear for ten families who have nothing.

£160 COULD ENABLE BMS' PARTNER WORKERS

to keep sharing the gospel with women like Bibi, so they can experience Jesus' love for the first time.

Please visit www.bmsworldmission.org/safehaven to give what you can today.

why we're asking you to give what you can to our Safe Haven appeal this year. "[This work], it's only possible with the support of other people," says Haniele. "If you want to be part of something, you can give to this mission and know that we're here sharing the love of Jesus to so many people." Whatever you can give this Christmas, remember the parallels of the Christmas story with Bibi's story. And think about how your support can help women like her on a journey to a new life: in a new, safe country, and as a beloved child of God.

**Names changed.*

On the case

Justice is rolling like a river in Mozambique. Take a look at some of the case files from BMS World Mission worker Jane Edwards and the team at The Association of Christian Lawyers, Mozambique (AMAC) and meet the people whose lives have been changed thanks to AMAC's commitment to God's justice.



Name: *Fernando*
 Category: *Land rights*



Words: **Laura Durrant**

Fernando's father had a plot of land, which he used as a machamba, and Fernando and his family grew up with this land as their home.

The land was passed down from father to son, and Fernando built a small home there, which was tragically destroyed in Cyclone Idai in 2019. Not to be deterred, Fernando was able to rebuild his home – but not long after, another tragedy struck. A woman turned up at his door and said the plot had been hers since 1983, and that she had a document from the local municipal council giving her the rights to use that plot.

Fortunately, Fernando knew who he could turn to for help. He went to AMAC, who gave him legal advice, and were able to reach an agreement

Note from Jane:
a machamba is a small plot of land used for subsistence farming

between Fernando and the municipal council. They agreed that Fernando would move on from the land, as long as the woman claiming ownership built him a new house on a new plot of land.

Thanks to AMAC's support, Fernando will still have a home, and he won't lose his way of providing for himself.

Note from Jane:

All land belongs to the state in Mozambique, so no-one really owns land. You can get the rights to use land either by occupation or by an official document from the council. It's not unusual for one person to say they have a document giving them rights to the land and for someone else to have rights to the same land by occupation.



Name: *Samuel*
 Category: *Land rights*

Samuel and his four siblings inherited 12 acres of land from their parents, which they shared among themselves.

When two different people came along saying that they had documents confirming they bought two separate plots within the 12 acres in 1997, the families were at a loss as to what to do. They had no corresponding documents, and there was no way of finding out if the newly presented documents were genuine or not. Thankfully, AMAC were able to help.

The AMAC team went to the local authorities, who sadly found in favour of the buyers. AMAC are now taking the case to court. The hearing was due to be in July, but was postponed, so the team are now waiting for the judge to set a new date.

Note from Jane:
Please PRAY for a successful outcome to Samuel's case.

Name: *Vicinia*
 Category: *Gender justice*

Vicinia's husband passed away four years ago, leaving her with young children.

For years now, she's had no steady income or job. Vicinia came to AMAC complaining that she had taken her car for repairs but that the mechanic had sold it off for around 250,000 meticais.

She decided to lodge a fraud case against the mechanic with the police, and he admitted in court that he had sold her car. He promised to pay compensation, but Vicinia has yet to receive a payment. The AMAC team has been helping Vicinia keep the case moving forward and they're hopeful that she'll soon get the compensation she deserves.

Note from Jane:
Widowed women often find themselves struggling to support their families as the inheritance from the husband is often claimed by his family.

Note from Jane: *equivalent to around £3,100.*



Name: *Oswaldo*
 Category: *Fellowship*

Oswaldo lost his eyesight as a child, and spent his life battling the injustices and challenges faced by blind people in Mozambique.

When he became an orphan not long after losing his sight, his life came to a standstill, and he found himself lost without help. Thankfully, he encountered hope and welcome with a nearby church family, where he came to faith and found the resolve to fight for his rights and help others like him.

He enrolled at the Institute of the Blind in Beira, where he learnt how to use Braille and a cane to help him get around. Convicted to fight for the rights of the oppressed, he's now studying law at university, with dreams of eventually becoming a judge. While at law school, he's found fellowship and family with the AMAC team. They do regular Bible studies together, share some of the challenges they face in their work, and learn how they can integrate their faith with the law. Oswaldo believes Christian lawyers have an obligation to seek justice for the poor and marginalised. He's determined not to give up on this calling, no matter what challenges he faces.



Name: *Joaquim*
 Category: *Legal education*

Joaquim is hearing impaired and worked for a private catering company. Sadly, his place of work took advantage of him and never asked him to sign a contract. When the company terminated his position, Joaquim lost everything – he had no idea of his rights as an employee, or that the company was acting illegally.

AMAC stepped in to help Joaquim understand his rights as a worker, and that he was entitled to compensation. They were able to take the company to court, but they argued that they owed Joaquim nothing as he was never an employee. Thankfully, AMAC were able to assist in getting a sign language interpreter into court so that Joaquim could properly fight his case. The company were forced to pay Joaquim what he's owed, and he's already received his first instalment.

Thank you!

This is just a small selection of the individuals AMAC has worked with, but they're working tirelessly to reach as many people as they can so that they can educate them about their legal rights. Your support and prayers are crucial to carrying the work of AMAC forward – thank you so much for partnering with them in their mission!



EXCEEDINGLY MORE

A front-row seat to God's salvation story

BMS World Mission worker Ben Francis comes from a country where being a pastor is now one of the most dangerous professions you can have. So why is it that he can't stop giving thanks?

Words: **Hannah Watson**

Closed doors open

"I am so amazed at the way the Lord is working on the ground," BMS evangelist Ben Francis says, joy radiating from his face. "I actually give thanks to the Lord on a daily basis... he's doing exceedingly more than we can ask." Ben's enthusiasm for his work is infectious, and it begs the question – where is this fertile ground, the place where Ben describes "sitting on the front row" before God's amazing deeds? The answer may surprise you. It's Ben's home country of India: beautiful, bustling and, for its Christian population, increasingly precarious.

In recent years, the persecution of India's minority faith groups, including Christians, has risen steeply, with hundreds of violent incidents being recorded each year. "Some people are being kicked out of their

villages, or prevented from taking water from the same wells as their neighbours," Ben says. News reports and anti-persecution organisations go into even more worrying detail, publishing stories of people being falsely accused, imprisoned or even killed for their faith. Even so, it's hard to get Ben to dwell on the difficulties of ministering in this context. "Doors which were closed are opening," he continues. "The Lord is doing some amazing things."

You may have heard a common but surprising prayer request from members of the persecuted Church: to pray not that persecution would be lifted, but instead that God would sustain his Church through it. Ben would agree. From his front-row seat, he can see that increased persecution in India is causing people to sit up and take notice of Christianity.

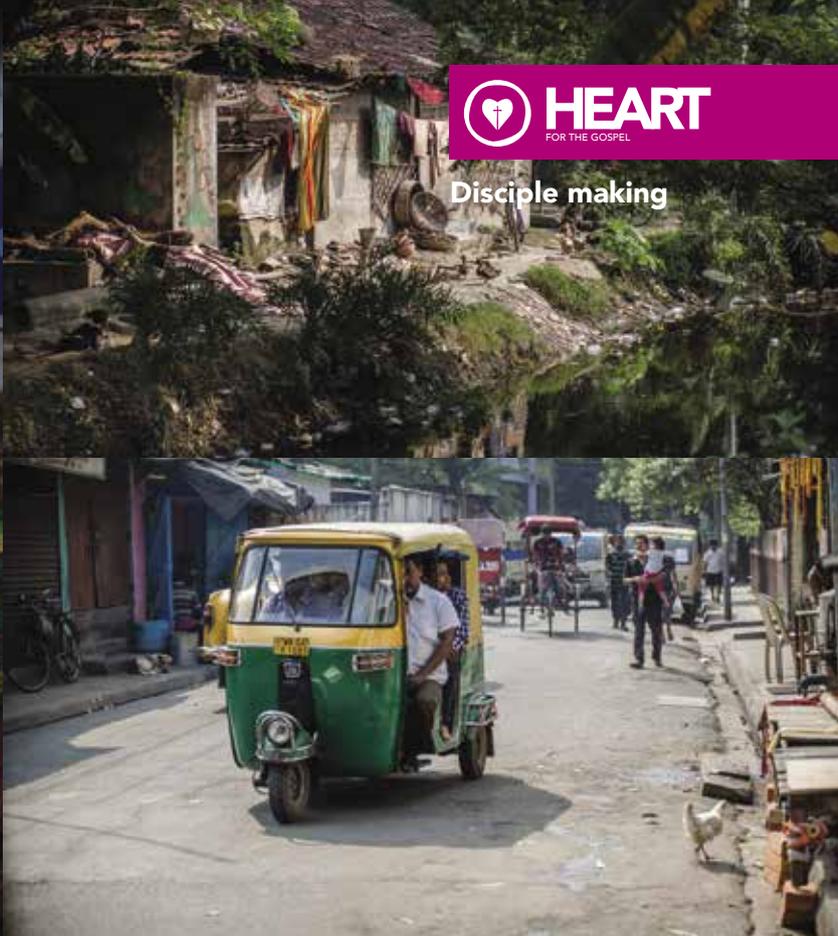
Every home a church

While Ben's non-Christian neighbours are being confronted by the persecution they're seeing believers suffer, Christian churches and house groups are, against all the odds, being inspired. "Every week, people are thinking to themselves: 'How will I obey the Word I have heard?', 'Who can I go [to] and teach the stories that I'm hearing?' and 'How can I share my own story?'" Ben says. They don't always have to go far to find the answers. Whether these small groups of Christians are meeting in coffee shops, marketplaces or in the entryways of their homes, the curious are coming to seek them out. "We literally have people coming to us to ask, 'Can you give me something to read [about Christianity]?' " Ben says. "Can you tell me more?"

Instead of shrinking away and worrying about their small

“
[THE LORD
IS] DOING
EXCEEDINGLY
MORE THAN
WE CAN ASK

”



size, each of these groups of disciples is seeing how they can be uniquely used by God. Ben has seen 4,000 of these disciple-making groups in action in the past year alone. "Each believer is being equipped," Ben describes. "Each home becomes a church. And each home church becomes a mission organisation in itself."

A front-row seat

There's one thing Ben's clear about, and that's that this kind of inspiring transformation comes from the Lord alone – and that's seen no more clearly than in the story of Arjun.*

Arjun was well known as an 'activist against the Word of God'. Notorious for attacking Christians, local believers were understandably nervous when he showed up to a screening of the Jesus film in a village last summer. But whatever sinister motivation had brought Arjun there was forgotten the moment the crucifixion scene started playing. Deciding to hold off any displays of violence

until after the scene was over, Ben describes how this former persecutor of Christians watched, transfixed. Anyone familiar with Scripture will know that the number three is often significant in God's Word, whether it's Jesus showing grace to Simon Peter, or the grace he showed to all of us by rising on the third day. Well, when Arjun asked to watch the film again, not once but three times, Ben knew God's grace truly was at work in Arjun's heart.

Arjun's words were, "How can I find this Jesus?", explains Ben. "Today, he is a born-again believer – someone who takes the gospel and shares it around and tells people about Jesus."

Standing firm

Your generous support of BMS church planting and evangelism in India means you're standing right alongside workers like Ben. A grant of £6,500, given in June of this year and made possible through your kindness, is enabling Christians to act as a shining light in

their communities, despite persecution.

After more than 23,000 people were displaced in Manipur state, following outbreaks of violence between people groups and protests over contested tribal statuses, churches across the region stepped in. Despite hundreds of people being wounded and some killed, and churches, houses and vehicles being damaged or burned, Christians boldly provided food, shelter and medical care for 500 displaced households, or an estimated 2,500 people.

Emergency provisions were made available to the most vulnerable, regardless of religion, tribal status or ethnicity, demonstrating that Jesus' compassion truly is for all. Your role in the relief effort was invaluable, helping Christian communities who themselves experience high poverty levels to stand out as salt and light. "Thank you so much for standing with us. Keep praying that we keep moving," says Ben. •

**Name changed.*

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DOORS
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WERE
CLOSED
ARE
OPENING
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A letter from Thailand

For more than 30 years, BMS World Mission has supported the Thailand Karen Baptist Convention (TKBC) and their ministry among the stateless Karen people, part of which involves helping individuals obtain Thai citizenship. Read on to discover how achieving citizenship can, and has, created a significant lasting impact on people's lives.



Dear friends,

My name is Mr Pattaradon Tara Udomsuk. I was born in Thailand and have always felt connected to it. I've never lived anywhere else, but my family does not hold Thai nationality. I am ethnic Karen (Pakayo). My parents are from the Karen State of Myanmar and moved to Tak province before I was born.

The school I was attending helped to coordinate with the district to register those who did not have Thai nationality or ID. However, I still unfortunately did not obtain either. I finally gained citizenship (thanks to the help of TKBC) after completing my bachelor's degree in 2022. Before that, I was anxious all the time. I felt this way at every stage of education.

I felt scared every time I saw police officers. I used to feel inferior and neglected, and wondered why others had access to everything, while I was restricted, even though I was born in Thailand. Everything

was complicated, whatever I did, there were always obstacles.

When I was stateless, I constantly felt like I was in the dark. However, after receiving my Thai citizenship, I felt light. I felt born again, getting a new life, with clarity and no obstacles. I no longer worry about being called by the police and being asked for my ID. I have more work opportunities and freedom to live my life.

I now have the courage to express more about my tribe. I am currently proudly serving the local community as a co-ordinator for the Association of Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand.

Presently, tribal languages and cultures are disappearing. Hopefully there will be a law passed to protect ethnic tribes. It would allow them to have access to land for farming, to gain citizenship and to be able to live in the land of Thailand with dignity.

Thank you,
Pattaradon Tara Udomsuk



I USED TO FEEL INFERIOR, AND WONDERED WHY OTHERS HAD ACCESS TO EVERYTHING, WHILE I WAS RESTRICTED





LETTERS FROM... THE UK



Survival of the fittest?

Dear Laura,

Nabil Costa speaks about 'survival of the fittest' but your editorial (*It's all about team work*) hits the right note.

When Margulis and Sagan looked at evolution in 1995 and the fact that over 98 per cent of known species are extinct, they asked what was special about the ones that had survived. Their answer was that the 'fittest' are those which co-operate.

That seems to characterise Nabil's work and that of many other BMS partners. So he is already doing what is necessary for survival. We just need to persuade a few more people in the world to act in a similar way.

John R Hudson

From the Editor

Dear John,

What a great metaphor for the way BMS and our partners work, and a fantastic way to subvert a phrase which is so often used to exclude those in need in our world. I pray that more of us will be able to co-operate, as you suggest, in order to, as Nabil says, uphold the weakest among us. Every blessing,

Laura

Still praying

Dear Laura and team,

Many thanks for Issue 57. It was good to 'meet' Nabil Costa and his positive outlook. Poor battered Lebanon.

I've prayed for Afghanistan since reading Rory Stuart's book about walking across it from west to east. Good to hear about honeybee culture, I'm an ex-beekeeper myself.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Murray

From the Editor

Dear Ruth,

Thank you very much for your kind letter about the latest issue of *Engage* magazine.

Thank you as well for your continued prayers for Afghanistan and Lebanon in particular. It's been heartbreaking to see the situations in these countries deteriorate over the last few years, and I'm glad to hear you're joining us in prayer for God's intervention.

Every blessing,

Laura

Time for less plastic

Dear Laura,

Thank you for sending the *Engage* magazine. I recently heard that BMS is promoting stewardship for sustainability so I am hoping that the plastic covering of the magazine and the contents that I have received will be reconsidered and eventually replaced, as not everyone takes recyclable plastic to their supermarket.

Yours sincerely,

David Alder

From Laura-Lee

Dear David,

Greetings from Perú! Thank you for writing to us and for holding us to account for our stewardship of creation.

Together with you, I also hope that we at BMS will continue to be more conscientious in our use of the earth's resources, including a phasing out of plastics with our publications.

Every blessing in Christ Jesus,

Laura-Lee Lovering

BMS Creation Stewardship Co-ordinator

Get in touch! If you've been inspired or challenged by anything you've read in *Engage*, we would love to hear from you! Use magazine@bmsworldmission.org to get in touch with our Editor, Laura!

THANK YOU

for your amazing
support in 2023!



We can't wait to see
the wonderful things
your support will make
possible in 2024.



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