

ENGAGE

The BMS World Mission magazine

HOW TO BUILD A HOSPITAL

Transforming healthcare from the ground up

GOOD LAND, GOOD NEWS

How your donations are changing lives in Ghusel

A LETTER FROM BETHLEHEM

"I want to be a light for young people"



Baptisms in Wang Daeng

Celebrate with Helen and Wit Boondeekhun!





WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

BMS World Mission works in fragile states and unevangelised communities, serving some of our world's most marginalised people. We also work with people on the move, supporting them on their journey from insecurity towards peace, or enabling them to remain in the nation they call home.

With your help, we send UK Christians and support local believers, working alongside trusted partners on 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*?



www.facebook.com/bmsworldmission



@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

Hannah Watson

December 2022



I wanted to kick off Issue 55 of *Engage* with a word from Dr Kang-San Tan, General Director of BMS World Mission.

"Thank you for your continued generosity during the cost of living crisis that has escalated throughout this year," he writes. "I know that things are not easy for individuals and churches, and that financial giving at this time is a wonderful act of sacrificial love." It's with this in mind that I present to you a new issue of *Engage*. I hope you'll see within its pages how valued your gifts really are.

Don't miss the incredible baptisms in Wang Daeng (page 4), the updates from the *Good Land* appeal (page 14) and a special announcement about the Stamp Bureau on page 7. There's also news you're unlikely to read anywhere else, like a first-hand account of the 2022 Sri Lanka protests (page 8), and a special letter from a young believer in Bethlehem (page 18). You'll also learn how you can help families in Afghanistan this winter. That's in the letter from Ruby*, on page 17.

As I sign off, I wanted to echo Kang-San's sentiment. Putting *Engage* together is always a joy, and my prayer as I worked on this issue has been the prayer of Ephesians 1: "Ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you."

Wishing you a wonderful Christmas, and a very happy new year.

Hannah
Editor

**Name changed*



Write to me at magazine@bmsworldmission.org

4. News

Nine new believers are baptised in Wang Daeng

5. Sharing our faith

Dr Kang-San Tan on introducing people to Jesus

6. Thank yous and news from the Stamp Bureau

Your stories, letters and an important update

8. Standing with Sri Lanka

An interview from the epicentre



14.

Good news from Good Land

Discover how you've been changing lives

17. A request from Ruby

Afghanistan needs your help this Christmas

18. Letters from Bethlehem and the UK



10 How to build a hospital Pioneering work saving lives in Nepal



BMS World Mission

Website: www.bmsworldmission.org

Tel: 01235 517700

Email (general): mail@bmsworldmission.org

The Baptist Missionary Society: registered in England and Wales as a charity (number 1174364) and a company limited by guarantee (number 10849689).

Managing Editor:

Matthew Fearon

Editor: Hannah Watson

Design: Malky Currie

Front cover photo:

Jonny Warke

The views and opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of BMS World Mission.

© Copyright 2022 BMS World Mission
ISSN 1756-2481





BAPTISED TO NEW LIFE IN THAILAND

Nine believers ask to be baptised in August

Nine believers have been baptised in a joyful service in Wang Daeng, Thailand. “The weekend began with a revival meeting on the Saturday, when our little building was packed out for an evening of food, worship, testimonies and an inspiring Bible message,” share Helen and Wit Boondeekhun, BMS World Mission church planters in Thailand. The church family congregated again on the Sunday afternoon, following a service in the morning to celebrate Thai Mother’s Day. “We had Sunday school children performing, quite a few non-Christian visitors and were delighted when Pa Nut’s friend Somsri accepted Christ,” they add. People also dressed in blue, as is traditional for Mother’s Day.

Helen and Wit describe the “wonderful, joyful occasion” when the nine new believers took the step of baptism. Though

the couple have now moved to a nearby village called Tao Hai (or ‘turtle jar’), they are still able to attend church in Wang Daeng each Sunday, and Wit is able to mentor Moses, Mary and Fluk, the Thai team leading the church in Wang Daeng. “So far, we’ve already had six guests staying with us, which has really excited the interest of our neighbours who have been very kind and welcoming. We see Tao Hai more as an extension of the church in Wang Daeng rather than a completely new church plant, and it’s so good to have a team of Thai believers backing us in this new venture,” the couple share. As well as looking out for church members in Wang Daeng, Wit and Helen are also discipling a number of people in a new village, Ban Geng.

We know from speaking to many of you that God has called you in a personal way to pray for Helen and Wit’s work. Thank you so much for your faithfulness in taking up that call – it really is bearing fruit.

< 2%

of Thailand’s population identify as Christians

9

people baptised in August in Wang Daeng

3

members of Suree’s* extended family who asked to be baptised

*Wang Daeng’s first believer



YOUR SUPPORT FOR UKRAINIAN CHILDREN

You enabled war survivors to attend a summer camp in Poland

Because you gave to the **BMS World Mission Ukraine appeal, you've made it possible for Ukrainian children to attend youth camps run by churches in Poland this summer.** The summer camps were made available to children across the country and built on work already being done by Polish churches to develop relationships with

Ukrainian families through English and sports classes, Sunday schools, teen and youth meetings and family meetings. The camps involved trips to the beach, swimming, trampolining, singing and more.

Even through the despair of war, you've given these children the chance to be children again, the chance to have fun together, play together and pray together. Thank you.

HOPE DURING A COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Your support for the **BMS World Mission Global Cost of Living Crisis appeal has raised over £102,000.** That stunning total is already making a difference in the lives of farmers in Uganda, Syrian survivors of war in Lebanon and communities

in Nepal. Thank you for prioritising vulnerable families around the world during a time of uncertainty for so many in the UK. Like the widow in Luke's gospel who generously gives all she has, your sacrificial giving speaks volumes.

From the
General Director

SHARING OUR FAITH

Kang-San Tan



A pillar of our strategy and at the heart of all we do is our desire to share our hope in Jesus. But how should we do this with adherents from other religions? A multireligious community presents us with three options for engaging in conversations. 'Reconciliation' is based on the idea that truth is found equally in all religions. 'Confrontation' is based on the idea that non-Christian religions are demonic, needing an approach ranging from gentle admonishment to spiritual warfare.

Between these two polarities, a third option holds out the incarnation of Jesus as a model for approaching friends of different faiths. This is based on the belief that, through Jesus, God became human in order to reconcile us to himself. Not only is all humanity created in God's image, but we're all invited to follow the model of Jesus' life. There will be times when religious truths are rejected, and others where our beliefs find points of connection, redeemed into bridges for the sharing of the gospel.

The end result of incarnational mission is that those beginning to follow Jesus come to full faith in him, their worldviews ultimately transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. This Christmas, would you continue to pray and support BMS as we seek to follow Jesus in his mission?

Thank you

You raised 1.6 million for Ukraine

Not forgotten



Donations at the café and concert raised hundreds for Ukraine.

After the onset of the terrible events in Ukraine, the folk at New Brighton Baptist Church set about doing all they could to raise money for the BMS World Mission Ukraine appeal. Knowing that every penny donated to BMS would be used where it is most needed, visitors to the church's 'Haven Café' filled a BMS collection box with a generous £200 in return for free tea, coffee and biscuits, as well as time spent meeting friends and playing board games in the well-loved community space.

But the final push came in July 2022, when Pastor John Cheek and his wife Fiona organised a fundraising concert for the BMS

appeal. Along with New Brighton Baptist's very own musicians, two local musical groups contributed to a programme of musical entertainment. The concert not only raised over £500, but it also proved a wonderful way to share Christian music with those who don't normally visit the church. Along with home-baked cakes and hot drinks served in the interval, BMS Church Representative, Linda Haynes, played the BMS 'When Disaster Strikes' video resource. In a moment of beautiful poignancy, a young Ukrainian woman, present at the concert, shared how overwhelmed and grateful she was that her country had not been forgotten.



The walk raised an amazing £5,860 for the BMS Ukraine appeal.

Wales for Ukraine

On a sunny Saturday in April, around 25 excited walkers gathered to enjoy Wales' Pembrokeshire coast in all its glory – and make a difference for refugees fleeing Ukraine.

The four-and-a-half-mile walk from Pencaer's Harmony Chapel to Hermon Chapel in Fishguard sailed by, broken up by chatter and the chance to carry aloft the blue and yellow flag of Ukraine.

A short service was held in Hermon Chapel under the leadership of four ministers, including the Reverends Huw George, Tom Dafis, Geraint Morse and Aled Jenkins. Wonderfully, the following month, Rev Geraint Morse was able to present a cheque for nearly £6,000 to Mrs Bonni Davies, the new president of Senana Cymru, for the work of BMS World Mission!

Celebrating the Stamp Bureau: your letters and memories



Dear Stamp Bureau Team,

We wanted to thank you for all the years you have managed the donation of stamps and coins for the benefit of BMS World Mission, and the help this has been to communities around the world.

There are times and seasons and things change, but we did want to acknowledge your work and expertise that has made the Stamp Bureau such a worthwhile work over the years.

Thank you,
Marion



Dear Hannah,

Always enjoy *Engage* and continue to pray for the work of BMS every day (using the *Prayer Guide*). I admit to being sad to think of the closure of the Stamp Bureau... It's something I have supported for decades, encouraged churches to be part of, but I can see it's 'had its day' now, both because of how few people write or send letters and cards now, but also the post office practice of franking rather than holding large stocks of stamps. So thank you for all the money that's been raised over the years and to those who faithfully sorted and sold them.

Yours sincerely,
Sally



Dear Hardworking Stamp-Sorters!

Thank you for doing this service for so many years. May the last donations bring in a worthy profit, especially now that we have a new King Charles III so that the face on the stamp will change.

Yours sincerely,
Judith (Crofton Park Baptist Church)



Thank you for taking my stamps towards funds for the wonderful work of BMS. It means a lot of work for you and I am grateful. So sorry that this service is ending. Thank you again. God bless you in the future.

Janet

An exciting update

While BMS World Mission is no longer able to receive loose stamps, thanks to the involvement of a new volunteer, the Stamp Bureau will continue to accept donations of stamp collections and related philatelic material. These will be sold to raise funds for the work of BMS. From October 2022, donations should be sent to: BMS Stamp Bureau, 6 Chapel Street, Norton Canes, Staffordshire, WS11 9NL. Enquiries from collectors wishing to purchase stamps or other items should also be sent to the same address.

Find out more at bmsworldmission.org/stamps



STANDING WITH SRI LANKA

A government deposed. A nation in turmoil. Roshan Mendis tells us what it's been like heading up BMS World Mission partner Asia Pacific Baptist Aid (APBAid) in Sri Lanka this year. Learn how you've supported his work through its toughest season yet, and pray with Roshan for stability and peace.

Tell us about the day that you arrived back in Colombo from a trip to the UK to raise awareness of all that was going on in Sri Lanka.

My journey back was surreal. It felt like I was living in two parallel worlds. One in which everything around me was 'normal' – people travelling places, eating, sleeping, working, driving and living life as it should be lived. While all the while I knew how hard things were back at home.

The general atmosphere on that day was a mix of many emotions; a mix of hope, a sense of achievement, but also a sense of uncertainty and some confusion, of where this would lead, particularly after the president fled his residence. The next few days were suspenseful – no-one expected him to flee the country without resigning but simply to step down.

"A journey that would normally cost US\$15 was quoted at US\$50"

What were you thinking and how are you feeling?

I knew that economic recovery was a long way away, but I was hoping for better, more honourable governance. However, currently I am feeling quite despondent at the turnaround of the situation and the deepening instability. We have witnessed several bodies that have been washed ashore on the beaches around Colombo, some with their hands and feet tied.

There is also a general sense of hope waning as we think of the future of this country particularly, with so many migrating our shores. The impact of the brain drain on the

future leadership of this nation will only compound the damage of the economic losses we have faced. We cry out to the Lord for his mercy and lament the loss in his presence.

"We cry out to the Lord for his mercy"

What are some of the challenges facing ordinary Sri Lankan people today?

There are shortages of fuel and basic essentials, schools are non-functional due to transport difficulties and power outages and the lack of fuel also affects farmers getting their goods to market as well as harvesting it. Getting fuel required waiting for days in spirit-crushing queues. I gave up and now get around by bus or bicycle.



Currently close to 200 essential medicines are out of stock, with a predicted shortage of another 163 critical medicines over the next two to three months. I have heard of some procedures being carried out using a mobile phone torch.

The rupee has lost almost half its value since March, and many Sri Lankans are surviving on one meal a day; some are starving.

What role can Christians play at times of political instability?

I believe the Church is called to pray and seek God's desire for such situations, as well as to get out of our four walls and cry for justice, fulfilling the prophetic call and ministry of the Church while meeting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of those affected – as channels of compassion and hope in these dark times.

What is APBAid doing in response to the current crisis?

As the impacts of the crisis began to turn into a situation of humanitarian need, the mandate of APBAid obliged us to intervene. Accordingly, calling upon the local Baptist Union and her partners, a coalition of five faith-based ministries was formed as the first step, called the SL Crisis Response Coalition.

“We are here for such a time as this”

What is personally keeping you going at this time?

The sense that we are here “for such a time as this”. The prayers and solidarity of the team and those of all our partners. And the hope that we have that God is at work, that he cares and is conscious of the needs of

The SL Crisis Response Coalition's first phase has included:

Cash grants/vouchers for food for **1,430** low-income families

Education support packs for **250** urban poor schoolchildren

Support for home gardens and poultry farming for **1,000** families

Sourcing medicines and consumables for the national paediatric hospital in Colombo

Support for youth-led advocacy campaigns, raising awareness of political and constitutional amendments

Appealing to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, among other bodies, to uphold human rights and act with restraint

Appeals for others to call upon their governments and release public statements about the crisis

Church awareness and response, and child protection messaging for vulnerable families

individuals, and calls us and sends us to them in the midst of national calamity, even as he fed the widow of Zarephath in the midst of a drought of national proportions.

Tell us something about Sri Lanka that you don't want people in the UK to forget.

I love the capacity, skill and creativity Sri Lankans are known for; I love and long to see their lives transformed and come to a place where they can experience their potential as God intends. I love the beauty of this land, the natural diversity that is so rich yet found in such a condensed and compact way. As stated by Bishop Heber of Calcutta in his poem about mission to Ceylon, as it was then known, penned around 1825: “God in his kindness has lavished and strewn this land with his gifts”. But one wonders with him, in this context of bankruptcy we have come to, if it is indeed in vain.

How can we be praying for Sri Lanka?

Please pray for justice to prevail and the establishment of an accountable system of governance. Pray too that in some way the plight of the people will be eased in their need for food, medicines, fuel and other basic necessities.

Pray that an acceptable plan for recovery, debt restructuring and reform will be finalised so that we can begin to see change.

Pray for the Church as it seeks to be a voice of hope in the midst of much confusion and despondency.

Pray for a generation of leaders whose love for the nation can truly lead us forward.

Pray for the APBAid team operating from Sri Lanka to be able to serve the region as we are entrusted to do.

HOW TO BUILD A HOSPITAL

Lessons from Nepal

Did you know that the nation of Nepal is on a “recruitment red list”? With 0.67 Nepalese doctors and nurses for every 1,000 people, the red list means that the World Health Organization considers the active recruitment of healthcare workers from Nepal by other countries unethical.

Words: Hannah Watson

But back in August, an article from *The Times* reported that 100 nurses were being flown over from Nepal to work in the UK’s NHS. An agreement had been brokered between the two governments as part of a pilot scheme, so that the UK can meet its own staffing shortfalls. With this dispiriting news ringing in my ears, I turned to BMS World Mission workers Pippa and Toby Vokuhl and Alan and Megan Barker. Both couples have dedicated

years to serving health needs in Nepal, helping to build an infrastructure of excellent medical care from the ground up. Whether it’s through hospital foundations laid and wards opened, or raising funds for lifesaving projects and programmes, I wanted to understand how they are setting about to transform health outcomes in the country. In short, I wanted to know the answer to one very big question: ‘How do you build a hospital?’

The foundations

For Pippa and Toby Vokuhl, the idea of building a hospital is quite literal. In fact, it’s what Toby’s been doing at BMS partner Green Pastures Hospital in Pokhara for the past few months – and it’s what sent workers to Nepal have been doing for the past seven decades.

Green Pastures Hospital is one of the ‘Shining Hospitals’, the health centres built by the very first Christian medical



Pippa and Toby Vokuhl (top left) have been based in Nepal since 2018. Alan and Megan Barker (bottom right) have served in the country since 2000.

teams to set up work in Nepal some 70 years ago. These early health centres were built on the site of old leprosy hospitals, first using bamboo and thatch, and then prefabricated aluminium from India. Nowadays, Green Pastures Hospital has expanded its work treating people with leprosy to include the treatment of people with cerebral palsy, hearing loss, disabilities caused by spinal cord injuries, and those needing palliative care. It served over 20,000 patients in 2018, but still describes itself as 'Shining Hospital Green Pastures' – a homage to days gone by when locals would remark on its shining metallic walls.

Widening the hospital's capacity to deal with such an impressive range of patients only means one thing: more buildings. Toby doesn't recall how he felt that first day

walking into the Green Pastures complex, but he and Pippa do remember with fondness a visiting couple who stood in its epicentre and asked, "So where's the hospital?"

"It was certainly very green and spacious," Toby adds. "Obviously, over time, Pokhara has grown and surrounded the site, but the fact is that it's still green, and I think it's something that we really want to maintain and use for rehabilitative benefit in the future." Faced with endless possibilities and lots of space, it's impressive to learn that Toby's first building project was a 300-seat multipurpose space that could be used as a place of worship and learning centre. "But with the help of a Nepali engineer of course," Toby adds. "I was thrown in at the deep end in some ways and did a lot of learning on the job."

Building blocks

Aside from acting as a surveyor and engineer, Toby's calling in Nepal also requires him to play the role of site planner and architect – as well as, at times, interior designer. Planning well for the hospital's development requires keeping an ear close to the ground, listening out for what staff most need. Whether it's cleverly incorporating steel beams into the operating room of Dr Sajit*, a talented Nepali hand surgeon, so that one day, the hospital can buy ceiling mounted lights, or leaving space for a consulting room to be built next door, collaboration between the hospital's construction team and medical staff is the key to success. And when funding often comes in the form of small grants, good foresight is a must. "I've been working quite closely with Dr Sajit to say, 'Look, if we have the

“ THE UK HAS PRIORITISED ITS OWN STAFFING SHORTFALLS

”



opportunity to create a minor operating room for you, how do we best lay it out?" says Toby. "Do you need sterile storage? A sluice room? Can we include that in the design and the scope?"

All of this is made more challenging by the reality of what's available in Nepal. Shopping to replace the 1960s concrete floor, now peeling off in places, reads more like detective work. "Searching online to find things doesn't really work," explains Toby. "So it's about talking to one supplier, who then recommends another supplier who then knows the uncle of someone who's importing something. It's much more explorative. I'm trying to build networks with other hospitals to see what they're using. We've had some problems with the main operating theatre floor at the hospital, and we're just like, 'Wow, how did that happen?

Do you have that same problem or are you using a different product?"

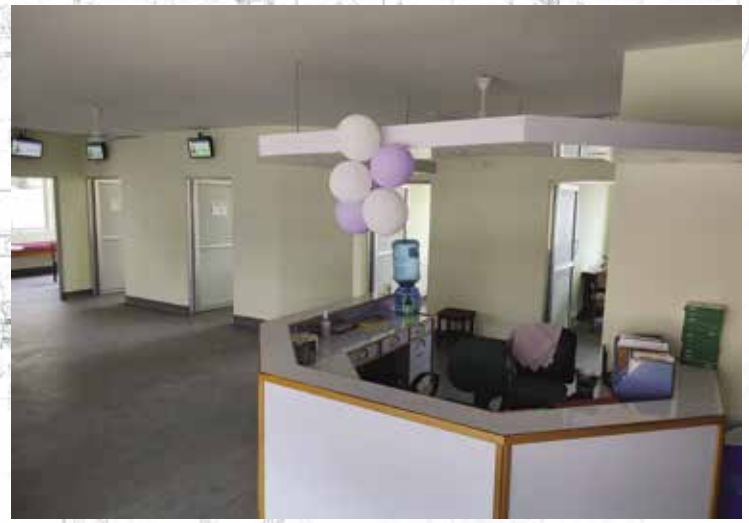
Often it's the patients themselves that define the brief. "In the UK," Pippa explains, "the patient gets submitted and their loved ones might visit them, but you wouldn't expect to do hands-on care. Whereas in Nepal [as in many countries], the nurses only deliver medical care. A family member will do any personal care that's needed, like taking someone to the toilet or washing their clothes." So instead of asking for modern bowl-shaped wash basins outside a new ward, patients had their own plans. "They wanted the types of flat basins where people could wash clothes and dishes, with the water being collected as well for people to do their daily self-care," says Toby. "So that's really great to listen to them and to say, 'This is what we still need

in this modern building'." And as for supporting family members, Toby's envisioned creating an ingenious bed-on-wheels to be stored under each patient bed, giving carers somewhere to sleep and doubling a ward's capacity in an instant.

Structural support

It's clear that the key to successful healthcare is in those magical interactions between building, patient and health worker. That's something Alan and Megan can attest to, in their roles training occupational therapists (OTs) and fundraising for medical work in Nepal. When Megan began her role, she was the only OT registered in the country. Now, she's built up a team of nine dedicated Nepali OTs who embrace the hurdles that their relatively unknown profession throws at them. "Mostly we have to make our own equipment,"

“
THE
PATIENTS
HAD THEIR
OWN
PLANS
”



explains Megan. "I just got a standing frame made in the local shopping street, buying metal from a merchant and then getting a bit of wood added... We have to be a lot more creative."

Alan tells me that the best-resourced hospitals in Nepal tend to be ones supported by mission organisations. It makes his role of supporting Nepali fundraisers like Binsa* all the more important. Alan helps his team to get to know the audience they're writing to overseas and what they might not realise about life in Nepal. Instead of saying that Megan has completed a home visit, explains Alan, it's about detailing that it involved driving until the road came to an end, walking for six hours and then going through a river. It's important to share too that hospitals can be incredibly remote, with patients being carried for hours to get

there. For patients with spinal cord injuries in particular, that can turn a minor injury into a catastrophic one. "What Nepali people would call hilly, we would call mountainous," shares Alan. "And we find we have the same problem too when we go on home assignment, if we are telling a story from the front, if we say A, we then realise we have to describe B, C and D to explain the context." Painting a full picture for donors who have never visited Nepal can lead to more successful fundraising, impacting and saving patient lives.

A shining future

At the end of my conversations with the Vokuhls and Barkers, I'm so encouraged to hear about the excellent work being done by locals and BMS workers alike in Nepal, continuing the legacy of the first Shining Hospitals. And as we chat, I

realise that we really have come full circle. Pippa tells me that Dhriti*, a colleague of both the Vokuhls and the Barkers, is the granddaughter of one of the first leprosy patients to be treated in a 'Shining Hospital'. "The couple became Christians, married and had their children... and Dhriti their granddaughter is now being trained by BMS' partner as a health worker." It's a reminder that it's the people that make a hospital – and that the impact they have continues down the generations. "There's a strong tradition within Nepali culture that the past is really important... remembering how organisations got there and who has shaped things over the years," says Pippa. And with people like Dr Sajit, Binsa and Dhriti leading the way, we can give thanks to God that the future, though uncertain, truly is in good hands.

**Names changed for security reasons*

“
WE HAVE
TO MAKE
OUR OWN
EQUIPMENT
”

GOOD LAND: REALLY BLESSED AND BEYOND HAPPY

Words: **Hannah Watson** • Photos: **Clive Thomas**



S

Soumy* thought he'd have to leave Nepal to have a good life.

It's a decision that would have seen him join the millions of Nepali families with at least one member working abroad in places like India, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, sending money home

and watching their children grow up from afar. But thanks to you, it's a decision Soumy never had to make. Thank you for organising *Good Land* harvest services in your churches and giving sacrificially to the BMS World Mission 2022 Harvest appeal. You've transformed Ghusel village and it's changed Soumy's life. Here's how.

The training opened my eyes

Soumy's been raising goats in Ghusel village for the past 15 years. It was long enough to know that something wasn't working – he was a hardworking husband and father to two girls, but the land he'd poured his energy and care into wasn't yielding much fruit. It couldn't even support his family. He was a subsistence farmer, living in poverty – and one who was considering going abroad to make ends meet. But your support has changed everything.

Soumy's wife, Ditya, had been part of the women's self-help groups in Ghusel set up by BMS partner MCDS. The group allowed women to speak up and make decisions in their community, something longed for by Anita, who

you met in the *Good Land* video. When it came to selecting the right person to care for a new breeding goat – one of the goats your gifts provided through the appeal – the women had one person in mind. It was Soumy, who had never given up on the idea that life could be better.

"I am really blessed and beyond happy," explains Soumy. "Seeing my desire to learn more, and my low economic condition, the participants selected me to receive the Boer goat provided in the training to increase the quality of breeding in the community."

Alongside stewarding the breeding goat on behalf of the village, Soumy received veterinary training along with other farmers from Ghusel. There, he's learned about improved

housing, feeding and the healthcare management of the goats. "It was very helpful," says Soumy. "The training opened my eyes to the importance and benefit of animal insurance. Moreover, I've learned about diseases in goats, their vaccination cycle, deworming and goat breeding management. The best part was learning by doing, where the trainer taught us practically."

A good land

It's easy to see why the women put their faith in Soumy. Since the training, he's taken all he's learned and run with it – in fact, blink and you'd miss him! When the BMS partner team caught up with Soumy, he shared that he'd insured all his goats through

GOOD LAND: THE FACTS

£104,538

THE AMAZING TOTAL YOU'VE RAISED SO FAR FOR THE *GOOD LAND* APPEAL

5 YOUNG PEOPLE FROM BAPTIST CHURCHES WHO HAVE JOINED BMS PARTNER MCDS AS INTERNS THIS YEAR

641 PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN LIVESTOCK CARE, GOAT RAISING AND KITCHEN GARDENING SO FAR

3,675 PEOPLE IMPACTED BY THE WORK IN COMMUNITIES LIKE GHUSEL

the rural municipality, as well as vaccinating all his animals. He was also planning to build a shed as had been demonstrated in the training, allowing him to increase the size of his herd. In fact, Soumy's on the cusp of registering his business as an official goat farm and focusing on it exclusively to earn his living. "The goat that [BMS supporters] provided has earned £25 in the past two months by being loaned out to other farmers," explains Soumy. "And the community are benefiting from the billy goat. Normally they'd have to walk two hours, but now they are able to breed their goats within a reasonable distance."

Soumy has realised that breeding goats brings other benefits too. "I am using the manure from goats in my kitchen garden as a fertiliser, in this way I can get grow my own vegetables and sustain my family," he explains. Not only has all this convinced him that he can earn enough while staying in Nepal, but he also has hope for his family's future.

"Now I am confident that life will not be that difficult, though we don't have much land for cultivation, the earnings from the goat rearing will bring stability to my household expenses. I believe that through this farm I can provide good education to my children and provide them with good nutritional food."

Parents to four girls, Bishnu (pictured bottom) and Parbati dreamed of a better future where their daughters would have the chance to go to school, and where they would have a stable income.

I SEE MY COMMUNITY LIVING IN UNITY

While Soumy is celebrating the hope he's been given, we're sure you're keen to hear how the other inhabitants of Ghusel village are doing. We caught up with Shiva, Bishnu and Parbati, who you met in the *Good Land* video. We even heard from a ward official in Ghusel about what he made of the transformative work made possible by your gifts. Here's what they had to share.

Bishnu and Parbati

When we chatted to Bishnu, he shared that self-help groups had transformed decision-making in the community. "The best thing BMS

partner MCDS has been doing is implementing activities through the self-help group. Different activities [like the veterinary training and water management training] have opened our eyes and created awareness of various things that were unknown to us before. We've also been growing maize and vegetables."

In fact, self-help groups have really taken on a life of their own in the community. One has been visiting neighbouring communities to clean and tidy communal areas, roads and trails. Excitingly, BMS partner workers shared that women have also been encouraged to take on leadership roles in the groups, even in mixed settings.





Shiva's own sons dropped out of school around the age of 14. He dreamt of a better future for his granddaughters, and after seeing his dreams for his community coming true, he's dreaming even bigger dreams.

Shiva

"The focus of the ward office and community is now on improving education," says Shiva. "I see my community living in unity. My forefathers lived here and I love the fact that I'm here in this community." Shiva's seen what his community can do and all they've achieved. As he shows BMS partner workers his herd of goats, he's got another dream to share: "I dream that after five years nobody is unemployed and everyone is involved in commercial farming and earning their living."



Gurratan

"I have personally attended some of the training in schools and other activities. I am very impressed with the work your organisation has done," he shares. "Helping and supporting one another can make a huge difference in community development... I am very thankful to MCDS for coming and helping the community and continuing the good work."

Of all the things Gurratan was thankful for, the work supporting and uplifting the lives of women was

Gurratan is a ward committee member for Ghusel. He sat down with BMS partner worker Amos to share what he made of the work that BMS supporters have made possible in Ghusel, especially the championing of women's voices and the prioritising of child-centred education in Ghusel's school.

particularly high on the list. He also valued having BMS-supported partner workers living alongside the people of Ghusel, something made possible through your support.

Thank you for everything you've done to transform lives in Ghusel, and for everything your money will go on to do as the work of BMS partner MCDS continues. We look forward to bringing you further updates, but, for now – please know that you've changed the lives of Soumy, Bishnu and his family, and many others, forever. More than that, in Soumy's own words, you've left some of the most vulnerable families in Nepal feeling "really blessed, and beyond happy". That's something that is priceless. Thank you.

**All names changed for security purposes.*

Your recent support in Afghanistan

2018 You helped save the lives of mothers and babies by providing crucial birthing classes

2019 You helped bring clean water to rural villages

2020 You helped provide vital mental health support to people struggling through the Covid-19 pandemic

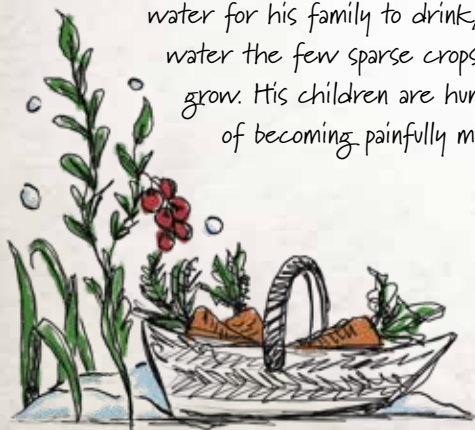
Afghanistan

Dear Engage readers,

I hope you can forgive me for the sparseness of this letter. Because I live in [REDACTED], Afghanistan, it's not safe for me to share too much about my life here, and the people in my community. I can't even share my real name. Instead of [REDACTED], you can call me Ruby.

I want to be honest with you – things in Afghanistan might be a bit more stable now than they were when the [REDACTED] first arrived, but things could topple at any time. We don't know what's going to happen next, and people have already been through so much. Drought, the cost of living crisis and growing unemployment rates are having disastrous effects on the people I work with. And I'm more acutely aware than ever that the agricultural work I do – and even just my presence here in [REDACTED] – is so important for the people I live and work among. Which is why I want to keep telling you stories of my work, despite the risks, in the hope that you can help me.

You might have received a letter from me in the post recently sharing the story of Fazal (I've given him a different name to protect his identity), one of the farmers I work with. If you didn't, let me introduce you. Fazal is the sole supporter of a family of ten. Because of the drought we experienced over the summer, he struggled to get enough water for his family to drink, and even less to water the few sparse crops he's been able to grow. His children are hungry, and in danger of becoming painfully malnourished.



I'm going to do all I can to help Fazal feed his family. But I need your help. If you can give to BMS World Mission's Afghanistan Christmas appeal, you can help Fazal and farmers like him get the seeds, tools and training they need to grow enough food to feed their families.

I know Fazal, and I know how desperate he is to make sure his family have enough to eat. Just like any other parent, he wants to make sure his children grow up strong and healthy. If you can give today, you'll be able to help him.

There are so many other things I wish I could share with you about my life in Afghanistan and the people I know. I wish I could share about the young girls who live near me, [REDACTED], who dream of becoming a doctor or a lawyer, or of going to high school, who are now unsure about what their futures hold. I wish I could tell you about my colleagues, [REDACTED], how hard they've worked doing [REDACTED] and how they hope to [REDACTED]. Maybe one day I'll be able to. But until that day comes, it gives me hope to know that you're praying for me and supporting me from afar.

I know things are hard for a lot of people in the UK right now, and if you're not able to give, please don't feel that you have to. But if you can, I know you'll be making a huge difference to Fazal and his family. Every blessing,
Ruby

PS Your prayers and support mean so much to me. You can give to the BMS Afghanistan Christmas appeal today by simply visiting www.bmsworldmission.org/afghanchristmas. Thank you so much.





A letter from Bethlehem

Riham is a student at the BMS World Mission supported Bethlehem Bible College in the Middle East. "I can testify about the difference I have experienced through the journey that God took me on through my studies," Riham explains. Read on to find out how your support for students like Riham is making this possible.



Dear friends,

My name is Riham. I live just outside of Bethlehem, and I am 27 years old. I have a Diploma in Mass Media from Bethlehem Bible College (BBC), and in May I presented my final project paper about the crisis of faith for Palestinian theologians and the Palestinian Christian population, with a focus on today's interpretations of the Old Testament.

When I first attended BBC, my dream was to be a journalist, but all that's changed since I met Jesus for the first time when I joined the chapel. While I was studying Media originally, I made the decision that after I finished my diploma I would continue to study Theology here. I felt that it was God's calling for my life and now I am sure it was the best decision I could make!

During these four years, God shaped my personality and my theological concepts about who he is. I realised how important it is for every youth to learn about God, and this is one of the things I am most passionate about – encouraging the youth to know

Christ, because God created us and put us on this earth, not by chance, but for a purpose. I want to be a light for these young people – to help them discover their purpose in life through their relationship with Christ and not the world.

Through BBC, I have been able to serve refugees in Jordan and attend conferences such as the Global Leadership Summit, which helped me discover my personality as a leader. BBC has offered me a lot, including getting to know inspiring people who enabled me to become a member of a church that embraces me spiritually. Today I am a member of the Alliance Church, with Rev Dr Jack Sara and Dr Madleine Sara. I will move on to the MA programme next year, but this year will be a year of reflection as I am working in the gift shop at BBC while meditating about the preparations needed for the next chapter in my life.

Thank you,
Riham

“
I WANT
TO BE
A LIGHT
FOR
THESE
YOUNG
PEOPLE
”



LETTERS FROM... THE UK



Encouraged in prayer

I first started to pray for Helen and Wit Boondeekhun after reading [an *Engage*] article you published back in around 2016/2017... The result was that the Lord laid the work on my heart and I resolved to pray regularly for them. In that article the prayer requests included Helen and Wit, developing relationships with the village community, and Suree, who was the only local villager meeting with them, but not yet a Christian. There was also a young man who ran a football team... and I also included the team in Uttaradit.

On the basis of these requests I have been able to pray regularly for the work up to 2020, continuing over the years with only the occasional additional information from prayer request notes. Sadly, age and serious illness over the last two years have meant that regular prayer has become increasingly difficult for me. However, to be able to read the update on the work in the new Issue 54 of *Engage* has been so refreshing and encouraging, especially the conversion of Suree and the growth of the church now to 20 or more.

Although my prayer contribution is no longer what it once was, I praise the Lord for what is being achieved still and for the many others who continue to pray for the work. Every blessing,

Brian

My prayers will be with them

Just a quick note regarding Helen and Wit's move to a new challenge – I have been praying for them for many years (I am now 85). It is good news that God has found a new couple to carry on their work in Wang Daeng. My prayers will still be with them as they take up their new challenge. Yours sincerely,

Margaret

Editor's note:

I passed on the numerous encouragements I received from people praying for Wit and Helen after the publication of Issue 54. This was their response:

Thank you so much for forwarding those responses – they're so encouraging. We are always so delighted and humbled to hear of people's faithful prayers for us over the years. We have seen God answer those prayers and it gives us faith that He can do the same again as we begin our new venture in Tao Hai.

Thank you again.

*Blessings, **Helen and Wit.***



Bringing back memories

I was moved by [the article on Ukraine] as I am sure many readers have been. I was particularly struck by the fact that the Baptist Seminary in Warsaw is hosting Ukrainians. It brought back memories of my time on a summer team that went there with BMS back in 2003. I remember it being a wonderful oasis, especially the grounds away from the bustle of a capital city. I am so glad it is proving a haven for these beleaguered people.

Every blessing and thanks so much for *Engage*.

Rosemary

Get in touch!

If you've been inspired or challenged by anything you've read in *Engage*, we would love to hear from you. Get in touch using one of the methods on page 2!



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING GOOD LAND

Inside this issue of *Engage*, you'll discover how your generous donations have been making a difference in Ghusel.

You can learn more about the appeal at www.bmsworldmission.org/goodland

Photo: ©Clive Thomas, for BMS World Mission

