

IN PARTNERSHIP

March 2022



Thanking God for Opportunities in Challenging Times



Elder Zingmuan and his wife Ngensim

When Elder Zingmuan first volunteered to serve in remote Mru communities in Bangladesh he knew he would face challenging circumstances. He did not speak the same language. There were no other Christians in the area, and he knew none of the Mru people living there.

"I [left behind] many friends and relatives, worldly wealth, desire and everything which could hinder me from the ministry," Elder Zingmuan says. "I raised my hand to serve the Mru Community...and I started my journey to explore what is a ministry."

Despite all these challenges, Elder Zingmuan's faith helped him see this as an opportunity to be thankful for. He said, "[What is] lost in the world is gain[ed] for eternity."

The Mru people are a vulnerable minority group in Bangladesh. For many years they faced violent persecution, the effects of which are still felt today. In his first year, Elder Zingmuan and his family travelled to almost every community in the area, getting to know the people and learning their language.

When preachers like Elder Zingmuan learned the Mru language, people could hear the word of God for the first time in their own language! The Mru language is spoken, and a written alphabet wasn't developed

until the 1980s — during the time that Elder Zingmuan was serving there. Bandarban Hills Churches of Christ (BHCOC) started working on Mru songbooks and Bibles, but the ministry was struck by setbacks.

Elder Zingmuan says, "Due to severe famine and political war, I and my wife left the place where we served. The circumstances had compelled us to move away, and that village was moved and all of them were scattered; none of them remain in one place. I could not continue my desire to serve the Lord among the Mru for almost 33 years."

Once again faced with incredible challenges, Elder Zingmuan thanked God for the opportunity he had. "I took opportunity to reassign the left-over task for the Lord," he shared.

Translation is a long and difficult process, especially for an emerging written language. Thanks in part to Elder Zingmuan's hard work, the Bible and songbooks are being published!

When he first came to serve the Mru communities, Elder Zingmuan pushed on despite knowing it would be hard; he is thankful to God for the opportunity. Something he could not have seen coming was the COVID-19 pandemic. "The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many of our people, and two of the older people have lost their

life," he says. "[But] we received three times relief of medicine and food for the Mru communities [compared to a normal year]."

Elder Zingmuan continues to serve God in the Bandarban Hills even though he faces challenging times. Despite the difficulties, he has worked with faith and thankfulness to God in his heart. The seeds he has planted have started to grow. Now he looks to the future as BHCOC plan further publications and a church building. He is thankful to God for what he sees.

"As I am getting older and older (72 years), my mind and vision are still renewing day by day. I have laid the strong foundation, empowering the leaders who could take my responsibility to promote the ministries."

We thank God for people like Elder Zingmuan who face challenges with steadfast faith. And he thanks God for supporters like you, who generously give to help people like him build faith communities, despite the difficulty.

When you give to Walk For Hope, you are helping people like Elder Zingmuan face these challenges with hope. You strengthen his work of sharing the good news. You are giving people like him one more thing to be thankful for.

News & Events

Walk for Hope

Walk for Hope is the opportunity at Easter to support evangelism, church planting and ministry training across the nations. A series of resources will be available for churches and individuals this month. Join us this Easter in giving thanks. Please visit www.WalkforHope.com.au

QLD and NSW Floods Appeal

In response to the devastating flooding in New South Wales and Queensland, Global Mission Partners Extend, our entity for emergency responses in Australia, is launching an appeal to support the recovery of impacted people. Donated funds will be distributed through local churches and Churches of Christ agencies and/or other bodies with the capacity to identify, support and meet the needs of those affected by the floods. Through giving, we know that we can make a difference to those most in need. Find out more and donate at www.extend.org.au/floodsappeal

International Women's Day

International Women's Day (March 8) is a time to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in history for their country and community. This year's theme 'Break the Bias – Equality today for a sustainable tomorrow' recognises the contribution of women and girls around the world and challenges us to reflect on the progress made to bring gender equality and build a sustainable future. We honour all the **Women in Ministry** who serve among our partners globally.

World Water Day

This annual observance on March 22 highlights the importance of safe water and advocates for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. For insight into how our partners work to bring safe water and maintain boreholes see our spotlight and embody articles on page 3.



Partnering Across Nations

Mission statements are a way of summing up the essential purpose of an organisation or ministry. Local churches, conferences, clubs and businesses all have mission statements. They say what is important in as few words as possible and do so in a way that captures attention.

As we have been planning the future of GMP, we decided to look again at our mission statement, 'Linking people, churches and resources across nations'. We felt that this statement is a bit long and unclear. We also concluded that the word 'linking' is not generally thought of in relationship terms.

The word that best describes the activities of GMP is 'partnering'. This aspect of our work has been with us for many decades. Ron McLean is credited with introducing it, and all the Executive Directors since then have embedded it in the culture of GMP.

'Partnering' is a heart-beat word for GMP. We affirm the multi-dimensional and two-way nature of the word. We are engaged in mutual partnerships. We learn from each other, we grow together, and we engage in mission together. Our faith is stronger together.

Our partners are everyone on the GMP mission journey – overseas and in Australia. All partners are important.

We also reflected on the word 'nations'. Most often this is a word

thought of in terms of international realities. Different nations have unique cultures, locations and languages. They all express their understanding of God and the life of the church in ways that reflect who they are. This is also true for Australia's First Peoples. There are more than 300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island nations. Some say around 500 nations, and each with differing language, culture, lands and self-understanding.

So, nations is a good word for GMP and captures what we understand about our ministry. We joined these two words with an additional word that captures the concept of bridging something and so we have our new mission statement.

Global Mission Partners – Partnering Across Nations. It is simple, easy to remember and very clear.

You may have even noticed it appear in GMP's logo, which has been refreshed and made a bit more contemporary. This new branding, featuring our new mission, will be rolled out across GMP's communications over the coming months.

If we are not partnering and serving nations, we are not being GMP. If we are not partnering, we are also not being the body of Christ. Partnering reflects the unity that Jesus prayed for 'that the world might believe'.

John Gilmore
Executive Officer

SPOTLIGHT



Women bring water and men create the apron for the new borehole at Muvonde

Muvonde Borehole Eases Burden for Entire Community

A borehole can ease the burden of water shortages for a community. Without a borehole in the Muvonde community, women had to walk long distances to collect water. They relied on unclear water sources nearby or boreholes in other districts. When the Muvonde borehole was drilled in December 2021, the whole community was filled with joy!

When Showers of Blessing install a new borehole, the community is involved in the process. Ntando Msimanga, Showers of Blessing Field Officer explains, “Through community participation, a sense of ownership is cultivated, as well as a greater appreciation of value and worth of their newfound asset.”

The Muvonde community rallied together to provide the labour and local resources to complete the build. Ntando describes the process, “The community cooperates with the construction of the apron and soakaway pit (concrete slab and drainage for the pump). We usually leave them to do this at a separate time after we have drilled the borehole (for whenever they can carve out an opportunity in-between their chores). The Muvonde community gathered river sand, pit sand, gravel and water to complete the mix.”

“In keeping with our modus operandi, we provided the equipment for making the apron and a couple of

skilled workers who knew how to operate the equipment, courtesy of the Rural District Council. Skilled community members such as builders and carpenters also get their chance to shine as they assist with tools and expertise that are required in such a task. Tools such as trowels, wheelbarrows, and valuable knowledge are required in handling these tasks efficiently.”

Ntando mentioned that, as the borehole was being constructed, the women were of great help in sourcing water from nearby water sources, such as low-lying pits or collection points. He said, “They carried their buckets overhead, as they usually do, and were pouring the water into a drum for storage. This was a great division of labour displayed by this community. Both men and women have shared in the labour and now both can share in the fruits of the completed borehole.”

The Muvonde borehole is a source of safe water. Ntando expands, “It has alleviated their plight from drinking contaminated water, represents the gift of improved health and extra time, especially the women who now have a shorter walking distance to collect water as opposed to a long working day to fetch water further afield. They are now collecting water close by.”

March 22 is World Water Day, an annual United Nations Observance that celebrates water and raises

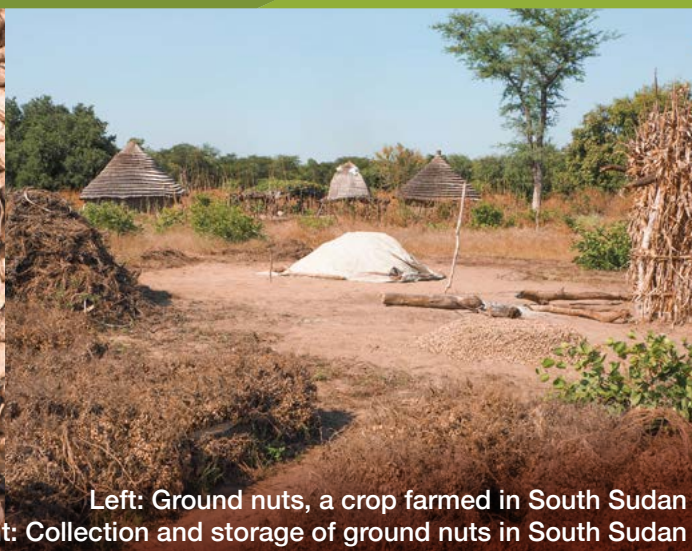
awareness for the 2 billion people currently living without access to safe water. Through the work of our partners, we see firsthand how safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WaSH) can change lives.

This World Water Day learn more about the issues facing people without safe water. You can visit worldwaterday.org/ to find out more or learn more about GMP partner Shower of Blessing at gmp.org.au/ ShowersofBlessing.

Thank you for supporting our partners giving life-changing safe water, sanitation and hygiene to communities like Muvonde.

embody Observes World Water Day

This World Water Day, embody will be sharing an update on the progress of projects supported by Safe Water September. This year the focus of World Water Day is on groundwater, a topic that the Showers of Blessing team and the Safe Water September community are well versed in! Communities in Zimbabwe know firsthand the increasing importance of access to, and care for, groundwater. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for the World Water Day update.



Left: Ground nuts, a crop farmed in South Sudan
Right: Collection and storage of ground nuts in South Sudan

Introducing the Conservation Agriculture Pilot

Many of the poorest farmers in the Aweil District of South Sudan still plough by hand. This is an exhausting and time-consuming task. You might remember our local partner, Christian Mercy International (CMI), has been working with farmers in this area. Before, CMI had been providing oxen and ploughs to farmers to help them improve their productivity. This was a way to help improve livelihoods and food security.

The introduction of ploughs and oxen did increase returns for farmers. But it wasn't without problems. The oxen and ploughs were expensive, meaning it was difficult to give ploughs to all the farmers who wanted them.

So, when this project was evaluated, a new approach was imagined.

CMI still wanted to support these farmers, help improve food security and livelihoods.

CMI Director, Paulino Malou, was also looking into a tree planting project (Return the Rains), which prompted interest in a new approach. We decided to pilot a new approach called Conservation Agriculture.

Conservation farming can double or even triple farming production! This is without having to increase the area being farmed. It improves the soil, promising ongoing increased

returns for the future. It is also more cost effective than funding traditional ploughing which reduces the productivity of the soil over time. Conservation farming is much better for the environment.

CMI will work with subsistence farmers, to pilot new methods of farming that are more sustainable for the future. This will help improve their food supply and income.

The CMI team had a week of training in Jinja town, Uganda, with Pastor Thomas of Life Gospel Ministries. The training, held in January, was on the Foundations for Farming method of conservation farming. This is a new technique that is better for the environment and is more productive. Two CMI staff and four farmers from Aweil completed the training, which they will bring back and test in the Aweil environment and share with other farmers there.

The training covered many topics. These included Principles of Farming, Soil and Rainfall, Vegetable Production and Herbs. It also included practical farming work in the field – learning how to test soil, sow seed and cover the ground with mulch.

The team also completed Agroforestry and Pfumvundza topics. Pfumvundza is a conservation farming strategy where maize is planted in a very

precise way with the aim of providing a bucket of maize each week – enough to feed a family.

A major challenge is conservation agriculture is not common in rural South Sudan. There are a lack of technologies in general available in the country's agricultural sector.

CMI's first task is to show that conservation agriculture works well in Aweil. As other farmers see it working, training will be offered so that they can benefit from conservation farming too.

The Conservation Agriculture Pilot will enable CMI to help make conservation farming accessible. Communities in need will gain valuable skills. Creating acceptance around sustainable farming will help encourage sustainable practices. Farmers will benefit by getting better results that continue to improve over time.

Once the pilot is complete, CMI plans to roll out conservation farming to more groups. This will provide twenty-five communities in need with new skills and a better future.

Find out more about
Conservation Agriculture
Pilot at www.gmp.org.au/conservationagriculturepilot