

MARCH 2015



harvesters

INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES



On the Ground

INDIA

Good Samaritan

In early January, GSSK Ministry sent an urgent request concerning the children at the village school. The temperatures in that part of India had dropped dramatically, and the village school children did not have anything to keep them warm.

They requested \$700 to purchase 200 well-made sweaters for the children. An e-mail blast was sent out to HIM donors, and God's people quickly responded by providing the needed funds!

MYANMAR

Fellowship Bible Church

Myanmar Bible College students recently traveled to remote villages to share the Gospel. While visiting house to house, 25 people accepted Christ!

DR CONGO

Union of Baptist Churches

The ministry is celebrating the graduation and ordination of nine new pastors. As part of their training, they have all already planted new churches!

UGANDA

Kerith Ministry

More than 700 made professions of faith at four open air crusades that drew thousands. We pray that all of the seeds planted will take hold and bring even more believers into the family of God!

Cover Photo: Girls at the recent anti-FGM rally in Kenya - courtesy of Shelby Tyler

In This Issue



Photo: Shelby Tyler

In this issue, we are celebrating the life-changing ministry by our partners that is restoring dignity and bringing hope to the women of the church.

In many cultures, women are not as highly valued as Scripture says they should be. We are committed to empowering women to be confident in who they are in Christ and to help them realize their full potential.

You will read about a campaign in Kenya to stop the brutal practice of FGM, and about savings and investment groups in Uganda, and skills training and education in DR Congo and Rwanda. There is also an article about the recent pastor's conference in Kenya that is helping lay a foundation of sound Biblical teaching.

We hope you are blessed by this issue and will celebrate with us what God is doing!

From The Field

Philip Ochieng - Grace Outreach Ministries, Kenya

Everyone at Grace Outreach sends you new year greetings and wishes you all the best for this year. It is our prayer that the Lord will grant you abundant blessings this year as you labor in His ministry. We also thank you so much for your prayers and continued financial support. We are so appreciative!

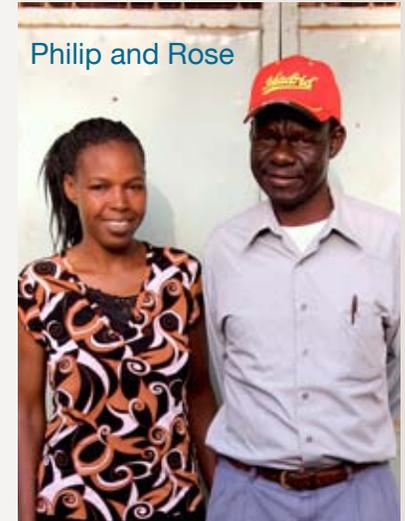
The church here has continued to grow in the area of evangelism. The churches that we have planted are doing well. Recently, we visited one of those churches and we were very much encouraged by their love, dedication, and commitment to the service of our Lord.

The orphan support program continues to draw attention as we share the love of Christ with the lost. The children that are under our care are all doing well. There are challenges in some areas, like sickness and the lack of funds to keep them in school. But even in such hard times, the Lord has been a faithful provider. We thank you for your prayers even in this area.

Our farming project is beginning to bear some fruit. We are hopeful that the Lord Almighty would bring us better yields this year. We just completed harvesting corn this January and we are hoping to get 140 bags. Even though one third may go into the cost of production, we shall remain with more than enough for our own consumption and to sell. The availability of the farm equipment that the Lord provided through you has been of great help in the area of farming.

Thank you once again for making yourselves available that the Lord may use you to be a blessing to us in this way. Please continue in your prayers and support for the work here and may the loving Lord bless you abundantly.

Rose, my wife, and our children, Grace, Moses, Sheila, and Zachary, are all doing well and also send their greetings. Be blessed!



Philip and Rose

Pokot Say “NO” to FGM

By Jen Todd, Founder of Women of Pokot



Rebecky Chebet with 3 girls that sought refuge from FGM

Photo: Shelby Tyler

The Women of Pokot ministry was started three years ago with a mission to educate, empower, and reclaim the Pokot women’s identity and worth as a beloved and valued child of God. We began with a goal of empowering two women’s groups to have sustainable businesses to generate income for their families.

We are ecstatic to report that both groups have profitable sewing and beading businesses, strong leadership, and have qualified to receive a substantial business loan from the government! They own goats and chickens to feed their families. Many also have side businesses selling honey, tea, and renting guest huts. The best part is that they also unite together as a team to spiritually and emotionally support one another and others in the community.

Now that we have seen the success of economic empowerment, we are tackling a bigger challenge: eliminating the brutal, centuries old practice done to Pokot girls. Women in the Pokot, along with 130 million women in Africa and around the world, live with the consequences of a ritual called Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), otherwise known as female circumcision or “cutting” of the female organ.

This rite of passage is performed on Pokot girls 9-18 years old as a preparation for adulthood and marriage, which is typically arranged by the family to a much

older man who could be three to even four times her age. Pokot fathers receive a hefty dowry for their child brides in the form of animals, usually cattle, which culturally is a great sign of wealth.

The physical effects of FGM are devastating. Many girls will die during or after the ceremony due to infections or bleeding, and many more are left with serious medical problems and difficulties birthing children.

The abusive practice of FGM limits the value of girls to merely a source of wealth and has continued for decades, though it has been deemed as a punishable crime against humanity around the globe and in Kenya. As you can imagine, it’s not just their bodies being left wounded and broken, this also breaks their spirits and their opportunities to live out their God-given purpose.

However, we have hope and good reason to believe we can shift this detrimental practice. This ministry has been blessed with a faith-filled and talented Kenyan leader, Rebecca Chebet, from Pokot Outreach Ministries (POM) who is bringing truth and enlightenment to the Pokot through our Anti-FGM awareness campaign.

Becky and her team began this campaign in August 2012 to debunk the FGM myths and impart facts about its physical, spiritual, emotional, and legal impacts. It is grounded in biblical principles and a rights and values based approach from the United Nations, who also has declared ending FGM a top priority around the globe.

To learn more or join the empowerment movement, visit www.womenofpokot.com.



Our Success

- ✓ 7,000 Pokot community members and influencers educated on the negative spiritual and physical impact of FGM
- ✓ 50 community leaders trained to advocate for girls against FGM and early childhood marriage
- ✓ Hosting rallies attended by thousands of Pokot observing UN’s International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM
- ✓ Launching of the first ever “Alternative Rite of Passage” for empowered Pokot girls that say NO to FGM

Photo: Jenn Waechter

Hope In The Darkness

Athanase Habimana - Union of Baptist Churches, DR Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda have suffered for years with war and ongoing violence. War has made many men aggressive toward each other and against defenseless women. Girls are taken from their families and forced into marriage, wives are taken from their husbands by evil men, and many others are tortured and raped.

Victims are abandoned by their families, often leaving them with no means to support themselves. Others have fled, abandoning their homes and jobs, and live in camps without any source of income.

Women and girls have limited educational or employment opportunities due to the societal preference for men in these areas. Girls are forced to stop their education because schools prefer boys to girls, and they are denied enrollment. A large number of girls over age 16 have not completed primary school.

While the church is unable to prevent the violent attacks or quickly change culture based discrimination, it is called to offer hope and support to victims by providing medical care, food, clothing, education assistance, shelter, and counseling to these women and girls. In response to their plight, the Union of Baptist Churches is working to provide skills training,

...the church is called to offer hope by providing medical care, food, clothing, education, shelter, and counseling...

educational assistance, and material support.

UBC provides training in sewing and tailoring and basket weaving, as well as agricultural training for farming and raising poultry. These

programs allow women to obtain skills than enable them to provide services or produce goods to sell to earn income for their families.

UBC also operates 14 Christian primary schools and 4 Christian

secondary schools allowing boys and girls to receive the education they need to be successful, all while learning about the love of Jesus.

Their goal is to enhance the spiritual, economic, and leadership capabilities of women and girls, to facilitate economic self-sufficiency, and to build self-esteem and self-worth among the abused women of the DR Congo and Rwanda.



Equipping the Saints

By J. Lucarelli

Last month, more than 100 pastors, teachers, and church leaders converged in Kapenguria, Kenya for the annual pastors conference. The theme of the conference was "Service that Produces Results" based on the parable of the talents in Matthew 25.

It was exciting to look back over the crowd that was intensely focused on varied topics such as "Using Your Time and Talents for Ministry" to "Developing a Strategy for Church Growth" to "The Importance of Discipleship within the local church."

The dedication and willingness to learn of the attendees was inspiring, especially when I thought of the untapped potential in that room and the capacity to impact the kingdom of God.

The annual gathering is meant to equip and inspire church leaders to effective leadership, strategize how we can be more effective, and celebrate what God is doing in and through the ministry.

In the past, this has been done with primarily Pokot pastors, ministering in Pokot. This year, it was encouraging to see the vision of the conference organizers extend to church leaders in Uganda, South Sudan, and DR Congo. The international flare of the gathering was a great opportunity to share ideas and learn from each other.

Pictured below are Habimana from DR Congo, Festus from Kenya, and Reuben from South Sudan - three of our African partners.



Finding Freedom

Samuel Mwesigwa - Kerith Ministry, Uganda

Women carry the heaviest burden of poverty in Uganda. Women's empowerment is key to ending that poverty, and that's why it is one of the top priorities of Kerith Ministry. The church stands out as a grass roots institution through which change and development can be realized.

Rather than giving women food or money, Kerith Ministry focuses on training and educating women to find lasting solutions to the challenges they face – hunger, poverty, and disease. They have created a nurturing

environment that gives a voice to women and helps them discover who God created them to be. Weekly Bible study and fellowship encourage the women to grow in their faith. Sometimes, it can be challenging for the women to step out in leadership when don't believe they are capable, but through these meetings many discover that they can effectively minister to others.

Kerith Ministry created the Bugaga foundation with the objective of encouraging economic empowerment for women by providing financial loans



2015 Goals



Provide additional financial education to help women make informed financial decisions



Extend interest free loans to 50 women enabling them to build their businesses



Encourage women to participate in SACCO



Provide health care training and encourage women to utilize the health center

to create or boost small businesses. To date, 12 women have benefited from this program, with many already earning enough to repay their loans! In 2015, they hope to extend interest free loans to 50 additional women totalling \$2,125.

Amagoro Eflance received a 100,000 shilling loan - about \$35 US - to boost her business of selling spices and onions at the Pallisa Central Market. She was able to purchase additional supplies and increase her sales. She now earns enough to meet all of her needs, as well as some to save.

In November 2014, women's ministry leadership created SACCO, a saving and investment entity for women. The required weekly savings contribution is 5,000 Ugandan shillings - about \$1.75 - per week. They intend to invest the money in income generating activities like piggery and poultry, all geared towards increasing earnings for the women. To date, 23 women are participating. They expect that number

to grow as more women become financially stable.

Kerith Ministry also provides health education including instruction in the basics of caring for children and personal hygiene. Free or reduced cost medical care is offered at their recently opened Health Centre.

Women are trained to become volunteer community health experts allowing them to work with families in their communities to improve health. They are able to share their knowledge and encourage others to seek appropriate medical care when needed.

Women in Uganda are experiencing the freedom that comes with knowing that they are able to provide for the financial and physical needs of their families. It is our prayer that they also find freedom in a relationship with Christ as a result of the care and attention they experience at Kerith Ministry.

Expanding our Horizons

By Ed Hirshman



The Lord continues to expand Harvesters' reach around the world! After much prayer and discussion, two very important votes were taken at the December Board of Directors' meeting. We are excited to introduce you to the newest additions to Harvesters.

The Board of Directors unanimously approved the addition of a new ministry partner, China Sees, which is led by Steve and Katie. (Their last name and location are withheld to protect their safety.) They have ministered to the underground church in Asia for the past fifteen years. The Gospel has multiplied exponentially in this part of the world creating an insatiable need for qualified leaders. As a result, the focus of their ministry is to encourage and equip nationals to reach nationals.

They draw their purpose and inspiration for ministry from the Apostle Paul's instruction to the Ephesian church leadership to use their spiritual gifts "for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." In both rural and city settings, Steve and Katie are equipping house church leaders and encouraging church planting efforts "in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth." By God's grace,

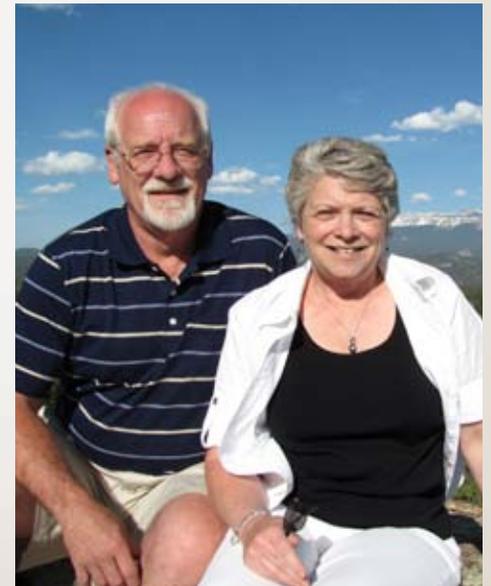
many Asian nationals have been trained and deployed in lay leadership roles — and are now training others to be disciples who make disciples.

Before the decision to add a new partner was made, the Lord foreknew (before we even asked) that Harvesters would need additional help as He prepared to increase the number of our ministry partners. He led David and Helen Stansbury to meet with us earlier in the year. After meeting several times and through much prayer, they expressed their desire to work with Harvesters. The Board of Directors was unanimous once again in their decision to have David and Helen join our staff.

*This is the
Lord's doing;
it is marvelous
in our eyes.
Psalm 118:23*

The Stansburys have two married children and four beautiful grandchildren. They live in Falling Waters, West Virginia, and attend Independent Bible Church. Both have worked with another missions organization for eight years, so they are well prepared to help us at Harvesters. They have made a number of short-term mission trips to Myanmar and are very familiar with our ministry partner there. Helen will assist J. Lucarelli in the financial area and Dave will assist Ed Hirshman in coordinating with our Asian partners.

Please remember both of these couples in your prayers! We are excited to see how the Lord will use them to reach the world with the gospel.





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