

LIVING FOR CHRIST

BRIGHT HOPE NEWS



I was recently reflecting on the trip that I took to Uganda in October.

Typically, I love the role of Partnership Facilitator for Uganda, but sometimes I do not. The role is challenging and intense. Sometimes I find myself lost for words, usually because some of our partners are in very deep waters. One couple in Uganda had their son brutally murdered just over a year ago, and I was there with them in their grief. What can one say when the prime suspect was involved with them in ministry, but may never be brought to justice because the system is so corrupt?

So many of our partners are going through traumatic difficulties but continue on. It is truly inspiring, and I am awed by their love and commitment, but they are real people. They hurt and cry, and do not consider themselves extraordinary. The only way that I can describe it is to say that many of our partners live out the gospel in ways that I often do not. Even though I do not consider our partners to be close friends in the Western meaning of the words, I love the fact that over the years we have developed genuine relationships and shared fellowship in our wonderful Lord Jesus.

When people here ask me here what I do there I quite often say "I sit in dark rooms and listen to people". People laugh, but in some ways that is not too far from the truth. At the heart of our engagement with our partners is a 'deep heart' listening. This takes a huge amount of time and energy. I have often been mystified by the fact that most interest here in my travels comes from those not identifying as Christian. I wonder whether we Christians in the West have been somewhat inoculated against the 'radicalness' of the gospel and miss its sacrificial heart. People who do not profess faith are often very curious and recognise something different about this engagement, which is so outside their experience.

My reflection is that what we do is also a witness to the reality of Jesus Christ in our own culture. We should not overlook the fact that engagement in Christian humanitarian development says something very important to those around us who do not profess faith in Christ. It is a lead-in to point people in that direction, and hopefully continues to awaken spiritual enquiry. What we do in far-flung places is an extension of our calling to live fully for Jesus everyday here. I find it easier to be an open Christian when I am travelling than I do in my familiar environments.

I have found it both encouraging and sobering to reflect in this Easter season that, when Jesus went to the cross and suffered death in our place, God loved you and I, even when we were separated from Him by our sin, as much as He loved Jesus (John 17:23) and considered the value he placed on each of our individual lives, whether African, Indian, American or Kiwi, worth the exchange of the Cross. The challenge that you and I face every day is to live for Christ here; to be witnesses in the same way that I see our partners living for Christ in their own culture. Sure, the issues are different, but the reality of Christ in us is not.

Matt O'Byrne

Uganda Partnership Facilitator

I (Fraser) recently returned from a trip to the Middle East, visiting partners in Jordan and Egypt. Both countries have in common the need to support vast communities of refugees from countries including Syria, Yemen and Iraq. Jordan alone hosts more than 3 million refugees in a country of just 11 million.

For decades Egypt and Jordan have received those fleeing from conflict. As one can imagine, the infrastructure of the urban areas where refugees typically settle is stretched to the limits. Tensions sometimes run high between locals and the refugees. Yet we have partners in both countries that have faithfully worked to support and love those coming from war-torn nations.

The big challenge we are seeing in the world now is inflation and food security. Egypt has seen 40% inflation this year alone. One of our partners in Helwan said that every time one goes to buy food at the supermarket, the price is different.

This is a very real issue, and one for which we are strategically preparing for intensification in. It will likely require increased support and budgets for our partners. Please do remember our partners in prayer. COVID has ended, but a new trial has replaced it.



Grace (on the right) arrived in Bunia on 5th May 2018, when she was nine years old.

“One day, we heard that the enemies had attacked a neighbour village. We were told that they are armed with machetes and guns. Rumours of a possible attack on our village continued until one day we saw fire on houses that were burning in a close village to ours. The same day, our village was also attacked. My mother, younger sister and I spent the night in the bush hiding with several other people, but the enemies quickly discovered where we were hiding. My mother was brutally cut with a machete. My sister and I were seriously injured. I didn’t think I would live as I had machete blows to my head, my neck and a bad one on my arm that was later amputated. The pain was unbearable, yet I was still desperately praying for deliverance.

My mother passed away in my presence. I walked through blood trying to hide myself somewhere else and it was there that I met my maternal aunt. She took me and cared for me from that very day. She encouraged me and said, as God preserved our life, He will also care for the same life. The following morning, the village was quiet as the armed group left. As we were trying to plan what to do, we saw a car coming into our village: it was MSF (Doctors Without Borders emergency team)! They quickly rescued us and administered first aid care to the wounded. We were then taken to Bunia for treatment in a church’s clinic.

After several months in hospital, we were taken to a displaced persons camp where we have lived up to date with the help and assistance of several other people God is continually sending to help us. Unfortunately, security has never been restored back home so we have been unable to return to our village. After the May 2018 incident, my father was very discouraged. He did not come back to us at Bunia but stayed in Drodoro, and in despair became immersed in drunkenness. My sister and I are staying with our aunt. For a long period, I was discouraged to live without my left hand, but I have progressively gained joy and hope.

Before our village was attacked, I had repeated Class 1. As my father could not afford to pay for my school fees regularly, several times I was chased from class. This negatively affected my performance. Arriving in Bunia, I was already 9 years old. I was admitted in Class 2 but with no mastery of this class level and the language barrier, I had to repeat Class 2. This discouraged me more. However, with advice, encouragement, and several forms of support from Pastor Bingi [from LASI], and especially from watching one of his videos on successful people living with a disability, I regained courage. I now have peace. I am no longer suffering from low self-esteem. My performance in school has greatly improved. I am now happily working on my assignments and my teacher is very proud of my performance and grades in standard four.

My mother died, my father disappeared, but God has faithfully used several good people I did not know before to provide for my needs and support me move forward with life. I am very grateful to God who has used people to save my life and care for my various needs.”

Read more at <https://www.brighthopeworld.com/partnerships.asp?pid=413>.

1. Pray for our team as they travel to meet partners and be an encouragement and support to them. Pray that they would excel at ‘deep heart’ listening in particular.
2. As Easter draws to a close, pray that our witness and testimony to the world around us would be stronger than ever. Pray that we would be strong witnesses wherever we are.
3. Pray for those countries - particularly in the Middle East and Africa – where inflation and food security are major issues. Pray that we would be able to support the needs of our partners even as costs significantly increase. Pray for God’s provision.
4. Pray for Grace, and the other people being assisted and encouraged by Pastor Bingi in the DRC. Pray for healing from the trauma they have experienced.
5. Pray for the restoration of peace and political stability in the DRC and for divine protection over the Christian community in that country.