

FROM OPIUM TO ORGANIC: THE STORY BEHIND LA MAI COFFEE

BRIGHT HOPE NEWS



Hopefully by now you've heard of La Mai Coffee—or even better, had a chance to try it for yourself!

In Thai, “La Mai” means pleasant, and we think that sums it up pretty well. After quietly doing our thing for the last few years, La Mai Coffee has had a little refresh—and we're back with a new look, and the same incredible purpose behind every bag of coffee we sell.

La Mai is part of Global Bridges, the trading arm of Bright Hope World. We bring in top-quality organic Arabica beans from the highlands of Chiang Mai in northern Thailand—an area once known as the infamous ‘Golden Triangle’ for its heroin production. For generations, many poor hill-tribe families in this rugged region were forced to grow opium. With barely enough income to survive, some even resorted to selling their children into the sex trade to get by. Caught in cycles of poverty and debt, they often borrowed from loan sharks charging outrageous interest—up to 10% per month! But over the past 20 years, a huge change has occurred. One of our partners, the Integrated Tribal Development Foundation (ITDF), has been working with these communities as they've shifted from growing opium to cultivating high-quality coffee. And it's made a huge difference.

By partnering with this amazing Thai-based Christian co-op, we're doing more than just buying great coffee—we're helping build brighter futures. ITDF have brought clean water, sanitation, education, health and agricultural assistance to over 300 villages, and 14,000 families have been impacted by their work. We've had the chance to visit these hill-tribe villages ourselves and see the work firsthand—it's a well-run, dedicated ministry that's been making a real difference for over 20 years.

And there's more. We help fund microfinance programmes for these villages—small, low-interest loans that empower families to plant crops, raise animals, or improve their homes. As people grow more financially stable, they can borrow more, invest in their futures, and meet their families' needs without relying on handouts.

And all profits from La Mai Coffee go right back into the work—supporting these hill-tribe communities and another powerful partner: Rahab Ministries in Bangkok. Rahab works with women trapped in Thailand's massive sex trade—an industry now almost as profitable as the drug trade. Tens of thousands of women and children are caught in it, often living in locked, prison-like conditions, forced to work for daily sex tourists.

Our La Mai Single Origin coffee is 100% from our Chiang Mai partners. Our La Mai Blend is 50% Chiang Mai beans and 50% from Brazil and Honduras—creating a beautifully rounded cup. If you'd like to be part of this story, it's easy: Just switch your coffee at home, work, or church to La Mai. You'll be getting fantastic coffee—and every cup will help change lives in Thailand. La Mai Coffee is truly the world's best-tasting act of kindness. Just visit www.lamai.co.nz.

Grace Downs

BHW Partnership Facilitator and La Mai Marketing Manager

For New Zealanders travelling to other parts of the world, May and June is often a good time to go as the weather starts to get a bit...miserable. This year is no exception.

Quite a few of our team are travelling shortly, including our Zambia Partnership Facilitators Jerry and Hayley Field who are about to fly out and are spending nearly a month catching up with partners throughout the country.

Our Executive Director recently returned from a trip to visit donors in the UK with his wife Debbie. The good news was that they got upgraded to business class on the way home. The bad news was that this was because Debbie badly broke her leg and needed surgery! They are back in New Zealand now, and Debbie is doing well.

In other news, we continue to pray for our partners in Lebanon and the DRC who are still facing hardship as the result of violence in their countries.

Sadly, these realities leave the news cycle quite quickly as the world gets distracted by the next terrible event, but we must not forget that the difficulties have not stopped.

If you are inclined towards prayer, please do remember the people in these countries. You can read some of their stories on our website. They are often quite scary. Many reasons to pray indeed!



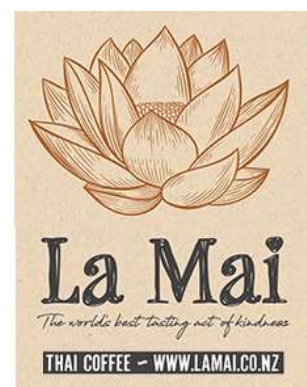
"My name is Blessed Chisheibe, and I am deeply grateful to Fountain of Hope for transforming my life and giving me a chance to dream again. I come from the Makamure community, where I was forced to drop out of school due to a lack of funds for school fees. Losing access to education crushed the passion and dreams I had for the future. I envisioned working one day to support my two younger siblings, who were struggling in primary school without essentials like food, school uniforms, and fees."

"Like many other young people from my village, I felt hopeless and joined others who had also dropped out of school. Together, we became trapped in substance abuse, spending days intoxicated and aimless. But one day, everything changed. A pastor working with Fountain of Hope saw me and offered me help. I realised I needed to break free from this destructive cycle and quickly embraced the opportunity. Soon after, I was taken to Peniel Centre, where Fountain of Hope gave me not only hope but also a chance to learn a skill that could shape my future. I chose building as my trade, and thanks to their training, I am now proudly working as a builder in Bulawayo. Fountain of Hope not only equipped me with valuable skills but also helped me escape the grip of drugs that were ruining my life."

"Today, I am independent and able to rent an apartment for myself while supporting my siblings in their education. I am determined to ensure they complete school and achieve their dreams, something I never thought possible for myself. Fountain of Hope saved me from a life of despair and gave me a second chance at success. For that, I am forever thankful."

Read more at <https://www.brighthopeworld.com/partnerships.asp?pid=216>.

1. Pray for the La Mai team as they seek to generate sales for the coffee farmers in Thailand. Pray that Bright Hope World can increase our reach with the coffee and that it can provide new opportunities to tell the stories of our amazing partners in northern Thailand.
2. Pray for Blessed and the other young people being trained and given hope for the future at Peniel Centre.
3. Pray for the children living in brick kiln factories in Pakistan, that this chance at getting an education will help them to break free of generational poverty.
4. Pray for Jerry and Hayley Field as they head off to Zambia shortly – for safety, wisdom and an encouraging time with our partners there.



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