

AFRIGO

Encouraging the African Church in world mission

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FAMILY CONCERNS AND MISSIONARY CALLING NAVIGATING THE TENSION



MOTHERS IN THE GAP
A TURNAROUND
FOR REAGAN

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CHEORGE OLIV

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FIND THE BALANCE

BY CHINEDU ORANYE



Family is central to Africans, who we are and how we exist. Remove family, and we are not a people. Our nuclear and extended families are interconnected, and this web often determines many decisions we make. Family in Africa exists to support individual units and build a communal identity. We are not African if we don't identify as African, and we cannot be African outside the family support structure. So, how does this affect our stand in missions and as missionaries?

Firstly, Jesus sets the stage by requiring absolute loyalty from all who will follow Him and serve Him, Africans included. In Matthew 10:37, He says, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." Jesus was unequivocal about the standard for followership, and the missionary call begins and ends with following Jesus. As Africans, we must wrestle with this reality. We cannot let our commitments to family deprive us of the privilege and

opportunity of serving Jesus, especially when Africa has become a major sending force in global missions. We will fail in our mandate if we let our cherished family traditions override Jesus' clear orders to "go and make disciples." Following Jesus will impact family, and sometimes as Africans, it may require making painful decisions that seem to tear us from our roots. But, obedience to Christ is our first priority.

On the other hand, Jesus says to the Pharisees in Matthew 15:5-6, "...you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God" — then he need not honour his father or mother.'... you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition." Here, Jesus affirms the importance of honouring family. He frowned at the false assumption that spirituality contradicted commitment to family life. Jesus made it clear that failing to honour family was actually disobeying God's commandment. Modern missions have, unfortunately, taught us that forgoing family was a prerequisite for serving God; thus, many young Africans have recklessly abandoned their family responsibilities in the pursuit of saving nations. This individualistic and selfish response has left many African families feeling antagonistic towards Jesus and His calling.

So, how do we reconcile these two positions? As Africans, we must find the balance between following Jesus, serving in missions, and honouring family. Though called to lay down our lives to follow Jesus, we should remain intentionally committed to our families. We must never abandon our responsibility to walk with and support them. While our loyalty to Jesus remains unquestionable, our expression of that loyalty must not burn the bridges to our family networks.

In this edition of AfriGO, follow Reagan's journey of his family's opposition to his missionary call to their eventual acceptance and support. The Perspective article presents an African solution to the missionary-family dilemma. The story of the Support Mothers in Nigeria demonstrates how those back home can stand in the gap for missionaries who are serving in the field.

May this edition of AfriGO help missionaries and their families to understand and support each other, and inspire the Body of Christ to stand with missionaries and their families in very practical ways.

While our loyalty to Jesus remains unquestionable, our expression of that loyalty must not burn the bridges to our family networks.

Dr. Chinedu Oranye is a Nigerian Bible teacher, author, leadership mentor, and pastor. His ministry has taken him to over 30 countries, sharing and communicating Christ's Gospel of love, redemption, and faith to the lost and the Church. He serves with Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) and Haggai International. He is married to Taiwo and they have three children. Chinedu.oranye@gmail.com.

CALLED: RALAMBO TIFFANIE

NO LONGER LONELY

AS TOLD TO MERCY KAMBURA

I faced a lot of suspicion when I first arrived as a missionary on the Island. Unknown to me, some Malagasy single women who arrived before me were involved in prostitution. It was tough to settle as a single Malagasy girl on an Island that had already determined I couldn't be legitimate, let alone be a missionary. I struggled to make friends and was very homesick. But I stayed for the sake of the Gospel.

As a middle born in a family of seven children, I was the poster child for self-pity. Words of affirmation and quality time are my love languages, and I was missing my dose of them. My family was as tight as a constrictor knot, but my young mind couldn't help feeling I was among the least in my family. Despite their efforts to offer love, I still felt it wasn't enough.

Nevertheless, this knot kept me going when I eventually ventured out as a missionary. Despite being a young, single girl, my family was convinced that the Lord had sent me. We promised to send each other news from time to time. This was a sharp and blessed contrast to my experience as a child.

I met the Lord while at the university. I attended a University Bible Group (UBG) fellowship, and the first thing that captivated me was the Bible study. I had never heard the Word of God so clearly. Despite growing up in a Christian home, I wasn't yet a child of God. I wanted to become one, so I gave my life to Jesus.

The Lord renewed me and gave me joy; I was no longer sad and angry with my family. When I began to bear fruit, they were amazed that I was taking an interest in the things of Christ. I heard about missions through UBG. I observed and witnessed the sharing and was amazed at how fired up the young people were for God. I said, "Jesus, when I grow in my faith, I will also go somewhere in Madagascar to preach your Good News."

I started participating in missions a year after my commitment. By participating, I got to know about missionary life. I later went as a missionary with Africa Inland Mission to the islands in Madagascar to serve among an unreached people.

The mission field had some shocks waiting for me. I hadn't had time to prepare. I had jumped onto the mission field's tarmac from the moving van that was my life. I learned everything on the ground, even the stuff I should have known in theory.

I was the only Malagasy on my team, and loneliness started creeping in. Sometimes, I wanted to run home and cry, and the meals weren't improving the situation. I was homesick, and I also no longer had sufficient financial support. After one year, I returned home to a prodigal-son-like celebration from



Tiffanie Ralambo

my family.

Back home, I started working with an NGO that helps women develop inwardly and outwardly. I also volunteer with people in need. We have a project called *Karama* which aims to share the Gospel with Indians here in Madagascar. I have been discipling an Indian woman of Muslim origin who is the only believer in her family.

I have understood God's heart for the nations and now look beyond cultural biases. I also understand that my life is for the Lord, and I choose to use it for something that will last forever. If the Lord calls you, go. Don't wait.

I no longer feel lonely. The Lord settled me in His heavenly family, and my relationship with my earthly family is better than ever. My sisters are becoming more interested in having a real relationship with Jesus. My family backs me up and has never objected to the missions I have done.

My family backs me up and has never objected to the missions I have done.

PRAY FOR:

- For my next steps, open doors, and God's will; my heart desires to return to the mission field. Please pray that the Lord will direct me in everything I do.
- For my family and me to grow in our love for Jesus Christ.
- For my extended family to know the Lord; we are the only Christians on my father's and mother's sides.



MISSIONARY CALL AND FAMILY: AN 'UBUNTU' OPTION

Must a missionary abandon his family to truly answer God's call to reach the lost?

Across the continent, a new generation of African missionaries is going out, and their families do not always understand the reasons. It can appear selfish, especially when the family has sacrificed to provide education and care, expecting the rewards later. It can look like abandonment when the elderly are left alone without their grown children to care for them.

The missionary call

Not everyone is called to missions in the same way. Some are called in a spectacular fashion like Paul's Damascus experience. For others, it is simply a growing conviction that God desires a different direction for them. Whatever the path, a person or a couple eventually comes to the decision that God wants them to go out and minister. This should be confirmed in consultation with trusted and mature spiritual advisors. Our first edition of AfriGO was all about calling. Read it here: <https://bit.ly/42KawyR>

At this point, a family is informed about the decision, which may result in a confirmation of their worst fears: their child will become a beggar, could be killed in a strange land, or have children who will never know their grandparents. That initial educational investment is now seen as a poor one, indeed. Unfortunately, the local pastor sometimes can be one of the biggest obstacles to the would-be missionary, with protests about local needs, doubt of the call, or his own fears about monies leaving the church for a foreign land.

These reactions are deeply distressing for someone who has already struggled,

perhaps for years, about God's mission plans for them.

Ubuntu and missions

Let's consider an alternative using the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*. It is related to the Zulu phrase "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*," which means that a person is a person through other persons. Can we not apply this to the missionary call? Could it be that God has directed the call to both the individual and the community around him? Dr. Dennis Kilama, in an *article for The Gospel Coalition Africa, comments: "Recovering Ubuntu in the Church would go some way towards recovering the New Testament vision for Christian community. This is the attitude that whatever you do impacts others: what affects one affects all. Success of the group is above that of the individual."

What if missionary success is considered the success of the whole community rather than the success of one individual labouring in the harvest field? Let's picture a community that hears God's call of their beloved. They pray for confirmation, see that he is properly trained, and is well-supported while serving in mission. They welcome their beloved when he is back home to rest, and encourage him while he prepares to return. The community gathers around the family members who, in the missionary's absence, require assistance, whether financial or otherwise.

Would this not be a real expression of Ubuntu? Read how Grace Djanie's family and community did exactly that.

Grace's story

I have heard stories of parents who were against their children's missionary call, but my experience was different.

When I first informed my parents, my Dad smiled. My Mum said, "It is a privilege to serve the Lord." They

never questioned my intentions or discouraged me. There were moments I was unsure if this was God's will, but they were always available to talk and pray with me when I needed it.

Before I came to the mission field, I formed an intercessory group to pray for me every week on Zoom. My parents took part in it consistently. When I left for the field, my brother coordinated it in my absence.

I resigned from my job to prepare for the field, and my old parents took me in for a whole year. They took good care of me and never complained about my inability to support with the upkeep of the home. They rather gave me a substantial amount of money for the field.

About 80 people attended my Commissioning Service. My whole family was there—my parents, my brother, my sister, her husband and their three children. My friends, old school mates, church members, former work colleagues, and mission leaders were also present. They spoke words of affirmation over me and blessed me.

A missionary couple gave me a suitcase. One friend came home to help me pack my luggage. A business owner added me to his payroll to send me monthly support as one of his workers, including statutory payments towards my retirement benefits—this was a miracle!

On the day of departure, my family saw me off at the airport.

The support from my family, friends, and the Christian community strengthened me to accomplish my missionary call. My Dad's words at my Commissioning Service describe the heart behind the immense support I received—"Just like Mary, the mother of Jesus, we feel so honoured that the Lord chose our family for this great task."

*<https://bit.ly/3NAioi9>

A TURNAROUND FOR REAGAN

BY KATE AZUMAH



Reagan and his sports ministry disciples

Reagan had never left the town of Kumasi in his entire life. So the day he boarded a bus for the mission field far away from home was a big day. Upon arriving in Tamale, he discovered that the bus to Gbintre moved once a day. He didn't miss it, but he wished he had. First, how badly the bus shook! Every part of his body vibrated. Then the rain came, and despite being in the bus, he got completely soaked.

The scheduled arrival time of 9pm became 12 midnight. He slept over at Gbintre, and continued the next day. He was expecting a nice car to transport him and his teammate, Joseph, who travelled with him from Kumasi, to their final destination. Instead, they shared a roofless tricycle with market women who spoke a strange language and stared at the two peculiar men. Reagan recounts, "When we finally landed in Tuna, the village had no electricity. At night, the darkness was so thick I hardly saw people's faces. I couldn't help but admit it—my Mum had been right. This is a

place of suffering, and I never should have come."

Reagan's call

Reagan Opoku Agyeman graduated from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. His decision to sign up as a missionary with Operation Serve had been influenced by his friend, Razak. "When I was finishing school in 2019, Razak told me about an opportunity to do mission work for one year during

my National Service. I decided to pray about it. I didn't see any vision or hear the Lord speak, but I decided to go as an act of simple obedience. I also thought it would be fun; the idea of an adventure in a far land appealed to me."

Family worries

"I tried to prepare my parents for what I had signed up for. I knew if I told them I was going to do missions, their response would be an outright 'no.' So, I planted the idea in

their minds that since I had specialized in Agribusiness Management, serving in the North would be a professional advantage. My Mum said she would be okay with it—I had won her over."

The posting came and Reagan was sent to the remote village of Tuna in the Bunkpurugu district in the North East Region. "Mum became angry; Dad, cousins, aunties, and grandmas protested. Mum's younger sister fought me and said she wouldn't let me go. A friend asked why I was being so foolish. 'Are there no souls in Kumasi? Why must you go all the way up North to win souls for Christ?' they queried. The hostility was real. I told them it was only for a year, but they weren't pacified."

"For the first time in my life, I decided to stand up for myself. I told them I was old enough to make my own decisions."

Reagan left home for six weeks of mission training. His family didn't stop him, but his troubles were not over. "While I was at mission school, Dad called me on the phone one dawn. He asked me to come home. He was very emotional, and I was too."

Reagan's Mum, Mama Anna, explains, "None of us was happy with the news. We had heard rumors about the volatile North. We were afraid for his safety." Reagan's Dad also expected

Mum became angry; Dad, cousins, aunties, and grandmas protested.

his firstborn to get a good job and support the family financially.

Missionary life

For Reagan, going to the North was partly about adventure, but God had serious business for this young man. Reagan taught in the elementary school at Tuna, ran a ministry for children, organized church services in other communities, and through sports ministry, disciplined many boys who were initially hard to reach.

One day, Reagan and Joseph were enduring the distressing Northern heat at home when Elijah rushed in. His wife was having another episode of high fever. They followed him home and prayed for her. As they did, she fell under the power of God, and started sweating heavily. "Right before our eyes, she was instantly healed! I wasn't an overly spiritual person, so I was shocked.

It dawned on me that God didn't bring me here for fun, but for real missions." This was the beginning of many testimonies as people came with more problems for prayer.

They prayed for Sala, a second wife who wanted a baby. When she delivered, she requested them to name him. "We called him Miracle," Reagan says.

"Another woman with epilepsy came from the South to seek treatment from a fetish priest up North. We asked her to come to our village for prayer. On the appointed day, her whole village came with her. They wanted us to pray for them too. The woman is now completely well."

Whenever he was home from the



PRAY FOR

- Least-reached Gonja communities to know Christ.
- God to keep Reagan and all missionaries reaching out to the Gonjas.
- God's special grace and peace for the parents of missionaries serving in distant fields.

field, Reagan shared such stories with his family and showed them photos and videos of his missionary activities. They started easing up, but they reminded him of his promise that it was only for a year.

Reagan experienced hard times too. On his first birthday on the field, he took very ill. When he called his Mum, she said, "Come home. We'll take care of you." Reagan stayed. Communicating by

phone was frustrating. "The only place I could access a network connection in the entire village was close to a particular tree. The slightest movement and the connection was lost." Mama Anna laments this as another worry for the family. "We couldn't call him at will. We had to wait for him to reach us." Three months into their stay, Reagan's teammate left the field and never came back.

Family support

Although he earned little, Reagan sent money to his parents and siblings

often. They were pleased with his efforts. After completing one year with Operation Serve, he joined OneWay Africa as a full-time missionary. He is currently in his fourth year, and travels on his motorbike showing the Jesus Film among least-reached Gonja communities in northern Ghana.

Reagan enjoys greater support from his family now. They pray for him, and help his ministry financially. He organized a Christmas party for his village recently, and his aunties sent money and beautiful clothes for the children.

"They see that something good has come out of it. By the time I signed up with OneWay, they allowed me to fulfill God's call."

A mother's thoughts

Concern for Reagan's safety had unsettled Mama Anna. Today, she reveals, "Later, I thought about it again and prayed. I realized God is the one who protects him, not us. "We're glad he's earning enough to care for himself. There are many jobless graduates who still depend on parents for their upkeep. Besides, wealth is not everything. Missions is good work, so we are praying and supporting him."

Mama Anna had eight miscarriages before Reagan. She acknowledges God's hand upon him, and doesn't stand in the way. She counsels parents: "Releasing your child into the unknown is not easy, but you don't have the power to protect him or her. They could have chosen a path that would have brought you problems and heartache. If they choose missions, pray for and support them." Reagan concludes that the turnaround with his family was God's intervention on his behalf.

They see that something good has come out of it.



Reagan's parents



Photo: Peace Alberto Iteriteka

MISSIONARY CALLING AND FAMILY CONCERNS

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS AND INSIGHTFUL ANSWERS

You have been called to serve as a missionary, but family concerns threaten to pull you the other way. How do you resolve the dilemma? We have compiled advice from mission leaders to address some common family issues that arise when you decide to serve as a missionary.

Question: I have been called as a missionary in a far land, but my old parents are afraid for my life and safety. They also need my presence and financial support. They prefer that I don't go. How do I address their concerns and have their blessing?

This is a question of obeying God

and obeying parents. You can't disobey God's Word that says, "Whoever keeps his life will lose it, but he who gives it up for the Lord will find it." (Jn. 12:25). At the same time, you cannot neglect your parents and leave for the mission field. Obeying and honouring parents is part of the Gospel, and also an act of worship.

The concerns your old parents have are real, but you serve the Creator of the universe who says the hairs on our heads are numbered. He can take care of you and your family, and ensure your security better than any human can. Help them to understand that it is God who watches over us and keeps us safe. Encourage them to support you by

praying for your safety. Even if the worst happens and you die on the mission field, it is better to die in obedience to the Lord, than to die in disobedience. Give your family practical evidence that you'll not be careless with your life just because God is going to take care of you. Tell them about the measures you have in place, such as the practical skills and trainings you have acquired to protect yourself in case you're in danger.

Assure them that technology will keep you connected, so they won't miss your presence much. Diligently stay in touch with them regularly, even if it means travelling to where you can have access to good internet for a video call.

The Bible says if we don't take care of

our relatives, we are worse than infidels. Whether we are in the mission field or not, it is our responsibility to care for them; serving as a missionary does not mean reneging on this duty. Seek God's direction and put together realistic plans to care for their needs. You can arrange with your mission leaders about raising support for their upkeep, or get someone to look after them while you are away. If your parents are still adamant, find respected Christian leaders to speak with them. Pray through all these steps, and be patient. Ensure that your parents are reasonably at peace before you leave for the field.

Question: My extended family in the village contributed to sponsor my education to university level because I was a promising student. They expected me to get a good job afterwards and take care of the younger members of our family. Now I feel called to be a missionary and I have to raise my own support. Should I attend to my family or respond to the call?

Attend to God's call. He says to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness and all that the Gentiles desire will be added to you. The Bible commands us to take care of our relatives, but this expectation from the extended family is quite unrealistic. What is the guarantee that after completing school, you will get a job that pays enough to take care of everyone? You may also be starting a family of your own.

This doesn't mean neglecting your family though. You can still take care of them by praying for them, giving good counsel (it's not always about money alone), and providing for them materially and financially. Prayerfully work through the process, and let them know what you can handle. Maybe you can take care of one dependent member for about five years, or raise seed money to set some of them up in a trade or vocation. Respectfully, give them the assurance that you would do what the Bible instructs you to do, but also let them know you cannot take care of everybody.

Demonstrate to them that ministry is a worthy vocation. Sometimes our own sloppy attitude in presenting missionary work gives the wrong impression and causes them to worry.



Photo: Ishaka Ali

The Lord says a worker deserves his wages. Explain to them that you would be paid; you may not know how, but you will receive your reward. Don't be arrogant about it. Humbly walk through the layers of authority in your family, and pray through the whole process.

Question: Our children were born and raised in a foreign mission field where they learnt the language and customs of a different people group. Their only interactions with other family members have been scanty online meetings. We are preparing to bring them home for the first time in 15 years. How can we make it a comfortable and fulfilling time for them and the rest of the family?

Find out if there are other couples in a similar situation and discuss what they have discovered to be helpful. In the meantime, prepare the children early on what to expect when you go to visit. One issue that can cause pain for the family back home is when

missionary kids are unable to speak the mother tongue. The family may feel that their culture is being forgotten or pushed aside in favour of others. To help the situation, teach your children the proper greetings, gestures, and words with which to address grandparents and other family members. Talk to them about your culture—food, language, family setting, economic activities—both the positive and negative aspects to avoid culture shock. Bring their attention to points of variance and intrigue between your home culture and the mission field culture.

Help the family back at home to understand that your children are third culture kids, so if interactions with them are not smooth, they should be considerate. You can also orient the family at home about the setting your children have grown up in, so they can empathize and be supportive.

Plan the visit home, so it is a purposeful one. Work through what you will spend your time doing, who you will visit, places you would go to, and the experiences you would want your children and your family to have together.

The tension between missionary calling and such family issues is a common experience for African missionaries. If you find yourself in this situation, you are not alone. Bring your concerns before the Lord in prayer and seek godly counsel and encouragement from those who understand this terrain. Do not hesitate to ask for help from Christian brothers and sisters who can offer it. God knew what you would face, and yet He called you. Trust Him to help you to obey His Word concerning your calling and your obligations to your family. It may not be an easy road, but God is faithful.



GO! NEWS OF AFRICA'S MOBILIZING CHURCH

BREAKFAST MEETING FOR MISSION PARTNERSHIP

The West Africa Mission Office (WAMO) of SIM hosted a mission breakfast meeting on the 12th of March 2023 at the SIM Ghana Office Garden in Accra. The event was aimed at engaging the Church in Ghana and West Africa about their primary responsibility of sending trained missionaries across Ghana, Africa, and the world. In attendance were 41 people, 31 churches and three organizations.

SIM WAMO director, Rev. Daniel Salamu, introduced



WAMO's role as a missionary recruiting agency, and Penny Bakewell, SIM director, followed with a presentation on the communities in Ghana that still needed missionaries; particularly in the north of the country. The senior pastor of the Legon Interdenominational Church, and SIM partner, Rev. Yaw Boamah, challenged attendees to partner with others in furthering the Great Commission. The Team Lead for AfriGO, Stephen Nitte La'abes, introduced AfriGO's publication ministry of encouraging the African Church in world mission through sharing inspiring African stories and resources to equip for missions. To crown it, Rev. Derek Amoo Sakyi, missions director of the Assemblies of God Church, led a prayer time.

The breakfast meeting resulted in the creation of a network between SIM and representatives of the Church of Pentecost, Assemblies of God Church, The Ghana Baptist Convention, Accra City Church, Havilah Praise Chapel, Sustainable Mission Aid, LifeNet International and others. By the end of the meeting, five applications were received for consideration as SIM missionaries.

MISSIONS SEMINAR FOR PASTORS

In March 2023, a team of Namibians with Simply Mobilizing (SM) travelled seven hours north of the capital into the region where the Himba people live. The Himbas are marginally reached with the Gospel. An interdenominational pastor's group in the largest town wants to do more to reach out. The SM team presented a one-day seminar using the Interface curriculum, designed to inform and inspire pastors on God's plan for the world and His missional heart. Participants were glad to receive the information shared in the seminar. AfriGO magazine issue 2.3, "The Pastor's Joy" was also distributed to the group to offer help and advice on pastors' involvement in missions.



<https://simplymobilizing.com/interface/>

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AFRIGO CONVERSATIONS

Join us every third Friday of the month for engaging mission interviews with those at the forefront of African

missions. We'll be live on Facebook and YouTube.

<https://bit.ly/3qiYXxz>



THE SUPPORT MOTHERS: STANDING IN THE GAP FOR MISSIONARY KIDS

BY FURAHA KENGELA

In February 1996, the EMS children's hostel opened in Jos, Nigeria, to provide a home for the children of EMS missionaries who were serving in the mission field. The idea was motivated by a finding that 25 per cent of missionaries left the mission field because of lack of proper education for their children. By the following year, the hostel was at a full capacity, home to 50 children. Events at the first anniversary celebration ignited the birth of the EMS Children Support Mothers, which later became Support Mothers International (SMI).

The anniversary took place on the grounds of the ECWA staff school where the hostel first started, and brought together adults and children belonging to the SIM and EMS families, members of the ECWA church, friends and well-wishers. Because the hostel had no room to house more missionary kids (MKs), the event aimed to raise support for expansion. Although a happy occasion, it was also a memorial gathering for Hyo jin Lee, an SIM missionary kid and friend of the EMS school who had died in a motor accident while on a trip back to Jos with her parents. SIM expatriate missionary wives and children volunteered to cater refreshments, and they served the guests so well that they made a deep impression on the Nigerian women in attendance.

The birth

Dr. Lami Bakari Ibrahim, the pioneer of SMI, recalls that right after the event, some of the Nigerian women stayed back and asked among themselves, "Why is it that after 100 years of having SIM missionaries in our country, they are still the ones serving us? What about us, the national ladies? What can we also do?" Their observation led to a follow-up meeting where they welcomed the challenge of mobilizing funds to expand the hostel's capacity to accommodate more MKs. They spoke to friends and associates, and raised enough money to put up

a strong, secure building—it was named after Hyo jin Lee. This marked the genesis of the Support Mothers' commitment to standing in the parental gap for missionary kids.

They decided to care for the MKs like they would their own children. They provided food, clothing, cleaning materials and more. Some of the Mothers took the children in during school breaks and others visited the hostel twice a week for bonding and activity time with them. Together, they made craft items such as redesigning old Christmas cards and decorating slippers with beads and ribbons.

The nurture

The Mothers travelled throughout the country to create awareness about the needs of the EMS MKs. They took the craft items, now with the label, 'EMS Lambs', and sold them to raise money whenever they made presentations before various women's groups in other churches. Some of the EMS children went along and did performances at these presentations. At one of SMI's international conferences, they invited the women's ministry of ECWA to take up the feeding of the MKs at the hostel. The women accepted and have diligently done that to date.

Dr. Lami explains that the Mothers do not receive donations directly. They share the vision, and publicize the various needs. They encourage women's groups to visit the hostel and see for themselves areas of need they can help with.

Over the years, several women have served as leaders and pillars in Support Mothers International, including Esther Chom, who was herself an MK. Others are Mrs. Eleanor Kiamu from Liberia, Mrs. Phoebe Sale, and Lydia Bossan who were part of the post-anniversary meeting that gave birth to the initial EMS Children Support Mothers group.

The fruit

Dr. Lami expresses that although the group is not as vibrant as before, all the initial objectives for setting it up were met. Not only did they expand the hostel; they also acquired nine acres of land, put up school and staff buildings, and started a livestock farm. "In a way, we saw what we did as serving in missions, even though we were not in the field like their parents," Dr. Lami reflects.

The work of the Support Mothers demonstrates that as missionaries serve on the frontline, like a true family in Christ, those of us back home can stand in the gap their absence may have left in very meaningful ways.



Representative photo



PEOPLE GROUP: THE BEJA OF ERITREA, SUDAN, AND EGYPT

The Beja people are nomads who have occupied their homelands across the Sudan, Eritrea and Egypt for more than 4,000 years. Some scholars believe they are related to the ancient Egyptians. In the course of their history, they accepted Islam and are 99 per cent Muslim. They practice folk Islam and believe in the evil eye and jinnis (spirits). They try to appease the jinnis and draw power from them by using charms and amulets.

The Beja are, for the most part, a marginalized and poor people group. Numbering about 4 million, most have little or no education and are therefore considered lower class and backward by their countrymen. Their nomadic environment is shrinking and, as a result, many are moving to the cities, where they can only find manual, low-paying jobs. A non-Beja will always be preferred over a Beja when hiring for jobs. Arab-speaking peoples regard the Beja language as “gibberish”

since it is not widely written.

One reason they are completely unreached is that most of them live in difficult-to-reach places, far from towns. In order to reach them, a missionary will have to live in harsh conditions.

In Sudan, Egypt and Eritrea, Christians are beginning to realize that the Beja need Jesus, and are feeling drawn to reach them. One young man has moved into a remote place to share the Gospel. Others in the cities have been pondering what they can do and have begun offering cool water or juice to Beja people who pass their church. Some have started taking meals to Beja prisoners.

The Beja are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the Islamic governments who are trying to erase their culture and language, forcing them to renounce their tribal culture.

In some places, they are asking for Christian schools for their children and asking missionaries to come speak to them.

AT A GLANCE

- The geographer, Abu Nasr Mutahhar al-Maqdisi, wrote in the tenth century that the Beja were at that time Christians.
- The Beja practice marriages among cousins.
- Only portions of Scripture are in their language, Bedawiyet.

PRAY FOR

- More Scriptures and resources to be translated and recorded into Bedawiyet.
- Local Christians to hear the Holy Spirit's urging and find creative ways to reach out in love to the Beja.
- The Beja to find Jesus and begin a movement among their people.

Sources: <http://bejafriends.org/> • https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/10766 • <https://omniglot.com/writing/beja.htm>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beja_people



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