

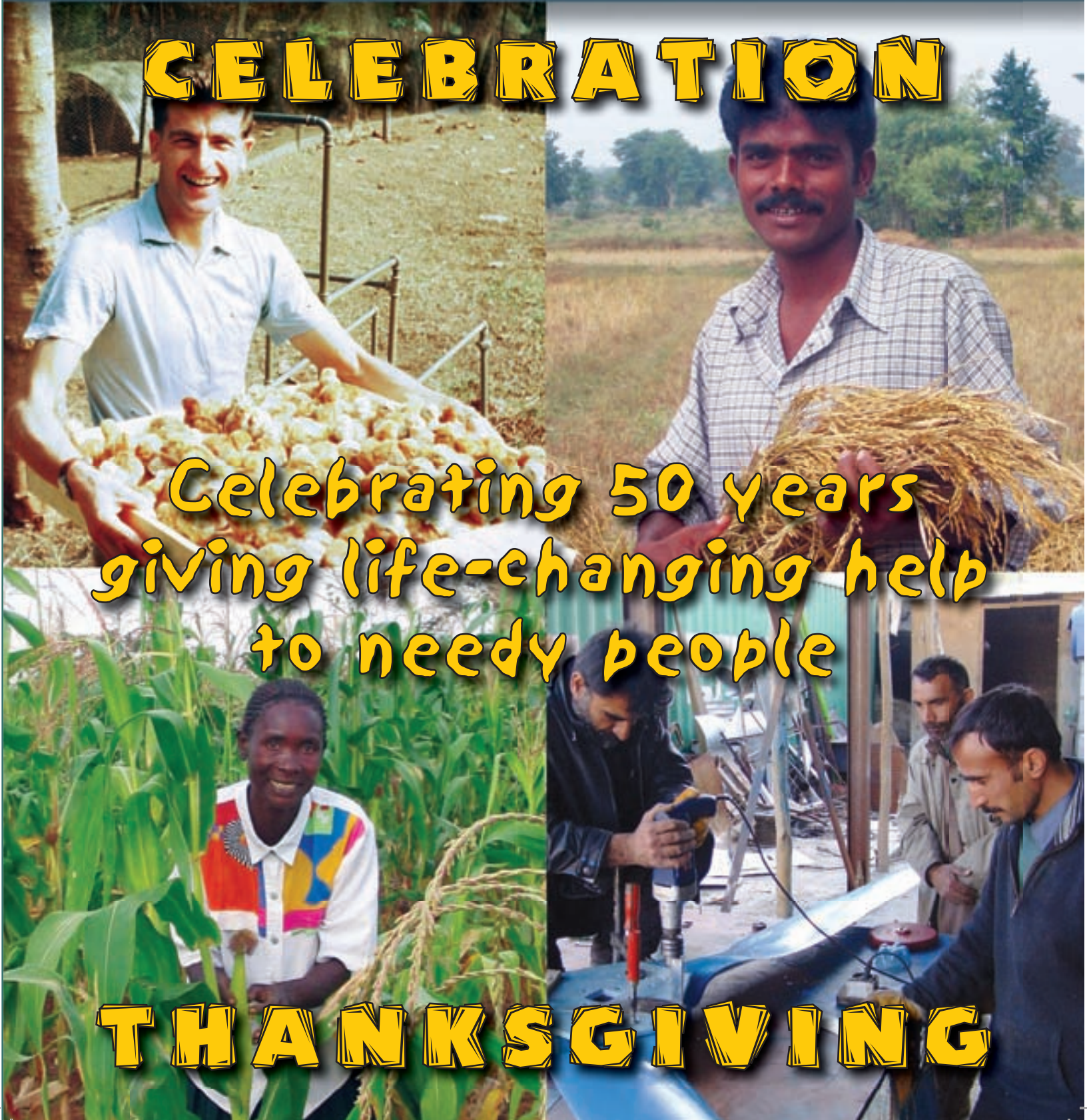
outreach abroad

SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT IN CHRIST'S NAME 1961-2011

CELEBRATION

Celebrating 50 years
giving life-changing help
to needy people

THANKSGIVING



Why Operation Agri?

By Russell Ashley-Smith, Chairman of OA

*Russell Ashley-Smith is OA's chairman.
His first involvement with OA was in 1968 when,
with his father, he took on OA's publicity.*

It was the early 1970s. I was horrified to learn of the hefty import duty the government of Bangladesh was demanding on the Land Rover Operation Agri was sending David and Joyce Stockley. I asked David why he didn't move to another country where his help would be better appreciated. "My call is to serve the people of Bangladesh, not the government," David explained in kindly fashion. "If this is what it takes to fulfill that call, so be it!"

That was one of many lessons in Christian commitment which as a young man I had the privilege of learning from OA-linked BMS missionaries.

In the aftermath of the war during which Bangladesh emerged out of East Pakistan, David was helping some villages re-establish small poultry flocks. Explaining that he needed chicken netting, David asked us to send him reels of wire. OA's purchasing officer, trying to be helpful, offered to send netting. "If I wanted netting I would have asked for netting; please send wire!" came the reply.

Here's why. A group of war-widows in one village had no means of supporting themselves. So David made them a cash-loan with which they bought wire from him. He also supplied them with wooden frames he'd made up, and taught them how to make chicken netting. He then bought the netting back from the widows, and over time they repaid the loan.

It would have been so much easier if OA had simply sent netting to David in the first place. But where would this have left the widows? This was a perfect example of Christian sustainable development, the principles of which underlie so much of what OA is still trying to do forty years later.

We don't now send wire (or even chicken netting!), but our partners buy what they need locally, and with most

projects in the hands of national Christians, a lot of the funding we send is used to pay local workers' salaries.

In recent years Gill and I have visited some of the projects supported by OA, while directing local film crews and gathering resources for the annual appeals. It's been a privilege to meet many Christian brothers and sisters, committed to helping some of the poorest people in their own countries.

I think of the young woman in a Muslim country who moved home, with her husband, to live in a very disadvantaged area of the capital city so she could head up a project reaching out to struggling families with Christian love and hope.

In other countries, development workers spend days each week lodging in remote areas amongst the communities they're serving. It's humbling to meet these partners and hear them expressing thanks for the funding and prayers of British Christians. Their sacrifice is so much more than mine – and perhaps yours.

Although I could give more reasons for my commitment to Operation Agri, hopefully these examples speak effectively enough and you will surely find more to fire your own commitment in the following pages.

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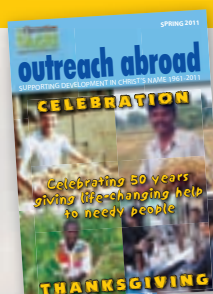
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This edition of Outreach Abroad was compiled and edited by Stan Crees and Malcolm Drummond. To be added to the mailing list, contact Malcolm Drummond (administrator) – see back cover.



Front Cover Photograph:

Clockwise from top left: Ian Pitkethley with baby chicks in 1961; Farmer with harvest in Orissa, India; Engineers at work on a wind turbine in Afghanistan; and Margret, Community Farmer Trainer, in Busia, Uganda

Higher Profile for Operation Agri at the Baptist Assembly

Operation Agri will have a higher profile at this year's Assembly, in this special year for the charity.

- Special guest – Roshan Mendis from Sri Lanka (see below).
- OA's Jubilee will be featured during the Assembly plenary session on Saturday morning, including an illustrated time-line showing OA's progress over the past fifty years, and live interview with Roshan Mendis and Russell Ashley-Smith (OA chairman).
- Roshan Mendis will take part in After Hours – the evening informal session.
- Roshan Mendis will co-host the Assembly communion on Sunday morning.
- OA seminar 'Harvest of Hope': 4pm on Sunday in the Norbreck Castle, with Roshan Mendis plus the BMS Thailand Action Team.
- Larger OA exhibition stand with selection of items and photographs illustrating OA's work past and present.
- Launch of OA's 2011 resources and video 'Harvest of Hope' featuring projects in Brazil, Uganda and Thailand.
- Cards and craft items from Thailand, Uganda, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will be available to purchase.

For more information about the Assembly visit www.baptistassembly.org.uk or phone 01235 517700. It is not necessary to register for the Assembly to attend the OA seminar on Sunday afternoon. All Assembly details are subject to change. OA is pleased to acknowledge the generous help of BMS World Mission and the Assembly organisers in many of the above.



Roshan Mendis is our special guest during the Assembly. He is executive director of OA-partner LEADS (Lanka Evangelical Alliance Development Service) which has been in existence for over 25 years, working in relief, rehabilitation, child protection and community development throughout Sri Lanka.

Roshan is passionate about empowering communities to make a difference and has a strong commitment to working for peace and reconciliation. He is also the Asia chairman of Micah Network and a director of United Mission to Nepal. For more about LEADS, visit www.leads.lk.

Seetha and her cow

The government of Sri Lanka gave Seetha and her husband some bare land three years ago in the village of Denarwatte. Previously, with her husband and 2 daughters, they had rented some land some distance away. In their new location, most of the daily earnings of Seetha's husband, an autorickshaw driver, were spent on constructing their house as they had to start from scratch and have no savings.



LEADS' field officers, with financial help from Operation Agri, had encouraged and helped the villagers of Denarwatte set up a CBO (community-based organisation) and Seetha soon became actively involved in the various community activities. Looking for ways in which she could contribute towards the family income, Seetha applied for help from the CBO's animal husbandry project.

LEADS gives the CBO financial and practical support for various development activities which the villagers have decided are appropriate to them. In this example, animal husbandry advice is given to the villagers taking part in the project. The CBO gave Seetha a cow about 6 months ago with the agreement that she will give the first calf back to the CBO so that the opportunity can be given to others as well. She plans to sell the milk and with the added income ensure her children can go to school.

"The CBO and its assistance is a real blessing to people like us who have no other source of help," Seetha says.

OA has in the last year given £34,000 in support of LEADS' community development work.

Fifty years – supporting development

1961

Operation Agri was adopted by the Baptist Men's Movement at their annual conference in 1961. Michael Putnam was appointed Secretary and the 'Farming Partner' scheme was launched, with a suggested annual subscription of at least five shillings (25p). £500 was raised in the first year.

1980s

Community health was a new venture in the mid 80s for Sue Headlam* working from the Chandraghona Christian Hospital, Bangladesh. It was also the start of a new chapter for OA when it was agreed



to help finance this outreach, with no agricultural element. The charity realized that community-wide development can take a wide variety of forms and soon other non-farming development projects were being supported

in various countries – water supply, latrines, income generation, pre-schools, vocational education

It was at this time that Jack Norwood and others started refurbishing tools to be sent by OA to developing countries. The project grew rapidly and 'Tools with a Mission' soon became an independent charity.

1960s & 1970s

During the 60s and 70s, OA responded to requests from the BMS missionaries, sourcing equipment and livestock in UK and arranging packing, and shipping overseas.



Alan Casebow* adjusts a two-wheeled tractor sent to him at WUAC in India (see p 14).

1990s

OA has always sought to live up to its slogan 'Action' – all projects supported are church

OA is pleased to have been able to support in their holistic ministry in NE Brazil, for over 20 years (seen here) has had a real ministry to local people, persuading them to breast-feed their babies. Where babies were introduced. A church has been established. Local people, in particular, have been helped to start their own latest project is income generation through small businesses. See this year's OA video and appeal resource.

Partners

The majority of OA's support goes to projects in the hands of partners of BMS World Mission, many now led by local workers, not missionaries, and many with a strong agricultural content.

OA has also established some other links, in particular with Oasis Global which concentrates on urban community development. Empowering the local people, supporting and helping families become more self-sufficient, giving pre-school education or helping vulnerable girls catch up on missed education – all bringing hope where there has been despair, in some of the world's most desperate urban communities.

t in Christ's name



David & Joyce Stockley traveled throughout Bangladesh (initially East Pakistan) in their OA-supplied Land Rover.*



Consignment arriving from the UK at Diptipur, India, in the early days.



Superior-breed goats and chickens were sent from UK or (as here in India) bought in from other parts of the country to upgrade local livestock.

slogan, 'Christian love in church-linked in some way. support Mike & Daveen Wilson* for over twenty years. Daveen local women, for example babies. Simple water filters established and young d to grow in their faith. The rough honey production – sources.



2011

50 years – over £5 million sent overseas – now supporting 33 projects in 14 countries, bringing life-changing help to some of the world's neediest people.



** BMS World Mission workers, past or present.*

On your bike!

By David Kerrigan, the General Director of BMS World Mission, having previously served with BMS in Asia



BMS

David Kerrigan

Jesus likened the Kingdom of God to a farmer sowing seed, or a merchant searching for fine pearls. What treasures these insights contain. But sometimes I wish Jesus had also said that the Kingdom of God is like a cyclist on a journey! "Try it with one pedal and you'll go nowhere. Travel with two, as the designer intended, and you'll go to the ends of the earth!"

For reasons that are hard to understand, the church periodically tries to reinvent cycling – or Kingdom building – and turns a blind eye to the fact that the gospels unmistakably convey the reality that Jesus did not see the gospel as some kind of paracetamol for a spiritual headache. The mission of Jesus addressed the physical condition of the sick, the hungry, the outcast, the stranger, the homeless and the hopeless. And hand in hand he offered the path of forgiveness and reconciliation to all who are estranged from God and who knew deep down that 'all is not well with my soul.' Two pedals. Christ-like mission.

A moment came in 1961 when BMS's commitment to body and soul, two-pedal mission needed a further expression of practical support. As one of BMS's first agricultural missionaries, David Stockley's commitment to increasing rice yields in Bangladesh created the need for seeds and tools to be regularly sent, a challenge which the Baptist Men's Movement readily took on; and so Operation Agri was born. Before long, OA was also supporting BMS work in agriculture and animal rearing in India and Congo.

My earliest involvement with OA was in the 1980's and visits 'up the road' to David and Joyce Stockley in Gournadi, Bangladesh. In the 1990s in countries such as Thailand, Nepal and Afghanistan where I had



WUAC

Indian farmers use bicycles to transport paddy rice seed provided by WUAC.

responsibility as Asia Team Leader, OA was on hand to support the work. And later, living in Sri Lanka, I saw first-hand the impact on hundreds of poor families as OA sponsored low-tech family income solutions through Farms Lanka.

I well remember a long hot day with Clarence Mendis as we went from village to village and saw people benefiting from sustainable approaches, through the provision of sewing machines, or equipment to make batik cloth, raising chickens or breeding pigs. This is the kind of work that transforms families not just for today but for a generation.

Through all of this there has been a commitment to working in partnership for Kingdom purposes, not least the partnership with BMS that flourishes to this day. OA has maintained a commitment also to helping fledgling projects get off the ground, and not focusing only on larger, well-established work.

I have seen with my own eyes the lightness of touch that seeks to avoid a heaviness of hand that characterises some attempts at helping the poor. Development oversight can be harsh and unforgiving, or it can be charitable, looking for the good in all things. That has been OA's approach.

And the most startling thing of all – this has been accomplished almost entirely by volunteers. In a generation when people in the west are cash rich and time poor, OA has shown the value of volunteer work undertaken by men and women motivated by Christ-like compassion.

The first 50 years have been a testimony to God's grace and the hard work of committed people. Those two factors will keep the bike on the road for some years yet!

Bikes for BMS supported workers in Guinea, West Africa



BMS

The nature of development

By Andy Matheson, who spent 18 years in India and was involved in pioneering Oasis work in Mumbai before taking up his present role as their International Director. He also Chairs the Board of 'Stop The Traffik'

There are a few occasions in our experience working among those who are disadvantaged when change has been miraculously quick – almost as if overnight. Yet this is rare and can't really be factored into planning. In fact, when this happens our plans are thrown out of the window and our experience is one of being carried along on someone else's agenda. Rather, in 99% of cases people's lives are transformed in the mundane struggles of everyday life and in the slow and painful process of seeing the world differently, embracing new opportunities and making the same difficult decisions day after day. As those who work among street children say 'It is one thing to take a child out of the streets, it is another to take the street out of the child!'

True transformation is a long-term process that can't be forced and can't be speeded up. It takes time and effort and there are few, if any, quick fixes. Along the path are many pitfalls and I personally have fallen into most of them. One of the key ones is to allow the person or people I am helping to become my little project where I measure success on their response to me. When that is our framework we can so easily force our agenda and then have to learn that change can never be forced. Oh, there are some things you can force – outward behaviour being one of them, but if anything is important it can never be forced. You can force obedience but never love; submission to another's will but never respect. In a context like South Africa you can legislate so that one group no longer has supremacy over the other but you cannot legislate to take the mindset of supremacy from a person's mind and heart. Real change only occurs when people own that change for themselves.

This is why when we are involved with a development agenda working among those who are poor we must choose to come alongside people for the long haul. Far better than a large

programme that we own which addresses a very visible problem is a smaller, less visible idea that springs from the person or community among whom we work – something that takes time to emerge and when it does, nobody really knows who owns it. In the community in which we work in the city of Johannesburg one of the most exciting things for me to see over recent years is the amazing capacity of young people who live there who have decided to be agents for change within that community. In one way our main role has been to inspire them and set them free. Change there will occur because of them, not us and we will neither direct what happens nor own it.

Operation Agri understands this nature of change and also that in the complexity of development work real development cannot be measured by statistics. That is why they commit to their partners for the long haul and are a great organisation for anybody to partner with. Thank you Operation Agri.



Three pictures of change agents in Johannesburg helping children and young people to make good choices for their lives



Photos by Tracy DiCocco

“Please don’t give her any money”

By Ralph and Jane Hanger



Income generation by weaving in Chandraghona (Bangladesh)

After over 40 years of involvement in Africa with Government, Scripture Union and others, Ralph Hanger retired from being Director of the African Pastors’ Fellowship in 2010. Jane Hanger continues to be active with the BMS Development committee and Ralph is a Research Associate with OCMS on the question of dependency.

This was the plea from the Bishop’s wife when her husband’s secretary asked for money for her daughter’s school fees. For a number of years the Bishop had given her the fees, even though she could have saved the money. The previous year she had been warned that fees would not be provided this year, but instead of doing what she could towards the fees she had relied on the Bishop’s giving, in spite of his warning. Her mindset was one of dependency.

Too often our giving has caused this attitude of unhealthy dependency through failing to think things through more carefully.

In his book *When Helping Hurts*,* Brian Fikkert identifies three areas of help or aid – Relief, Rehabilitation and Development. Each type of aid has its own characteristics in terms of attitudes, relationships and situations to which they relate. He claims that too often we apply the wrong approach to situations in which we are trying to help.

Clearly there are situations where local folk are completely swamped by a crisis and they need immediate help in terms of resources from outside. Floods, drought, war/terrorism and so on are likely to occur and re-occur in a number of places and unless immediate help comes from outside there will be serious loss of life. Aid in terms of relief is essential. Here the key word is **giving**.

Giving too readily, however, has been one of the major causes of unhealthy dependency. If recipients know that whenever they ask for ‘emergency help’ it will come without any questions, they are not encouraged to look for their own solutions. This is shown by the story with which we started. Fikkert claims relief aid should be immediate, temporary and seldom.

Once relief has done its work of helping the recipients survive a crisis, rehabilitation is needed to help them recover to their former state. In Burundi, once emergency food help had been given to returning refugees, help was given in the form of hoes, seed and fertiliser to enable them to work their own ground and grow their own food again. Here the key word is **helping**. Helping recipients to provide for themselves requires a different set of skills and mind-set.

Once the basic needs of life are secure, development can be considered. Again a different set of skills and mind-set are needed to work together with local people to identify areas where development is relevant and practical. Training people in the use of ox ploughs, as in the Busia sustainable agricultural project, has led to a whole range of other developments in the area, as it was ‘felt needs’ that were being tackled.

One of the major problems with aid from Western donors to Africa is that we still have a relief mindset and use skills appropriate to this, in situations where rehabilitation and/or development skills and attitudes are needed. If we can learn to get ‘our house in order’ we will be able to set the scene for recipients of our aid to move away from dependency towards sustainability. This does not mean that we should not give to those in need, but that we should be wise in the way do so. Motivated by love and respect, our giving must encourage recipients to play a major part in solving their own problems.

* *When Helping Hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor and yourself.* By Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert, Chicago, Illinois, USA, Moody Publishers 2009. Pp 230 \$6.99



After Fikkert in *When Helping Hurts*, Moody Press

Paul Kyalimpa by board giving training in using oxen (Uganda)





DEVELOPMENT IN CHRIST'S NAME 1961-2011

2011
JUBILEE
APPEAL

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inspiring”



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Operation Agri BMM a Baptist development organisation, supporting church-linked rural and urban development projects in 3 continents.



DEVELOPMENT IN CHRIST'S NAME 1961-2011

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They send you a freepost bag (or a box, if your whole church would like to support this).

All you need to do is sign up – there's a link on the front page of our site, www.operationagri.org.uk, to make it as easy as possible, or contact our Administrator on 020 8803 0113.

This goes alongside our existing commitment to support projects among the world's poorest people through offsetting the carbon produced by air and car travel – again, see our website for more.



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Operation Agri BMM is a registered charity no: 1069349

Celebrating fifty years of generosity

By Michael Putnam, OA's Treasurer and an original member of the founding committee of OA.

A big "Thank you" to all our kind and generous friends who, both individually and collectively, increased their donations to Operation Agri during the past financial year in spite of the current squeeze. General gifts and donations increased from £75,000 to £97,000 and included some unexpected and large gifts. Support for the annual appeals also increased from £95,700 to £102,000.

Legacy gifts are always unpredictable but, nevertheless, form a major part of our income: lower this year - £85,000 compared to £132,000 last year, so our overall income for the year compared to last year is down by about £34,000. Dare I plead with you to remember Operation Agri when you prepare or rewrite your will so that your support for overseas development projects amongst poverty-stricken people can continue when you are no longer here to help?

The pie chart illustrates the various income sources and the proportion each sector contributes to the totals. The cost of advertising, printing and despatching our magazine was more than covered by the £22,000 reclaimed under Gift Aid.

Once again we are proud that more than 80% of our expenditure went directly to the support of overseas projects. We budgeted for an overspend of around £25,000 in order to maintain the same level of support for our overseas partners. When the final accounts were prepared the shortfall was a little above this at £30,000. This was met from reserves but such a deficit cannot be sustained indefinitely.

In budgeting for the current financial year very regretfully we had to reduce the total allocation for grants by 10%. This is subject to review as the year progresses – if income rises significantly, more overseas grants can be released. The expenses pie chart shows the large proportion sent to overseas projects and the relatively minor amounts spent on administration.

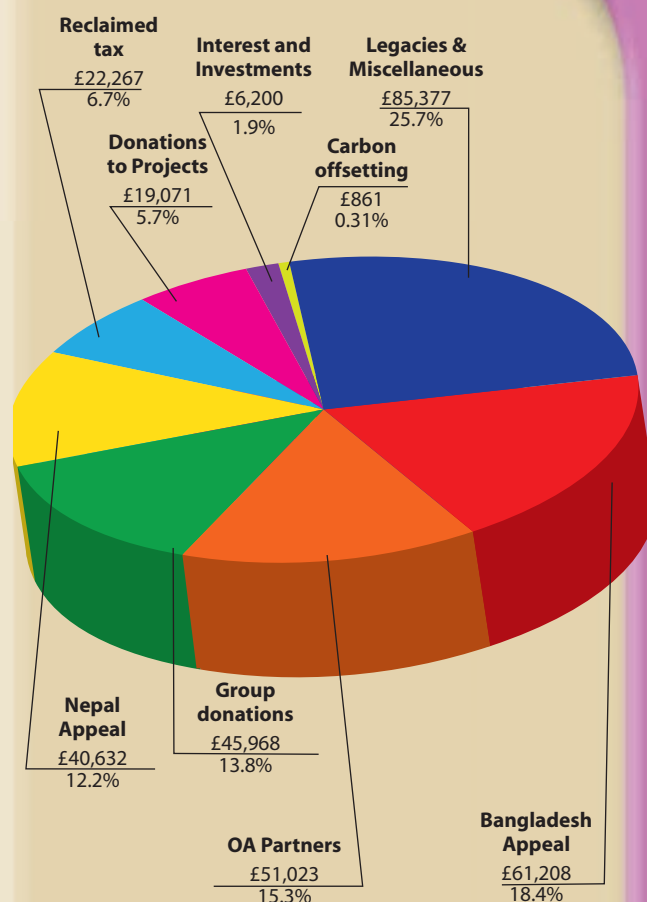
It is notable that over the fifty years of providing help and support for the poorest people in developing countries, OA received a total of £6,203,000 in gifts and donations while supported overseas development work to the tune of £5,046,000.

Until recently all the work involved in raising funds, preparing magazines and other advertising material, and organising the payment of grants was undertaken by volunteers. Even now we have only one part-time administrator, which is how we have managed to keep administration costs so low.

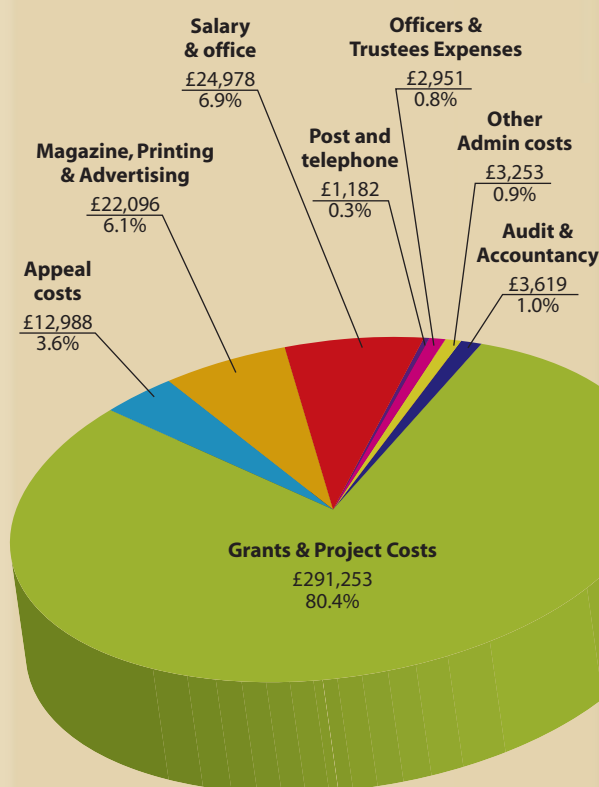
We are tremendously grateful to all those who, through the fifty years, have given time and energy to maintaining the work of Operation Agri and made it possible to spend 81% of all the funds given to us directly helping those who need it most. Several of the officers would like to hand on the organisation of OA to a younger band of volunteers and we hope that suitable friends will come forward to carry this work forward.

Thank you again to all those who have continued to support OA so loyally and generously in spite of the current financial squeeze! We do pray that gifts and donations will continue to increase so that our budget can be revised to expand the support given to development projects amongst some of the world's poorest people.

OA Income 2009-2010



OA Expenditure 2009-2010



Rural Orissa – the challenge of leading development work

By Tony Sykes

During November, OA trustee Tony Sykes with two friends from Norton Baptist Church, and an Indian colleague, travelled through Orissa en-route to OA partner WUAC (West Utkal Agricultural Centre).

Question: What's a sure-fire way of boosting a meeting's male attendance almost anywhere in the world?

Answer: Tag on a football match.

We found ourselves watching Bolangir vs Bargarh, two teams from the interior of the Indian state of Orissa. The event, sponsored by WUAC, attracted hundreds of men, young and old, and this captive audience was subjected to HIV/AIDS sound-bites booming over the tannoy in the lulls between the action.

Unconventional tactics perhaps, but it made me reflect on the difficulty of enthusing men to get involved in development work. Anecdotal stories abound of women

and children striving to better their lives while the community males take life easy. The leaders we met went some way to balancing this perception.

We'd reached Diptipur by a tortuous route from Berhampur on the coast of Orissa.

Berhampur Christian Hospital is now led by Dr Nanda, an Oriyan surgeon burdened by local needs. We edged through an Outpatient Department packed

with women and children and looked into nurseries full of new babies.

Journeying inland, the Asha Kiren community in Lamtaput also boasts a rural hospital, this one started within the last twenty years by a South-Indian friend challenged by the absence of facilities around this remote village. I was personally fascinated to see the buildings full of innovative features, many initiated by famous India architect Laurie Baker. Tiles introduced into ceilings to reduce concrete, shapely brickwork arches and low-cost cavity walls to reduce heat.

Asha Kiren also has agricultural projects providing friendship and practical help to surrounding villages. In the village of Surmil, we were proudly shown kitchen gardens producing pumpkins, sweetcorn, beans, tapioca, tomatoes, okra, chillies and much more grown in raised beds covered with moisture-retaining grass. The surrounding hillsides were stabilised by measures to prevent soil erosion and



Irrigation pond, still very much in use today.

scattered with mango and silver oak saplings. As we sat in the village sipping ragi (millet) drinks, the villagers and Asha Kiren team laughed and teased each other; a clear rapport and trust had been established by Mathew and his team.

We were thankful finally to reach WUAC Diptipur. A tiny village at a strategic crossroads, Diptipur is surrounded by agricultural land tended by occasional villages. For fifty years Operation Agri has helped these communities with water supplies, including the construction of large bunded lakes for emergency water during droughts.

A fish-farming centre, tailoring, and a variety of training courses, have been introduced through the years. Mihir, Satayanda and the other leaders of WUAC, together with Operation Agri, continue to work together to address the many needs in this remote area.

John Smith and his wife Jean were sent by BMS to India in 1956 and began to turn a plot of land near Diptipur into a farm demonstration centre (the origins of WUAC) and started looking at ways of improving local crops and livestock. Alan and Jean Casebow followed them in 1965. Alan now writes: "I give thanks to God that He took Jean and me to Diptipur for twelve years. Drought was a recurring theme for local farmers and we found ourselves involved in a number of famine relief schemes and the construction of

run-off tanks and irrigation works. Between 1975 and 1977 we organised the construction, using manual labour, of an irrigation project in eight villages surrounding

Diptipur, giving work to 1,500 men from ten villages. I believe this still functions in the rains today."



Working on a cutting to join two large irrigation ponds c. 1976.

We were gladdened on our journey to see pockets of development work led by committed men. It's our duty and calling at OA to support and encourage those willing to lead.



Tailoring training course at WUAC, Orissa.

Our Voices through the Silence

By David and Laura Parajon, the co-directors of AMOS Health and Hope, OA's partners in Nicaragua

Psalm 19 vs. 3-4 Their words aren't heard, their voices aren't recorded, but their silence fills the earth: unspoken truth is spoken everywhere. (The Message)

In the poorest communities in rural Nicaragua, a photo is a treasured possession. They are found carefully framed or safely stored in an envelope to be shared with visitors or relatives. But photos can also become a voice for people whose words usually aren't heard or recorded. We recently had the privilege of training rural health committee members how to implement in their local communities a participatory means for learning called 'Photovoice.' At its heart is teaching rural community members to use a camera to take their own pictures, which they analyse to tell a brief story about their life or community. Says Antonio, a farmer and leader in the rural community of El Roblar, "I never imagined I would ever touch a camera in my life – but now I have taken pictures that can speak the truth about our community, and help motivate us to think more clearly about what we can do for a healthier community."

The photos and stories serve as catalysts to help improve the health of their communities. For example, Elia Eloisa Urbina, one of the AMOS health promoters who runs a small clinic and organizes public health activities in her community, received training from our team at AMOS on Photovoice. She took a picture of a 7 year old child, Karina, writing her name for her mother to see, while her little 3 year old sister, Bianca, sat in her mothers lap. The picture is poignant; last year Bianca spent most of her time in a hammock and had not yet learned to walk because Karina was in charge of caring for her while her mother was working in the fields. Karina was not in school because of her responsibility to care

for Bianca. Says Elia, "I took a picture of Bianca in a hammock and wrote Children Caring for Children as the title. It's a picture of one child, but the problem of children

Ella's picture, 'Children Caring for Children.' Bianca was being looked after by her seven year old sister, Karina, and had not learned to walk.



Nicaragua Community members learning how to take pictures

AMOS, Nicaragua



Karina is now able to attend school. Here she shows her mum that she can write her own name, while Bianca looks on.

caring for children is common in our communities. The picture inspires me to keep on visiting other mums, and help them figure out how to do something different so that their children can be healthier and go to school, and the smaller brothers or sisters can be cared for by an adult and not a child."

Elia encourages and listens to the mums during her home visits. She talks to the children, and laughs with them. **From Elia, we learnt the silent truth of the miracle of presence – how each and every one of us can make a difference one person at a time by**

reaching out to someone in need and by being there for them. Through her home visits, Elia convinced the family to arrange for adult care so that Karina can now go to school and can proudly write her name on a piece of paper to show her mum. Elia gave the mother advice on how to prepare nutritious foods for her children so that they are no longer malnourished.

Through her picture and the story, Elia allows us to hear a glimpse of the voices and truths that are not recorded nor heard – of children deprived of their right to an education and having to work, and of the hope of what ordinary people can do to take simple actions to make a difference in the life of a child.

£8,463 was sent to Nicaragua last year to support this project.



Memories and thanks from partners

As we approached this jubilee year we asked some of our overseas partners to comment on the help they had received from Operation Agri. A few of their generous responses are provided below.

Joyce (with David) Stockley,* Bangladesh

"When BMM agreed to take on Operation Agri from BMS it was the answer to many prayers for us. David and I were often encouraged by letters from supporters and officers of OA. I remember the great excitement when a bus carrying baby chicks from the UK reached us, and another occasion when our Bengali assistant arrived after a long journey with some goats of a good breed. Both chicks and goats were used to improve the productivity of local animals. Another very simple but helpful gift was a simple soil testing kit. This enabled us to show some farmers why their rice looked so poor."

Alan Casebow,* India

"OA helped me in so many ways over the 17 years I was with the BMS. Perhaps foundational to all that was achieved in India was a one-week short course in Oxford. During my stay I was urged to spend as much spare time as possible reading recommended books in the agricultural department library. OA subsequently bought several of the books and they became a valuable and constant reference for me while in India and also in subsequent years."

John Mellor,* Congo

"Thank you, OA, for making our agricultural development even as fruitful as it was. By the grace of God - giving us the energy & drawing commitment from us & from you, we were able to improve the quality of the village chicken. Even though the people probably sold the chickens rather than eat them, the money helped a near-destitute domestic economy so the folk could buy things they needed such as clothes to cover themselves (many folk had scarcely enough), pay school fees, medical bills, etc."

Clarence Mendis, Sri Lanka

"In October 2001 OA was such a help in enabling us to provide a loan of just £60 to a woman in great need. She set up a business making mosquito nets and now employs 10 women who over the years have made thousands of nets. This provides all with a good income and they in turn give good support to the local Baptist Church."

Fetching safe, clean water in Nepal.

Farms Lanka



Making mosquito nets in Sri Lanka.

A beneficiary at Leads, Sri Lanka

"I had always wanted to set up a home garden so I could earn money for my family; it was so wonderful that OA assisted me to buy the plants. I will never forget their kindness."

Paul Kyalimpa, Uganda

"The people of Busia, Uganda were so grateful for the timely support provided by OA, helping them to improve rural livelihood through family income generation. The biggest success was the change of attitude and knowledge in farming skills and practices among the farmers, improving sustainability of small scale farms through farmer capacity building workshops supported by OA."

Our partners in Nepal

"We in Nepal are so grateful for OA's flexibility. The support provided as we developed our own ideas and priorities made it possible for funds to be used quickly and effectively. Our help came from the Lord through OA. Our hope for the future is that you would continue to bring safe drinking water, health, and improved agriculture through poverty eliminating projects."

Mike and Daveen Wilson,* Brazil

"The people have been so grateful for all the help which OA has given over the years at Trapiá. Often, with no other solution available, we were able to step in with OA funding and get medical help, or give a lift to hospital. I remember when a young mum, Railda, arrived at our house with her youngest child so dehydrated from diarrhoea that I thought he was dead. Thanks to the vehicle OA provided, we were able to get him to hospital, spooning oral rehydration into him all the way. Little Rogerio, though he spent several days in intensive care, is very much alive today."

MCDS



past and present

Gill Olaaka, Beersheba, Uganda

"It has been a real challenge to equip vulnerable rural families with the skills needed to improve their standards of living. When we began to partner with Operation Agri, we were able to start weekly training sessions for families in various topics to help them take better care of their children and homes. These training sessions have been so helpful in empowering people with skills and knowledge in topics such as health, parenting, agriculture and income generation."



Sylvia demonstrating a dress she made on graduating from a tailoring and dressmaking course.

Beersheba (Oasis Uganda)



SDKF, Uganda

Chicken breeding in Uganda – an effective income generating project

Dennis Ssettaala, SDKF, Uganda

"We faced a real problem when we had a child support project of 30 children but with no funder to support us. When we contacted OA, they were there to help us start a poultry project as well as buy land."

Martin Beck, RESAP Afghanistan

"OA was such a faithful supporter of our renewable energy program during the past years. In all the difficulties and problems they have been so understanding and the conversation with OA was so easy and unbureaucratic."

* Former or current BMS workers.

Join us for celebration and recommitment

Operation Agri, 1961 – 2011

Bloomsbury Baptist Church, central London

2.00 p.m., Saturday 11 June 2011



Key-note speaker – Rev Dr Paul Beasley-Murray, senior minister, Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford.

Prayers led by Rev David Kerrigan, general director, BMS World Mission.

Other speakers:

- Joyce Stockley (former BMS worker in Bangladesh)
- Debbie Wilson (daughter of BMS workers Daveen and Mike Wilson, whose holistic project in Trapiá, NE Brazil, OA has supported for over 20 years)
 - Andy Matheson (international director, Oasis Global)

Come and meet some of the personalities involved with Operation Agri over the years.

Refreshments will be available in the Friendship Centre following the celebration, together with an exhibition and photographs illustrating some aspects of OA's work past and present.

Venue: Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8EP  Tottenham Court Road and Holborn.

No congestion charge on Saturday; NCP and meter parking close-by.



Debbie Wilson, who will speak about her parents' work in Brazil

News in Brief

Youngsters 'take over' in Trapiá

BMS workers Mike and Daveen Wilson have been serving the people of Trapiá, in NE Brazil for 21 years. Their son Paul (18) is doing a gap year in Trapiá after his A levels, and one recent activity was a holiday club for 40 children living in the immediate area. With the help of several local friends a successful event came together, filling the church with life. "Here" says Daveen "is one of the rewards of staying in one place for so long – seeing those babies, whose Mums you encouraged to breastfeed, now doing the work you once did, and doing it better because they speak the language better - in every sense. And seeing your own son born in this place and totally at home in it (in spite of his six years in an English boarding school) working alongside those kids in a way we'll never be able to achieve. It helps me see why Jesus might have left the work of the Kingdom to us incompetents – for the joy it gives him to see us doing it."

Green Island Vision

A recently approved proposal from Zimbabwe will address local issues of poverty by creating income generating opportunities - the small scale production of perfumed soap, paper products, bee keeping and sewing. Operating from a farm in Matabeleland South, there is an abundance of natural products that can be used in the making of soap and paper. Training will equip local people with appropriate skills and the prospects for marketing such products are judged to be good. The way elements of this proposal complement others is an interesting feature. Bee keeping will provide wax and honey for soap making; off-cuts from sewing may be used in the paper making process, or sewn covers for card and envelope combinations and the sewing class will also make the beekeepers suits. It is estimated that eventually the benefits from this project, known as Green Island Vision, may extend to some 6200 local people.

A legacy of health and welfare in Eastern Nepal

Last year the Nepal Baptist Church's community health and education team completed 11 years of activity in Itahari region, East Nepal. The team has now moved on to a new location but a recent report summarises the benefits from their work in Itahari. 43 health workers were trained to meet the needs of the expanding population – 39 women became skilled weavers and some are already passing on their skills to others in

the town – 15 biogas systems were constructed, thus reducing the use of wood and the work load of some local women – 14 micro-saving groups were linked into 3 Cooperative Banks with a total of 340 members and as a result every member has been able to improve their economic status. We join the Nepali leaders of this project in giving thanks to God for his abundant blessings on their work.

Love and care expressed in Northern Sri Lanka



Children involved in Home Gardening in Sri Lanka.

After 30 years of civil war the northern part of Sri Lanka is recovering some of its normal lifestyle. Since May 2009 the restrictions on travel have been lifted and thousands of people have the freedom to travel that they have so long been denied. Farms Lanka is currently visiting these previously inaccessible churches in the north and providing brotherly love and care. Manager Clarence Mendis reports: "During these visits we gather people for Bible studies, trauma counseling and for seminars on development, disaster management and home gardening. Books, seeds and compost bins are among the inputs provided. One of the pastors in Jaffna started a small poultry, banana growing and home gardening project with help from Farms. His model project will help local villagers to adopt similar schemes. In these ways and by many other means Farms Lanka has the privilege of helping the northern dwellers who have suffered so much during the civil war."

Farms Lanka

Prayer Points

Please use this page in conjunction with other information in the magazine

DR Congo

- 1 Life in Congo continues to be a struggle for most people. Corruption is rife and desperate poverty the experience of most of the population. Communications are challenging, travel is difficult and promise of a better tomorrow is always seemingly out of reach. Yet the CBFC (Baptist Community of the River Congo) continues to declare the good news of Jesus in practical ways. Pray for the ongoing projects offering help and hope through agriculture, development and skills training.

South Africa

- 2 Pray for the ongoing work of the Thusong Skills Training Centre in Soweto - that more students will benefit from the baking, tailoring, IT and other courses on offer.

Tanzania

- 3 Remember Rev Heavenlight Luoga and his colleagues in the NW Karagwe region offering hope through 'Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development.' Pray that the project workers and community farmer trainers will work well together and that the farmers in the area will soon experience the benefit of the programme of training given by Paul Kyalimpa.

Uganda

- 4 The Beersheba Project near Mbale is helping girls at risk and giving support to their families. Pray for Maggie Aturo as she leads this project and with her team of workers, implements the vision of their recently published Strategic Plan. Pray too for Gill Olaaka in her role as Country Director of Oasis Uganda, Beersheba's parent body based in Kampala.
- 5 Pray for the work at Gulu in the north of Uganda where Paul Kyalimpa is leading the work of the Integrated Rural Development Project, along similar lines to the successful sustainable farming project at Busia in the south west.
- 6 Remember Dennis Ssettaala and those working with him in SDKF, giving training in tailoring and IT skills to young people in a slum area of Kampala, and agricultural training to farmers at Nakaseke to the north.

Zimbabwe

- 7 Pray for Kevin and Gill Jones as they settle into their new home in Zimbabwe and explore development opportunities in and around Bulawayo. Pray for Phillip Jambaya who is now running the NBCZ Development Desk from his home.

Bangladesh

- 8 The staff of the Kodamtali Community Health Programme have had a difficult few months following the death of Dr Swe Hla Mong Chowdhury the previous Medical Director of the Chandraghona Christian Hospital and father of Dr Stephen Chowdhury the current Medical Director and leader of the Community Health Programme. Pray for all the staff but especially for Dr Stephen at this time of bereavement.
- 9 We give thanks for good progress at the Duaripara slum project in Dhaka. The new director for Oasis Global projects in Bangladesh, Nripen Baidya has settled in well. Sue Headlam visited the project early this year and reports real changes in the confidence of the girls who attend, thanks to the hard work of team leader Lovely and her helpers.

Thailand

- 10 Continue to pray for the BMS Action Team as they teach, encourage and witness in and around Chiang Mai. They are enjoying a very busy schedule of activities and will be spending time at work in an OA supported activity under Mike Mann. As this magazine reaches your hands the team will be close to returning to UK and looking forward to relating some of their experiences to folks at home. Pray that they will be well prepared for this and will be a good witness in the churches which they visit.

Nepal

- 11 Give thanks to God for the success of the Machhapuchhre Health Awareness and Action Programme where the toilet construction programme has had a really positive effect on health and general cleanliness in the area. The work has united the people and sown the seeds for positive change in the community.

Sri Lanka

- 12 Serious flooding in many parts of the country in January adversely affected many thousands of people, caused several deaths and destroyed rice fields, vegetable plots and the loss of many homes. The staff of Farms Lanka and of Leads will be working hard to bring relief to those who have suffered in this disaster. Pray that they may be well resourced and strengthened in this work.

Home

- 13 Pray for the good success of the 2011 Appeal "Harvest of Hope" - that it will be a challenge to churches and individuals and that through it God will provide for future blessing and the extension of our work.
- 14 OA is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Give thanks for the wonderful resources that have enabled us to help so many thousands of people towards an improved lifestyle. Pray that the celebrations may be truly focussed towards the God who provides and enables and on whom we are dependant for the ongoing work of our charity.



HARVEST OF HOPE – OUR 2011 APPEAL

It's not too early to begin thinking about this year's appeal, which will focus on the future of OA's work in the light of the last 50 years, with video from Thailand, Uganda and Brazil. The resource pack will be available from May onwards, but the order form is printed in this issue if you would like to order in advance. We will send it to you as soon as it is ready.



IN THIS MAGAZINE – OUR NEW COLLECTING BOX

Celebrate our Jubilee with us! Children could collect 5p coins in the box you'll find folded flat inside this issue, and those a little older could collect 50p coins in the same way. It soon mounts up! If you need extra boxes for your church, please contact the administrator.

YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Offset the carbon dioxide you release into the environment by air or road travel by making a small donation to one of our carbon offsetting projects, providing solar powered water heaters to villagers in Afghanistan, or fuel-efficient cooking stoves to people in Nepal. Visit the website to see how easy this is to do: www.operationagri.org.uk following the links to 'Carbon Offsetting.'

PRESENTS WITH A PURPOSE

Birthdays... anniversaries... any time someone would welcome a greetings card there is an opportunity to give through our 'Presents with a Purpose' scheme. Your gift will benefit the work we do overseas. Churches too can participate in the same way.



OA's WEB SITE

Information about any aspect of our work can be found on our web site. Visit: www.operationagri.org.uk

Operation Agri supports rural and urban development projects on three continents, attacking the basic causes of poverty amongst some of the least fortunate people in the world. Many of the projects are run by churches or organisations in partnership with BMS World Mission.

Operation Agri BMM was established by the Baptist Men's Movement in 1961.
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DONATIONS and ENQUIRIES to Malcolm Drummond: Operation Agri BMM, 361 Firs Lane,
Palmer's Green, London, N13 5LX tel: 020 8803 0113 (daytime or evening) email: admin@operationagri.org.uk

Visit our website: www.operationagri.org.uk