

Outreach Abroad

OPERATION AGRI'S MAGAZINE

UGANDA:

Breaking barriers to
employment

TANZANIA

Community banking
key to growing success

Supporting
rural and urban
development
projects in
Christ's name



1961-2024

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AGRI
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AUTUMN 2024



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local Christian partners in
ten countries. Operation
Agri helps grow food,
increase incomes, teach
skills, empower women
and much more.

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Welcome
from the Editor

Growing for life

Our supermarket shelves routinely overflow with fresh and processed food offering us an amazing diversity of produce, most unknown to previous generations. Sowing cress indoors, lettuce in a window box or potatoes in garden tubs are small endeavours, but they put us in touch with the soil.

Operation Agri supports many projects which enable farmers to improve their yields with creation care. For them it's more than being 'in touch with agriculture'; it enables families to eat healthily and generate income for education and health care. Thank you for being part of that ministry. Nigel.

NigelJones@operationagri.org.uk
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Growing Greener pioneer, Rev Lloyd Chizenga, dies



Sadly, Lloyd Chizenga died at the end of July. He was one of our long-term partners who headed up *Growing Greener* in Malawi, an agricultural project which helps rural farmers adapt to climate change. For over 20 years, since he first had contact with APF, (African Pastors' Fellowship), and OA, (Operation Agri), he worked tirelessly to better the lives of many in Malawi.

Lloyd founded the New Life Christian Church and, alongside his agricultural work, helped untrained pastors to better understand the Bible and present the Good News of Jesus. He was also involved in helping young people get an education and opening a school in the Shire valley. His churches stretched across the border into Mozambique and his requests for prayer, just before he died, were:

- to give thanks for all who had benefitted from the work in Malawi and
- to pray that many in the future would also benefit and give thanks.

Please pray for his family, those he pastored and everyone who is and has been part of the project, Growing Greener in Malawi.

Presents with a Purpose



There is a brand-new *Presents with a Purpose* brochure. If you need more copies please ask Jo, (admin@operationagri.org.uk), alternatively you may photocopy the order form. Another option is to go to: operationagri.org.uk/presents-with-a-purpose/ and make your selection on-line.

Or you can scan the QR code to go to the *Presents with a Purpose* page. When you scan the QR code you will also be given the opportunity to share the link.



Showcasing Operation Agri



Operation Agri had a stand at the Edenbridge and Oxted Agricultural Show over the August Bank Holiday weekend. We were excited to meet many people new to OA and to share what Operation Agri is doing.



Marathon runners please

We have two places in the next Brighton Marathon on 6 April 2025 and one place in the next London Marathon on Sunday 27 April 2025.

Please book your place with Jo, our Administrator, (admin@operationagri.org.uk) and start gathering sponsorship now.

Thousands impacted by a walk to raise awareness of **HUMAN TRAFFICKING** in Kalwa

Sulekha Thapa, looks back at a year of impact and growth

In a transformative year marked by community development and engagement, Oasis India, in partnership with local stakeholders, has made remarkable strides in enhancing the lives of families and individuals in Kalwa, a suburb of Mumbai.

Community-building and engagement

Oasis India's project team engaged with 250 families, addressing their needs through personal visits and active participation in project activities.

Women's Day, marked in collaboration with SNEHA, (Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action), brought together 250 women to discuss inclusion. A motivational speech by an Assistant Police Inspector emphasised empowerment and safety for women in the community.

Young people were urged to become agents for change or Change Agents, so that their transformed lives could transform others. In this way some progress was made, and 15 proactive community members focused on pressing issues such as sanitation, youth addiction, and child protection.

Three new groups of Change Agents were formed, comprising 20 young boys and girls aged 18–24. Additionally, two new Self-Help Groups were created, each with 10 women, empowering them with economic opportunities and support networks.

Fostering strategic partnerships

The project strengthened its network through strategic partnerships with six local NGOs and four CBOs (Community Based Organisations). Collaborations with organisations like Sahayyak Foundation, Support, Alert India, Humble Smile Foundation, Sneha, Kshamata, Aamchi Cycle, and Magic Bus facilitated the exchange of ideas and best practices.

Promoting health and hygiene

Three medical camps addressed general health concerns for 126 individuals. The eye check-up camp for 106 participants, identified 35 needing spectacles. Nine health awareness sessions targeted children and women, covering topics like personal hygiene, mental health, balanced diet, and disease prevention, significantly improving community well-being.

Employment opportunities

A significant highlight was the 250 students who gained invaluable careers advice from the founder of an educational institute, retired technical engineers from Indian Railways, and a Senior Programme Manager from Oasis India. Connections with training institutes and job placement agencies led to vocational training for six individuals and successful job placements for ten. Basic tailoring and computer courses were also useful in securing jobs for community members.

se awareness

Environmental initiative: a partnership with the Solid Waste Management Department and local health authorities led to a successful cleanliness drive and tree plantation initiative ▶



After-school programme

The After-School Programme (ASP) engaged 94 students, with 60% showing improvement in their academic performance. Celebrations of various national and international days enriched students' cultural and educational experiences.

Regular sports practices for 25 students developed sports skills, teamwork, and sportsmanship. A local cricket tournament boosted confidence, highlighting the importance of sports for physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Human trafficking and environmental initiatives

Awareness sessions on Personal Safety Education reached 475 students, promoting health, hygiene, safety, and social issues. On World Human Trafficking Awareness Day a session for 75 women and 50 youth educated them about the trafficking process, prevention, and available resources.

An environmental initiative, in partnership with the Solid Waste Management Department and local health authorities,

led to a successful cleanliness drive and tree planting initiative.

Oasis India, in collaboration with others, organised the 'Walk for Freedom' in Mumbai and 40 other locations across Maharashtra, including Kalwa, last October. This marked the fifth year of Mumbai's participation, with over 964 individuals from corporates, schools, colleges, and NGOs joining in Kalwa alone. Participants pledged to end the trade and walked

silently holding placards with statistics on human trafficking.

Looking ahead

The achievements of the past year reflect the dedication and collaborative spirit of Oasis India and its partners. As the community continues to grow and thrive, these initiatives promise a brighter, more sustainable future for all. Through ongoing education, empowerment, and engagement, Oasis India remains steadfast in its mission to create lasting positive change in the lives of the people it serves.



Sulekha Thapa

“**Participants pledged to end trafficking and walked silently holding placards with statistics on human trafficking.**”

Children's

Page

By Janet –
a good friend of OA

See if you can work out the anagrams below –
there are some pictures to help you.

BCCEILY _ _ _ _ _

EEEHIVB _ _ _ _ _

CCEHIKNS _ _ _ _ _

AAABNN ALNPST _ _ _ _ _

AGOST _ _ _ _ _

HOOCLS IKST _ _ _ _ _

AIEMZ DEESS _ _ _ _ _

When you have completed the anagrams above see
if you can work out the anagram below.

It will tell you what all these things have in common.

EENPRSST HITW A EOPPRSU

Clue:

P

_ _ _ _ _



Answers on page 19

YOUTH PAGE

Questions for you: (Tick all that apply)

I have **never**:

- ☐ visited Operation Agri's website
- ☐ bought from *Presents with a Purpose*
- ☐ shared the Youth Page with a friend
- ☐ used the Prayer Pages
- ☐ received a copy of the magazine for myself
- ☐ volunteered to help Operation Agri
- ☐ spoken about Operation Agri to a friend
- ☐ prayed for the beneficiaries
- ☐ considered promoting Operation Agri

Here is a polite request: Consider how you might be able to rub out at least one of those ticks. Do something to make that happen – today! *Thank you.*

3 X 3 STUDY:

1. What are your top 3 topics at school, college, university?

A) _____
B) _____
C) _____

2. What are your top 3 sports or hobbies?

A) _____
B) _____
C) _____

3. What are your top 3 skills or gifts?

A) _____
B) _____
C) _____

How could you put any one or more of these to use to promote Operation Agri and the overseas projects?

Please let me know NigelJones@operationagri.org.uk



Victim to *victor*

Nargus Azhar highlights how LFTN empowers Christian women to escape prostitution in Pakistan

With a heavy heart, I share the reality of Christian women in Pakistan being forced into prostitution to feed their families. They are coerced into selling themselves to protect their loved ones from predators. Despite their suffering, they have not lost their honour.

As Christians, we must ask ourselves: how can we remain silent when part of the body is suffering?

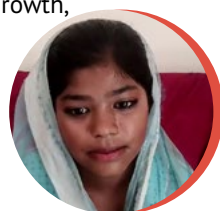
Rani Lateef has been helped by Light for the Nation Trust (LFTN). She comments, 'My father's cruel words and the darkness of depression consumed me, denying me education, subjecting me to sexual abuse, and forcing me into prostitution. I felt like a blank, dirty piece of paper – worthless and insignificant, trapped in a living hell. Then, I found hope at LFTN's adult literacy centre and advocacy training. There, you gave me



education and opened my eyes to a new world. You equipped me with skills to earn my daily bread with a respectful manner and showed me that I am worthy of a life of dignity. Thanks to Operation Agri, I'm breaking free from the shackles of my past. LFTN is empowering me to rebuild my life, and for the first time, I feel like I have worth.'

Operation Agri supports LFTN in empowering women through comprehensive training, aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Our programme offers vocational skills, literacy, advocacy, and more, helping women break free from poverty and exploitation. Together, we can promote sustainability, economic growth, and a brighter future.

Munaza was born into a brick-kiln unit where generations of her family had toiled in slavery, which crushed her spirit,



denying her the fundamental right to education.

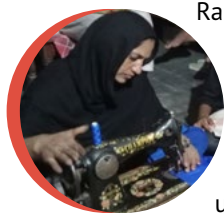
When LFTN's adult literacy centre opened, she fought tirelessly to secure permission from the brick-kiln owner. Finally, she stepped into the world of education.

Today, she stands tall, a shining testament to resilience, proudly pursuing her studies in grade Seven. She wants to study further, to become a successful girl who can shatter the glass ceiling of her circumstances. With every step forward, she's determined to leave the legacy of slavery behind, forging a brighter future for herself and inspiring countless others to do the same.



Farzana Liaquat was also helped by LFTN and she says, 'I faced unimaginable struggles – sexual abuse, poverty, and shame, but I refused to let my circumstances define me. I

found solace in prayer and devotion at the training centre, which empowered me to overcome my past. Through sewing, and business management training, I discovered a new sense of purpose. With each stitch, I sewed away my fears and doubts, replacing them with confidence and hope. Now, I proudly own a small business, earn a steady income, and provide for my family. I'm filled with gratitude and hope, a testament to the strength that lies within us all.'



Rani Zafar spent 43 years in bondage at a brick-kiln unit, enduring verbal and physical abuse, loan burdens, and relentless labour under the scorching

sun alongside her children. She says, 'We were treated without mercy, forced to meet impossible targets. My heart ached for my children's education and my husband's health, suffering from hypertension, but LFTN intervened, setting us free from the brick-kiln unit's shackles! Their Sewing Training course and Adult Literacy course was a turning point – I gained the skills of sewing, cutting, knitting, crochet, embroidery, and literacy, empowering me to secure a job in a garment making factory. And now, my factory owner has entrusted me with a leadership role, making me in charge of other women. I'm proud to be a supervisor, ensuring their safety and well-being. Tears of joy fill my eyes as I celebrate my new-found freedom and the chance to rebuild my life. I'm grateful for LFTN's unwavering support, which has transformed my life and given me a sense of purpose.'

Through the intervention of LFTN and Operation Agri, many people have broken free from the shackles of slavery, abuse, and illiteracy, and have discovered new purposes and passions. Their journeys serve as beacons of light, inspiring countless others to seek freedom, education, and a life of dignity. As we celebrate their triumphs, we are reminded that every individual deserves the chance to thrive and reach their full potential.

Editorial note: Whilst this article focuses on the work with Christian women, LFTN serves women from a variety of different faith backgrounds.



Nargus Azhar



Jerry Clewett learns how communities in Sri Lanka continue to rebuild after civil war

▲ Kerenakaran with one of her daughters and one of her goats

Killinochchi was a focus of the civil war in Sri Lanka which ended after 26 years in 2009. Even though that was 15 years ago the rebuilding of communities, and the local economy is necessarily long-term.

Sri Lanka holds many memories for me. From surviving the 2004 Tsunami on a family holiday to a number of work related visits. So I really looked forward to the opportunity to visit the work of Lanka Evangelical Alliance Development Service (LEADS), particularly the project supported by Operation Agri in Killinochchi, in the north of the island. The first couple of days of my visit were spent dodging thunderstorms in Colombo, though it was great to meet the LEADS staff at their main office and get a good overview of their wonderful work in child-focused community transformation since 1983. Then, on the Sunday, after church, we set off on the long road journey north, arriving in Killinochchi just before midnight, having left the thunderstorms far behind us.

Rebuilding communities after civil war

It is wonderful that Operation Agri is partnering with LEADS to support local communities in this post-war recovery process. My time in Killinochchi was limited – just one and a half days – but I am very grateful to our friends in LEADS Monroe Jayasuriya (LEADS Executive Director), Diordre Moraes (LEADS Resource Mobilisation Director), and Nadeesha Rajakaruna (LEADS Community Transformation Director) for organising an excellent programme. I was able to meet with fourteen individuals or groups who are participating in the project. I am even more grateful that LEADS was able to facilitate conversations through two interpreters: Nadeesha who interpreted English-Sinhala-English and Turin (LEADS staff based in Killinochchi) who interpreted from Sinhala-Tamil-Sinhala. So, between us we could communicate with everybody, even if it did take additional time.

It started with a cow

There is no space here to do justice to the many people who willingly shared their stories with me, but let me mention a couple of examples to illustrate what the project is doing. On

Monday we visited Aalady, one of the two project villages, and we met Kerenakaran whose husband died 18 years ago, and who the project has supported to ensure that she has a sustainable livelihood. Kerenakaran has two daughters (aged 25 and 18) and she told me that after her husband died she really struggled to provide meals and support her daughters in education. Then, after an assessment, the project decided to support her with cattle, and selling milk became her main source of income, enabling her to provide three meals a day for her children, pay for their education, and make regular savings. The profits from the cattle also enabled her to expand her business to home gardening, rice cultivation, goats, peanuts, and chilli powder production. She invested the profits from the peanut production in the

“

She invested the profits from the peanut production in the construction of a well. She is clear that it started with that cow from LEADS!



construction of a well. She is clear that it started with that cow from LEADS!

Child focused development

We finished the first day in the dark – mainly due to my endless questions

to learn more about how these women-headed households had developed impressive resilience since being resettled after the war.

The second day was scheduled to be shorter in terms of meetings as we also had to travel back south, but I was grateful that the first meeting of the day was with the Village Child Development Committee comprising teachers, police, midwives and welfare officers, as well as village representatives. We had an engaging and far-reaching discussion talking about child rights, child abuse, drug abuse, crime, alcohol abuse, school attendance, nutrition, domestic violence and teenage pregnancy.

There was general agreement that trends are positive, (for instance greater school attendance rates, reduced teenage pregnancy, and improved nutrition), and there was universal support for the child clubs, like the one we met later in the morning. In fact, they cited the encouragement of child clubs as a key highlight of their work as they help children develop leadership and advocacy skills, and those who emerge as leaders are then positive peer role models.

*Jerry Clewett,
Operation Agri Trustee*



▼ Jerry with LEADS staff



Village Development Group for Tanzania

Jesca Mgimba explains how the IMARIKA project promotes positive change in poor rural areas in the Iringa region



IMARIKA Mlowa group

Village Community Banking (VICOBA)

Every village group, where we are operating, runs a VICOBA programme. Some groups have recently completed the yearly cycle and have started another cycle. When the Lupembelwasenga group completed its first round of savings they had total shares of TZS84,000, (£28,000), for 35 group members. This encouraged many more people to start asking to join the group. Members now include the Chairman of the village and the VEO.



Stulida Nyagi, who lives in Utengule, was 18 years old when she joined the IMARIKA group in 2019, and took

a VICOBA loan of £300. She was able to increase stock in her shop, and from that profit she started maize farming. Her field yielded 10 tons of maize which sold for £3,000. She has since used some of this money to grow two acres of tomatoes which have sold for £1,550, so from a loan of £300 just four years ago she has been able to earn £4,550. Stulida is using the money to pay her childrens' school fees and

she continues to improve her business. She is proud to be a member of the Utengule group, as she says, 'It has been a great blessing to my family.'

Abundant harvests

IMARIKA groups are taught how to look after the soil to retain moisture, fertilise it with manure, compost, and green manures. The introduction of organic farming methods has meant that a number of groups have seen significant improvements in crop yields.



Vicent Mtisi used to harvest 20 bags of maize, but now, using conservation agriculture principles, he

harvests 40 to 50 bags of maize. Vicent took a loan of £400 from VICOBA and started a shop with half of it and invested the rest in his farm. Currently, Vicent has grown papayas, which are very productive, some he sells, and some his family eat.

Nelson Nzilano, a member of the Mlowa group, says



s are good news

“ He now thinks that because his sesame has grown so well, he can pay his son’s university fees, after selling the produce.

he is now motivated to farm better. He was growing sunflowers and groundnuts, but when he visited the Mafuluto group he saw the benefit of growing sesame. He now thinks that because his sesame has grown so well, he can pay his son’s university fees, after selling the produce.

Tree planting

The word IMARIKA means strengthening the environment, the economy, and matters of faith for the community. IMARIKA therefore has a strategy of planting trees. Here, in Iringa, every year, many acres are cut down, so the IMARIKA groups are proud to make some small restoration. In 2024 we have the goal of planting 30,000 trees. Work has already started to plant fruit and other trees in Izazi, Utengule, and Lupembelwasenga groups. Other groups have prepared their nurseries for tree planting.

Ibumbu secondary school

The Imarika Project has developed a partnership with the Ibumbu secondary school. We have been teaching the students about environmental care, conservation agriculture and tree planting. They now have more than 800 avocado trees planted in the school grounds and some are already bearing fruit. Students have been taught how to graft fruit



▲ Ibumbu secondary students

seedlings as this produces a quicker fruiting tree.

Also, secondary school teachers in Ibumbu asked for VICOBA training after seeing its benefits and have now formed their own group in school.

Emmanuel International

To enable the Imarika groups to develop and become strong we meet with the groups weekly, training them in how to run effective VICOBA meetings. Then, as each group becomes more entrepreneurial, we visit less frequently. It is hard work, with a lot of travelling, but seeing the way the Imarika groups bless the local villagers is a great motivator.

Our groups are formed without religious discrimination, so we have Muslims, Christians and others. God has blessed the work, and we teach about God from the Bible. A big Imarika groups networking meeting in August involved teaching on entrepreneurship, psychology, and the Word of God. In this environment Muslims and Christians collaborate to learn and there are good discussions.

Jesca Mgimba



PRAYER we invite you to pray

I will give Thee thanks in the great congregation; I will praise Thee among many people.

PSALM 35:18 21ST CENTURY KING JAMES VERSION

Bangladesh

Project name: **Duaripara Family**

Development Project

Partner: **Christian Ministry to Children and Youth**

Empowering girls through education

PRAYER REQUEST:

For the health of the girls' families especially for Saiba's grandmother, Achiya's father, Sumaiya's mother, and Brishti's mother, all of whom are facing long-term physical ailments in an urban environment where it is difficult to stay healthy.

India

Project name: **Community Empowerment Project, Kalwa East, Mumbai**

Partner: **Oasis India**

Empowering the urban poor

PRAYER REQUEST:

For the parents of school age children, especially that they should be more mindful about taking trips to their home villages, since frequent absences are leading to children dropping out of school and thereby jeopardising their educational development.

Nepal

Project name: **CHEST Ghusel**

Partner: **Multipurpose Community Development Service**

Handing over for sustainability

PRAYER REQUEST:

Pray that MCDS and the local community can work together to ensure the benefits of this project will continue after MCDS have completed the handover. BMS World Mission is supporting a transition year for the project.

Nepal

Project name: **CHEP Mahatgaun**

Partner: **Multipurpose Community Development Service**

Health and education in a remote village

PRAYER REQUEST:

Pray God's guidance for the MCDS work to build ownership of project content by the local community through capacity building activities. Pray too that the new ways of working will be understood and supported.

Pakistan

Project name: **Women's Literacy Centres**

Partner: **Light for the Nations**

Empowering women with literacy and skills training

PRAYER REQUEST:

Give thanks that Colin Gibson, a close friend of an OA Trustee, was able to visit Lahore and meet some of the groups. Pray that our three-year project agreement ending in 2026 will empower LFTN to plan longer term for the groups.

Nicaragua

Project name: **Community-based primary healthcare**

Partner: **AMOS (A Ministry of Sharing)**

Mums and their sick babies

PRAYER REQUEST:

We thank God for accompanying our ministry of sharing health and hope in Nicaragua. Please pray for strong and blessed partnerships so we may continue working for the health of all in the Western Hemisphere's second poorest country.

Sri Lanka

Project name: **Enhancing Vulnerable Communities and Protection of Children**
 Partner: **Lanka Evangelical Alliance Development Service**

Building resilient communities

PRAYER REQUEST:

For the work of the Village Child Development Committees in the project area who seek to protect children and create a positive environment for their development. Pray that the members of this multi-agency committee will work well together creating positive results.

Uganda

Project name: **SDKF Vocational Training**
 Partner: **Setting Development and Keeping the Foundations**

Imparting vocational skills

PRAYER REQUEST:

For the vocational teachers to be filled with the love of Christ. That all the students will excel in their studies and successfully set up their own businesses and for good health for all involved in SDKF.

Uganda

Project name: **Women's Adult Literacy Project**
 Partner: **Baptist Union of Uganda**
Capacity building through literacy

PRAYER REQUEST:

Pray for the women that – after the WALP training – poverty ends once they become literate and find work.

Uganda

Project name: **Sustainable Agriculture Farming Initiatives**
 Partner: **Baptist Union of Uganda**
Building farm businesses in Uganda

PRAYER REQUEST:

Pray the farmers put the knowledge they acquire into practice.

Tanzania

Project name: **IMARIKA**
 Partner: **Emmanuel International and Diocese of Ruaha**
Community development in Tanzania

PRAYER REQUEST:

Pray for the staff as they facilitate training and smooth functioning of the groups; the formation of a new group at Makuka; partnership between El-Iringa and the Regional Girls' Secondary School at Lugalo as they introduce IMARIKA there; and that milking goats will be found for some of the IMARIKA groups.

Malawi

Project name: **Growing Greener in Malawi**
 Partner: **African Pastors Fellowship**

Sustainable farming in Malawi

PRAYER REQUEST:

For the future of the project after the sudden death of the leader, Lloyd. For trained farmers and trainees that they'll benefit from the training. For good rains this growing season 2024/2025 asking God to spare Malawi from climate calamities and give thanks for the Community Agricultural Trainers and the lead farmers.

Tanzania

Project name: **Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development**
 Partner: **Farming Partnership Initiative**

Unity, training and rain

PRAYER REQUEST:

Pray for Agnes and the FPI team as they lead the farming training and that those who are trained put their learning into practice on their farms. Thank God for our financial resources.

Zambia

Project name: **Nyampande Organic Farmers Project**
 Partner: **African Pastors Fellowship**
Organic farming in Zambia

PRAYER REQUEST:

That the rains will be good this season, and farmers trained in producing home-made fertilisers, last year, will be able to benefit this year, with a good harvest.



Land girls and level fields – challenging

CULTURAL NORMS

Alexandra Lear challenges our 'picture perfect' vision of the division of labour in farming

Picture this – a pastoral view of undulating hills and grazing sheep, a farmer returning to a mutton stew prepared by his hard-working wife. It's an image to which we often default – the man is the farmer, and the woman is the farmer's wife. It is likely we default to this image because the roles of men and women became less equal once we settled down and became pastoralists (the practice of keeping sheep, cattle or other grazing animals). Women took on more domestic roles, which naturally led to women having less control and access to resources such as capital, land, equipment and training. Fast-forward to the present day, and many women around the world are still facing similar barriers.

Land girls before 1917!

Whilst conflict is known to accelerate feminisation in the agricultural sector, the truth is that women were Land Girls long

before 1917. Here in the UK, there are more women in agriculture today than there ever has been – but the barriers remain. Recent campaigns such as, 'Level the Field', carried out by *Farmers Weekly*, are seeking to facilitate change across the industry, making agriculture fairer, more equitable

and more inviting for women. Looking forward, the United States Department of Agriculture, (USDA), has hailed 2026 as the 'International Year of the Woman Farmer' so, watch this space.

Globally, around 80% of the world's food is produced by small-scale farmers. Let that one sink in – 8/10 of the vegetables you've just bought in your weekly shop were grown by small-

scale farmers. And, an average of 43% of the world's food is produced by female farmers, with that number rising to over 50% in some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia. Which means that over half of the produce in your basket was grown

“
... an average of 43%
of the world's food
is produced by
female farmers,
with that
number rising
to over 50%
in some parts of
Sub-Saharan Africa
or South Asia.

◀ Santhrani with her Sprinkler irrigation system supported through the work of LEADS in Sri Lanka

by a woman. A woman facing obstacles that limit her productivity, a single mother who is working to give her daughters an education, a woman who is often overlooked by the men in her community.

Imagine what those women could do if they were given equal opportunities and access to that which their male counterparts have access?

Women empowered

Operation Agri partners with locally led initiatives that empower women to make this vision a reality, by putting men and women on a level playing field. Some of the ways in which this is achieved is through projects that work directly with women, through approaches that provide equal opportunities for both male and female participants, and through appointing highly qualified women facilitators to deliver training.

In Sri Lanka, one of the ways in which Lanka Evangelical Alliance Development Service, (LEADS), is empowering women is through targeting 'women headed households' to improve their economies and food security through training in organic home gardening. In Tanzania, Farming Partnerships Initiative (FPI) is working to assist smallholder farmers to sustainably move beyond subsistence farming, providing equal opportunities, training and equipment for both men and women; and that's just two examples.

A shift in thinking

Through supporting work such as this, Operation Agri is contributing to challenging cultural and historical norms



▲ Sarafina, Heavenlight (FPI Project Director) and Agnes (FPI Trainer) in Sarafina's tree and plant nursery.

that exist worldwide. Our thinking is so ingrained that we don't often notice it, let alone consider the positive impact that challenging it might have on our communities, at home or overseas. God made man and woman equal, and we both have a seat at the table. Supporting women in traditionally male dominated roles such as farming isn't just about making it fair – it's about cultivating independence, enabling women to participate in their local economy, and contribute to food security and poverty eradication within their communities.

So, let's do what we can to champion women farmers, at home and abroad. Shall we start by revisiting the image from the beginning? Picture this – the rumble of a tractor as a farmer returns from the field. First cut of silage finished, she opens the door to the smell of a mutton stew she put on this morning. See? It all starts with a small shift in thinking, and Operation Agri is partnering with projects that do just that.

Alexandra Lear



Breaking *barriers* to employm

Dennis Ssettaala, shares stories of lives transformed in Uganda



Stella Namakula

Setting Development and Keeping the Foundation, (SDKF), vocational skills training project trains 120 disadvantaged young people per year in tailoring, hairdressing and motorcycle mechanics, so that they can acquire skills to earn a living, hence breaking the poverty cycle for them and their generation. So far over 1,800 youth have benefited from this programme.

Young people face so many barriers in their journey to success and, often, the root cause of failure is lack of capital and the skills needed in the labour market. Many young people from vulnerable backgrounds are not able to complete their education. Most of these young people have only gone as far as Form Four and can proceed no further due to obvious economic challenges. This means they cannot find employment.



Twenty-year-old Jacob Mukase is one of the students doing motorcycle mechanic training at SDKF Vocational Skills Training Project. He joined SDKF Vocational Skills Training Project from the Buyende district.

He says, 'I lost my father when I was 15 years old and I dropped out of school in primary six. After dropping out of school, I had no job, so I went to the streets and

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**Now I can save money
... support my family with
soap, clothes and also
buy medicine when
someone is sick.**

started taking drugs. However, in May this year the SDKF coordinator visited our home and spoke to me and my mum about me doing a course in motorcycle repair and maintenance, which I accepted. In June this year I joined SDKF Vocational Skills Training Project.

Jacob said that since they started learning he, and others on the course, have acquired various skills and their lives have changed for the better as the training has kept them from indulging in violent and risky behaviours.

Juliet Naigaga, 23, finished senior three, but was not able to continue with her studies due to lack of school fees. She decided to go to the



city, where she got a job as a house help. Unfortunately, she became pregnant and returned home to give birth. Things took a turn for the better when she was selected among the youth that were trained in hairdressing at SDKF Vocational Skills Training Project. Juliet says that she is very happy with the skill that she has acquired. She is able to take care of her child and also help her mother with paying medical bills and other needs.

Nancy Namugga is 19 years old. She says, 'I am a hairdresser in Buyende. Before I

joined SDKF, I had dropped out of school because my mother, who is a widow, could not afford to pay for fees in secondary education.

'After staying home for one year, I was seeing no future of enrolling back to school. Thankfully I was recruited by SDKF for a hairdressing course, where I was able to acquire skills which are really helping me now. The skills I acquired have brought change in my life. I was totally dependent on others, but now I have become a source of support for my siblings and my mother, because I can make enough money to meet other needs.'

Stella Namakula, 23, is a graduate of hairdressing from SDKF Vocational Skills Training Project. She joined SDKF after dropping out school after becoming pregnant and was very miserable.

She says, 'I applied for a hairdressing course at SDKF, and I was accepted to train to become a hairdressing student. I was so excited.

'While at school I put a lot of effort into practical lessons because I was determined to learn all I could about fashion. My commitment and the practical training enabled me to acquire skills to become a hairdresser.

'When I finished my course, I got a job and started working. In the past I could not afford anything. Now I can save money and also support my family with soap, clothes and also buy medicine when someone is sick.'

Dennis Ssettaala



Answers to page 6: BICYCLE, BEEHIVE, CHICKENS, BANANA PLANTS, GOATS, SCHOOL KITS, MAIZE SEEDS. PRESENTS WITH A PURPOSE

Treasurer's report: 2022-23

A hurricane wind ripped through the mountains and shattered the rocks before God, but God wasn't to be found in the wind; after the wind an earthquake, but God wasn't in the earthquake; and after the earthquake fire, but God wasn't in the fire; and after the fire a gentle and quiet whisper. I KINGS 19:11-12 THE MESSAGE (MSG)

In a world with a changing climate, God is in the quiet whisper of those that teach 'new farming methods' and promote 'healthcare education', 'vocational training' and 'literacy health education'; improving individual and community livelihoods and transforming lives.

Operation Agri is privileged to support programmes that quietly speak of God's love and care through our In-Country partners, supported by the gifts of hundreds of individual donors, churches and grant funders.

In 2023 Operation Agri funded fifteen projects in ten countries on three continents, with a total of £140,131, **thanks to you** our supporters and donors. For over 60 years, tens of thousands of lives have been, and are being transformed.

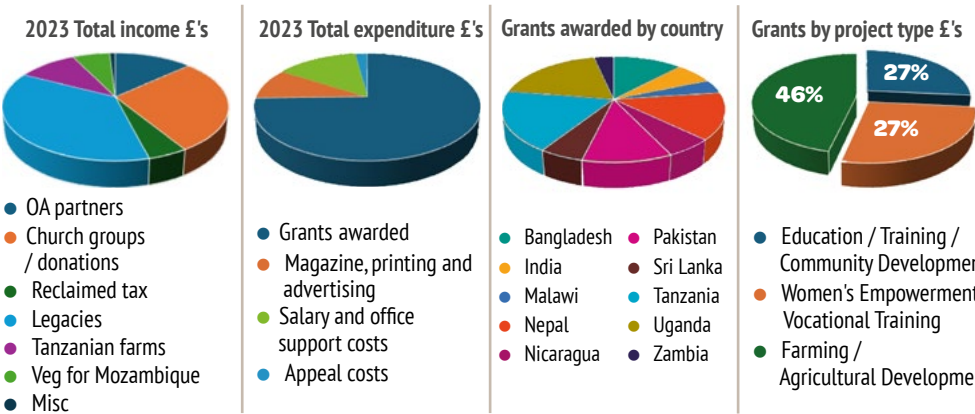
2023 income amounted to £250,419 (consolidated CIO and BMM) with expenditure of £190,238, including grants awarded amounting to a total £140,131.

The 2023 annual appeal *Transforming Farms in Tanzania* raised £25,001 and *Vital Vegetables for Mozambique* £14,763.

The 2024 annual appeal *Securing Livelihoods in Sri Lanka* focuses on improving crops in a changing climate and will support the LEADS team in Sri-Lanka to run this project in an area that still suffers the effects of years of conflict. Welfare and protection of children is a priority, as women are helped to do organic market gardening, to earn a livelihood and support the family.

Thank you for continuing to support Operation Agri, enabling us on your behalf, through our in-County partners to be the gentle whisper of the love of God reaching out to those that have real challenges and desperately need help and support, through the various projects, transforming their lives.

Every blessing,
James D W Townsend, Treasurer



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converts waste
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items for selling, in Pakistan



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Sort Code: 80-22-60 Account No: 20935768

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For guidance please ask the Administrator.

GDPR We have procedures to keep your personal information secure. We comply with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018. We never sell your data and we will never share it with another company or charity for marketing purposes. We only share data where we are required to do so by law.

Operation Agri is registered in England and Wales as a charity, No. 1189098



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