

Outreach Abroad

OPERATION AGRI'S MAGAZINE

UGANDA

Empowering women,
breaking the silence



1961-2026



1/4 2026

NEPAL
Income-
generating
agriculture

*Supporting
rural and urban
development
projects in
Christ's name*



**Operation
AGRI**

Christian love in action

NEW YEAR 2026



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

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Notice of OA general meeting

The trustees of Operation Agri will be holding
their Annual Public Meeting later this year. Its
main business is to receive the annual accounts
and elect trustees. It is open to anyone to attend
either in person or online. Please contact the
Administrator on admin@operationagri.org.uk for
details of the date, time and venue and to book
your place.

Happy New Year.

There is always a
sense of Endings and
Beginnings at this time
of year.

As I considered this I
was reminded of the
number of endings
and beginnings we will
experience in our lives.

For Christians across
the world, we have
something in common
– whatever endings and
beginnings we face, we
can hold on to Christ's
promise.

'... surely I am with you
always, to the very end
of the age'
Matthew 28:20.

As you read reports
from the projects
featured in this edition
you will hear stories
of many endings and
beginnings. Please pray
that they will all know
the truth of Christ's
presence with them
today.

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Lighting the Path

Joy Ahurra reports on how teaching women to read and write gives them a voice in rural Uganda

Women are learning to read and write, many for the first time in their lives. Classes organised by the Women's Adult Literacy Project (WALP) are transforming not just women's minds, but entire communities.

Many women lived in silence when it came to reading or writing. They depended on others to help them read signs, medicine labels, or letters. They struggled to help their children with homework and often stayed silent in community meetings, unsure of themselves. But those days are slowly fading.

Now women can learn to read in their local language of Rutooro. They are able to assist their children with schoolwork and

communicate better with teachers. Some of them teach other women. It's a ripple effect that is touching households beyond the classroom walls.

One of the greatest changes they've seen is in their self-confidence. The simple act of reading a sentence or writing their names has unlocked a deep sense of pride. The women are no longer embarrassed when asked to fill in forms or participate in

“When a woman learns to write her name, it's like watching her discover who she really is.”



Alice Kunihiro training women in the local Rutooro language

church readings. For many, this is more than literacy, it's personal dignity.

Elizabeth Kengozi, 48, says, 'Before I joined the class, I lived in fear of paperwork. I couldn't read instructions on medicine bottles or even write my name. I depended on my children for everything that involved reading. It made me feel helpless. But now, I can read signs, write simple messages, and even follow a recipe. The best moment for me was when I read a Bible verse aloud during our women's fellowship – for the first time in my life. Everyone clapped. That day, I knew I had found my voice.'

The classes are also a space for friendship and



▲ Alice Karungi

“
I may have
started late,
but I feel young
again with this
knowledge.”

encouragement. They cheer one another on, especially on days when learning feels tough. Women who were once overlooked, are now becoming role models in their homes and communities. They read, speak, plant, share and they do it all with hope for a better future.

Alice Karungi, 52, says, 'I had never stepped into a classroom before. The first time I held a pen, my hand shook. But I kept coming. Now, I can read letters, numbers, and write short notes. When I go to the health centre, I read the posters on the wall myself. I've also joined a savings group and can write down my contributions without help. I may have started

late, but I feel young again with this knowledge.'

Our journey has been more than learning how to read and write, it's been about discovering confidence, independence and hope. Looking forward, our biggest plan is to expand literacy classes to more villages. We continue to encourage practical skills like tailoring, weaving baskets, knitting and gardening. This enables the women to earn an income. Also, following completion of the course in Rutooro the groups are offered the opportunity to learn English.



Godfrey Ayebele – training women in the livelihood empowerment class

teachers they are mentors, counsellors, and friends.

Each day, they show up with patience, warmth, and creativity. Some of the women have never held a pen before, so the trainers begin from scratch teaching them how to hold a pencil, how to form letters, and how to sound out words. They celebrate every small win, whether it's writing a name for the first time or reading a sentence aloud. But their role goes beyond the classroom.

Joan Katusabe, 29, a small business owner, says, 'I used to run a tiny shop, but I had trouble keeping track of sales and prices. After joining the literacy class, I can now write down what I sell, read labels on products, and even calculate simple profits. My business has grown, and I'm more confident when dealing with customers. At home, I sit with my children to help them with homework. It brings us closer and makes me proud.'

Behind every woman who learns to read and write in our community, there are committed people walking the journey with her, the trainers. They are the backbone of the literacy programme. Many of them come from the same communities as the women they teach. They are not just

Trainers visit homes to encourage regular attendance, remind women of their value, and help them practice. They create a safe, loving space where no one is judged. They also listen to fears, stories, and dreams. One trainer once said, 'When a woman learns to write her name, it's like watching her discover who she really is.'

Together, they bring light. They are the reason a mother can now read her child's report card, a market vendor can write her prices, or a grandmother can read her Bible.

In WALP, it's not just about letters and words, it's about dignity, hope, and giving women a voice. And it all begins with someone who believes in them.



Joy Ahurra, WALP

A move towards sustainability

Jhaggu Prasad Gahatraj looks at how the outreach of the Baptist Church Council, in the mountains of Nepal, continues to change lives

Multipurpose Community Development Service (MCDS) is a social wing of the Nepal Baptist Church Council. Set up in 1994 it has consistently shared the love of God to non-Christian people. To date, MCDS has helped over 800 people and has implemented the

Community Health and Education Project (CHEP) in Rukum East since 2023.

MCDS, a registered NGO, celebrated its 31st anniversary in 2025 and continues to work for social awareness, health improvement, education, environmental protection, income generation, capacity building, disaster response and recovery in Rukum East, Kanchanpur, Dailekh, Khotang and the Lalitpur districts of Nepal.

Currently six Self Help Groups are growing towards sustainability and MCDS is facilitating these groups to fulfil responsibilities in the community. MCDS aims to establish a Community Based Organisation (CBO) – a non-profit, often informal association formed of individuals looking to address local issues and



Aash Bahadur Buda Magar

Now, people from other NGOs, the agricultural department, and many farmers come to observe my agricultural production.

promote collective well-being and development - before phasing out the project. Hundreds of people in the Rukum East district have been involved, so far, in income-generating activities.

Aash Bahadur Buda Magar, from the Bhume Rural Municipality, Ward No. 6,

Mahat, Rukum East, says, 'When the MCDS CHEP project started to work in my place, I became President of Pokhari Danda Agricultural Group, which was facilitated by the MCDS Community Health and Education Project.

'Before joining this group, I used to farm traditionally. I took professional vegetable farming and tunnel making training organised by MCDS CHEP. Now, I have produced vegetables and fruits, and am

earning a good income from it. I have planted seasonal vegetables like cauliflower, beans, peas, and chilli. I sold more than 400 kg of mushrooms in the local market. I have raised 18 goats. I have planted 42 Buddha Chitta Mala (Garland) plants which have started to produce fruit. I am also producing seedlings from it. I have planted 50 trees of toothache berry, 40 apple trees and 250 walnut trees, 120 orange trees, and 50 lemon plants. I can now sustain my family's sustainability and save money for a better future.'

'Now, after training, I am leading and facilitating my group members. They have started to earn from vegetable farming and animal husbandry. I visit members' houses and farms and provide facilitation for income-generating skills and ideas. Now, people from other NGOs, the agricultural department, and many farmers come to observe my agricultural production. Thanks MCDS, for enhancing my economic status and empowering me to bless my community.'

Laxmi Budha Magar, 32, is an active member of the Goat Rearing Farmer Group (Self-Help Group) at Mahat Rukum East district. She lives with her mother-in-law, husband and three children. Her husband is a teacher.

Before participating in the self-help group, she used to be busy at home with household work and conservative agricultural activities. The crops produced from the field were not enough for the whole year. Her husband's salary was not adequate for the household. There were no savings in the house. She says, 'I am involved in the self-help group. It has been around two years since I became skilled in



professional vegetable farming training, livestock training, financial literacy and leadership development training.

'Now, I have learned that new skills transform the lives of people. I had a will, so I participated in a professional vegetable farming programme with 20 other trainees of six women's groups for income generation. I started professional vegetable farming on my own land. I received vegetable seeds and a tunnel (greenhouse). I reared one buffalo for organic manure. I sell three litres of milk per day and earn 9000 NPR. From green vegetables, I am earning 20000 to 30000 NPR monthly. There was only one person to earn in the family, but now, I am also earning from vegetable farming and animal husbandry. Now, our family is saving money regularly.'

The CHEP project in Rukum East, has been active in the Mahat village development. Now, child clubs are able to conduct non-budgeted and extracurricular activities and leadership development.

Rachana Sunar, 17, is a grade 10 student at Shree Janajagriti Secondary School. She belongs to a child club at her school, which was started and is supported by MCDS CHEP. She says, 'Because of family support, the school's encouragement



and my own capability, I became the president of the child club of my school. I encourage my colleagues, share my own ideas and thoughts, and work together with everyone.' She continues, 'I learned the skill of speech, decision making and fulfilling responsibility because of self-effort.'

She recently conducted a poetry competition, sports activities and child rights and leadership development awareness programmes. She says, 'Before joining child club, I used to fear speaking, but now I have become strong. I knew myself and got encouragement to go forward.'



▲ Aash Bahadur Buda Magar with his crops

Within two years of the MCDS project in the school, Rachana has proved herself and established that she is an example and a leader.

Jhaggu Prasad Gahatraj
Executive Director of MCDS,
Nepal



Operation Agri FUNDRAISING IDEAS



Buy a plant
plant a tree

Eat a cake
change a life



Swap a read
sow a seed

Could your Church host an event to fundraise for Operation Agri? There are so many possibilities, from craft fairs to clothes swaps or plant sales to painting parties. Email admin@operationagri.org.uk to discuss your tailored package.



Visitors make a bee line for OA stall

Operation Agri (OA) was well represented at the Christian Resources Exhibition at Sandown Park, Surrey, for two days in October last year. James Townsend and his cohort of helpers, Jo Jackson, Joanna Legg-Bagg, Russell and Gill Ashley-Smith, Nigel Jones and Carin Blunn found that visitors to the OA stand ranged from those who knew Operation Agri well, and had used the *Trees, bees and seeds* video in recent weeks for their Harvest services, to those who had never heard of Operation Agri before.

James comments, 'It was an exciting show, not only because we met so many supporters, but also it gave us the opportunity to speak with other exhibitors who were interested in the work of Operation Agri.'

'We were able to make some great contacts with visitors and exhibitors that we pray will make some very interesting and, hopefully, fruitful relationships.'

The Big 'Plush BEE' was an attraction for many people passing by. Those who stopped at the stall were able to enter a draw on each of the two days of the exhibition (15 and 16 October) and a bee was given to the name drawn for each day. The two people who will each be receiving their 'BEE' came from Caterham (on the Wednesday) and Ashted (on the Thursday).



James Townsend and Nigel Jones on the OA stand with Luzia Watt who drew the winning entries for a 'Plush BEE'

“ I asked people if they had problems knowing what to buy people for Christmas– many said yes – and were intrigued to receive our *Presents with a Purpose* brochure. ”

Gill Ashley Smith says, 'I asked people if they had problems knowing what to buy people for Christmas – many said yes – and were intrigued to receive our brochure, *Presents with a Purpose*.'

In addition there were two visitors who were keen to bring OA to the attention of their fellowships in Kenya and Ghana respectively, where they felt OA could consider funding potential new projects.

James concludes, 'The focus of the stall was the

resources OA can provide for churches – it was good to receive ideas from churches of other types of resources that would be useful for them. If you have any ideas too – please let us know.'

Jesus said, 'The poor you will always have with you, ...' (Matthew 26:11) and this is a constant reminder of the call to care for God's broken world.



Power and responsibility

Trustee, **Jerry Clewett**, examines why accountability matters?

In past decades, some international development organisations in the Global North used their power and resources to push their own agendas, requiring partners in the Global South to implement projects designed far from the communities affected. This history has led to a movement to ‘decolonise aid’ – an effort to challenge and transform unequal power dynamics, structures, and mind-sets rooted in colonial history that continue to shape much of the aid and development system today.

We may argue that Operation Agri has never misused its power in this way. After all, we require that projects are locally

designed, and we don’t impose solutions. Yet, by controlling financial resources, we still hold power. We decide which projects to support, to what extent, and for how long. Recognising this means accepting the responsibility to be accountable to those who have a stake in our work. The challenge is to whom, and how, is Operation Agri accountable?

For us Christians we know that, ultimately, ‘... each of us will give an account of ourselves to God ...’ (Romans 14:12), but if we unpack accountability in the development world within which Operation Agri operates, it can be defined as ‘an obligation or willingness to accept

responsibility and to account to others for one's actions'. For Operation Agri, who are these 'others'? We sometimes refer to 'upwards' (e.g. donors) and 'downwards' (e.g. communities) accountability, but the use of these categories is problematic as they reinforce perceptions of power. So, avoiding these terms, I would

suggest that Operation Agri is accountable to: **Churches and individual supporters:** Our work depends on the generosity of churches and individuals. We report on project progress mainly through this magazine and social media, showing how funds are used, impact, and inviting prayer support. These communications ensure transparency, and feedback from readers is encouraged.

Programme Country Development Partners (PCDPs): We do not call our partners 'implementing partners' because their role extends far beyond implementation. They design projects, monitor progress, identify local resources, and write reports. Their resources differ from ours, but we view them as equals – hence the term PCDP.

Recently, we began a 'partnership review' to explore how Operation Agri can be a more effective and accountable partner. PCDPs have requested clearer feedback on their reports – traditionally the main way they are accountable to us. Building two-way accountability fosters trust and strengthens partnerships. Most *Outreach Abroad* articles are written by PCDPs, reflecting their own

perspectives on progress. PCDPs also have their own accountabilities: to their governments and to project beneficiaries, for example through community 'Feedback and Response Mechanisms.' Their accountability to Operation Agri is further supported by trustee monitoring visits, annual audits, and project impact evaluations.

UK Charity Commission:

As a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Operation Agri must submit an annual return, trustees' report, and accounts. These public documents ensure transparency, good governance, and legal accountability.

The Commission also

requires due diligence when selecting PCDPs, for which we have developed clear criteria.

Ensuring effective accountability is an ongoing process for Operation Agri. Some mechanisms are required by law, others we design ourselves. By continually improving how we listen, respond, and share responsibility with partners and supporters, we strengthen not only our accountability but also our integrity and our witness as a Christian development agency.

“ ... We do not call our partners 'implementing partners' because their role extends far beyond implementation. They design projects, monitor progress, identify local resources, and write reports. ”



*Jerry Clewett
Operation Agri Trustee*

These words all begin and end with the same letter.

Can you discover the letters and write them in the circle on the balloons to reveal the missing words.

- 1 __atio__
- 2 __ras__
- 3 __indo__
- 4 __umm__
- 5 __agl__
- 6 __rom__
- 7 __ive__

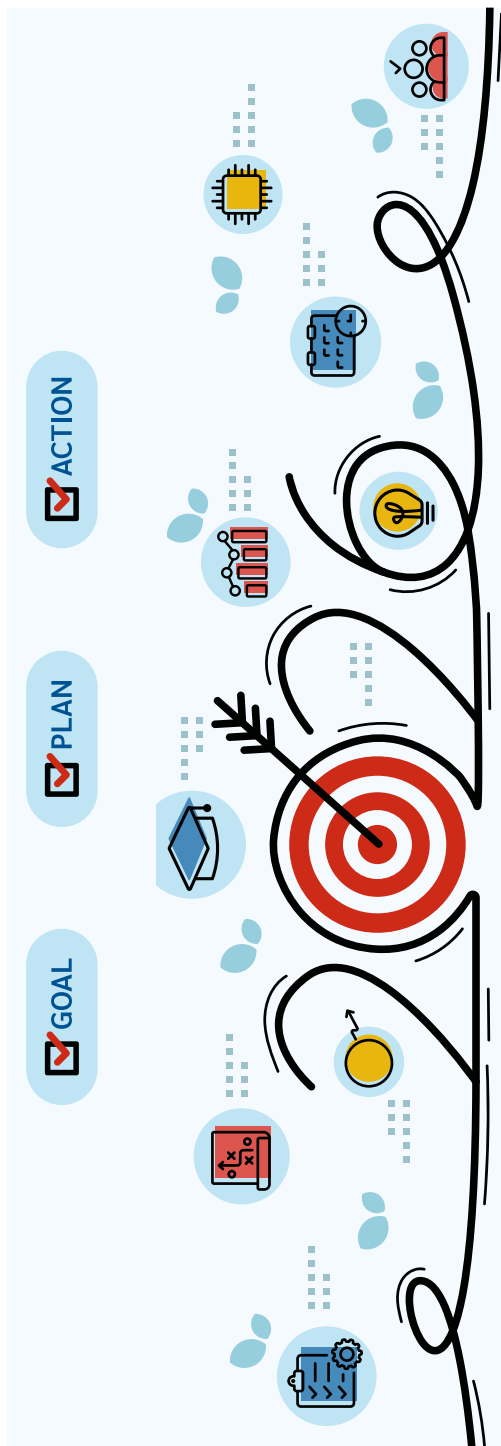
(Answer on Page 18)

2026

HAPPY NEW YEAR

New year is a time for new beginnings – a time for change for in the lives of:

- Women in Uganda
- People of the mountains in Nepal
- Girls and their families in Bangladesh



Happy New Year!

As 2026 begins

What are your hopes and plans for this new year?

What challenges might you face?

Read on for stories of new beginnings for many people through the projects Operation Agri partner with. They too have hopes and will face challenges this New Year.

2025 has ended and 2026 has begun.

New Year is a time to think about endings and beginnings.

As 2025 has ended

What are the things you are grateful for in the old year?

What unfulfilled plans do you bring with you from 2025?

The Bible tells us to rejoice – pray – and always give thanks to God.

Thank God for each new day and all your new beginnings.

Pray for the people who have new beginnings through the projects Operation Agri supports.

PRAYER we invite you to *pray*

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ROMANS 12:12

Bangladesh

Project name: **Duaripara Family**

Development Project

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

Empowering girls through education

PRAYER REQUEST: May God bless the girls as they continue their studies in 2026 in their newly promoted classes, help them adjust well to new classmates and routines, and grant them wisdom, confidence, and success.

India

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

Partner: **Oasis India**

Aspiring to be role models

PRAYER REQUEST: Pray that the youth set good examples for the children. May they stay away from gambling and harmful activities and instead live creative, disciplined, and respectful lives that inspire others.

Malawi

Project name: **Growing Greener in Malawi**

Partner: **African Pastors Fellowship**

Sustainable farming in Malawi

PRAYER REQUEST: Praise for those actively participating, and seeing positive results bringing transformation in their communities, spiritually, economically and socially.
Pray for wisdom for the new team of project leaders and the field staff. Pray for favourable weather.

Nepal

Project name: **CHEP Mahatgvan**

Partner: **Multipurpose Community Development Service**

Improving health and education in a rural village

PRAYER REQUEST: Pray that the final year of this project will bring security and sustainability through the building of local commitment to the activities and good relationships with local stakeholders.

Nicaragua

Project name: **Community-based Primary Healthcare**

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

Bringing health and hope

PRAYER REQUEST: Please pray for the Community Health Workers we support, as they reflect on a week last November when they travelled to the AMOS campus for a time of learning, sharing and encouragement. During this week they exchanged experiences, learnt from one another, reflected on their impact and challenges and were strengthened in their calling to serve their communities.

Pakistan

Project name: **Women's literacy centres**

Partner: **Light for the Nation**

Empowering Women with literacy and skills Training

PRAYER REQUEST: Continue to pray for health, family, grieving and struggling communities following recent rains. Please also pray for persecuted Christians, ministry growth, and Christmas outreach – trusting God's faithfulness and perfect will in every circumstance.

Sierra Leone

Project name: **Joy Agricultural Project**
 Partner: **BMS World Mission and New Harvest Development Office (NEHADO)**
Building the capacity of subsistence farmers

PRAYER REQUEST: Pray for farmers' safety, fruitful harvests, healing for the sick, strength for project teams, and that many participants in the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) continue to benefit and can support their families.

Sri Lanka

Project name: **Strengthening Community Structures for Sustainable Development**
 Partner: **LEADS**

Building Resilient Communities

PRAYER REQUEST: Pray for the children and communities engaged in the project – that the training will be impactful, the children's growth and participation will continue, and their lives will be shaped for lasting, positive change.

Tanzania

Project name: **Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development**
 Partner: **Farming Partnership Initiative**
Training in sustainable agriculture

PRAYER REQUEST: Pray for the FPI team and training, that the Lord will equip and empower FPI team/staff to continue working in love and for farmers to attend Phase 8 training workshops for their best results.

Tanzania

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

PRAYER REQUEST: Pray for wisdom in choosing villages to invite to join. Pray that Jesca's visit to Brazil last October enhances her work in Iringa. Praise for groups, already graduated, continuing to benefit from the training.

Uganda

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

PRAYER REQUEST: Give thanks for the transformation WALP brings in women's lives. Praise God for the dedication of the teachers. Pray for the continued encouragement the women give each other. For even more women to join WALP.

Uganda

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

PRAYER REQUEST: For farmers to make good use of donated items. Pray that the new groups and their CFTs work well and the workshops: Orientation and Surveying, Sustainable Agriculture and Animal traction, to train the CFTs, are well understood.

Uganda

Project name: **Setting Development and Keeping the Foundations (SDKF)**
 Partner: **Rev Dennis Ssettaala**
Providing vocational skill

PRAYER REQUEST: Pray for the recruitment of students to start the new courses in January. Pray for the planting of maize to feed the students and for rain at the correct time.

Zambia

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

PRAYER REQUEST: Give thanks for 400 farmers trained last year by an agronomist fluent in Chichewa, leading to excellent communication in sessions. Pray they are putting into practice what they were taught. Pray for favourable weather.

Timely support

Shyamal Sarker shines a light on how a centre based in a slum area of Dhaka, Bangladesh, is helping girls who risk missing out on an education

Simran is 13 years old and is currently studying in class seven. She was admitted to the Duaripara Family Development Centre (DFDP) in 2018.

At that time, she was attending nursery at a formal school. Simran has always been good at her studies. In 2023, due to her excellent academic performance, her teachers promoted her directly from grade four to grade five. She is also talented in dancing, singing, poetry recitation, and drawing.

Through the DFDP programme – which is based in a slum area of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and helps girls who are missing out on education – Simran has also learned about personal hygiene, HIV prevention, child marriage, dowry, and sexual harassment. She has participated in creative and life skills sessions, rallies, and door-to-door campaigns promoting handwashing and hygiene awareness among girls. She now helps spread these important messages within her community.

However, there is financial hardship in Simran's family. Her father, a diabetic patient, is unable to earn enough to support the household. After completing

grade five in 2023, Simran and her family decided she would discontinue her studies from grade six in 2024 and start working to contribute to the family income. At that

time, DFDP support was available only up to grade five.

However, in 2024, DFDP introduced a revised policy extending educational support to high school girls. This change allowed Simran to receive free education, including school fees, textbooks, and uniforms. Motivated and encouraged by this new opportunity, Simran and her family decided she should continue her education instead of working. DFDP and Operation Agri's timely support enabled Simran to remain in school and pursue

her studies with renewed hope.

Since 2024, Operation Agri has been supporting girls like Simran to continue their education, which has been a great help to her family. Without this support, Simran would likely be working in a garment factory today.

Kajal Begum is a hardworking mother of three children – one son and two daughters. Her two daughters are





Kajal Begum and her husband Alamin Mia

studying with the support of DFDP. Kajal works in a garment factory, while her husband earns a living as a rickshaw puller. For a time, their family was managing well. However, in tandem with other family difficulties, Kajal's husband had an accident while driving his rickshaw, which left the rickshaw badly damaged. With no money for repairs and daily household expenses piling up, the family struggled to make ends meet. They could no longer afford to pay their daughters' school fees regularly. In desperation, Kajal came to the DFDP office, crying and seeking help. Seeing her situation, DFDP provided her husband with 4,000 taka (around £250) to repair the rickshaw. They have slowly started rebuilding their lives.

Today, both daughters are continuing their education successfully. Kajal and her husband are deeply grateful to DFDP for their support.

Madia Akter is a fifth-grade student. She is grateful for the snacks provided to girls at the DFDP centre.

Madia's father has passed away, and her mother works in other people's homes to support the family. Often, Madia goes to school without eating



because there is no food available in the morning, which affects her ability to concentrate on her studies. Like Madia, many other girls at the DFDP centre also come without eating in the morning. The snack facility

has been a great help to them.

Jannat Begum is a housewife. Her daughter, Sadia, is studying in the sixth grade. Last year, Sadia was diagnosed with an eye problem after attending a free eye camp at the DFDP centre. DFDP provided financial assistance for her treatment and other health issues.



Joshna Begum has two sons and one daughter. Her daughter, Bidisha Akhter, was admitted to the DFDP centre in 2019 and is currently studying in the sixth grade.



Joshna Begum regularly attends the monthly parent meetings at the centre. She also actively participates in various rallies and campaigns on topics such as handwashing, puberty, personal hygiene, HIV awareness, child rights, child marriage, trafficking, dowry, and domestic violence. She has become very aware of these important social issues and encourages her family members to practice what she learns. She is also making efforts to raise awareness among people in her community, particularly those involved in child marriage and dowry practices.

Some mothers, inspired by these awareness sessions, have begun taking their own initiatives to combat child marriage and

dowry practices. The DFDP centre has significantly contributed to making their daily lives easier and more informed through its various awareness programmes.

Shyamal Sarker, Director CMCY
Mary Nokrek, Manager DFDP

Childrens' page answers

NationN, Erase, Window,
Yummy, Eagle, Aroma, River



Girls celebrating National Daughter Day at DFDP. Simran (top left) holds up her drawing

Tapestry of hope



Trustee, **Jerry Clewett**, reports on a pattern of inspiring leadership in all three of the projects OA supports in Uganda

At the end of last September I had the opportunity to visit all three of the projects Operation Agri (OA) support in Uganda. I met the project staff and those who participate in activities and was able to begin to better understand the opportunities they have and the challenges they face.

Vocational Skills Training Project

My first meeting was with Dennis Ssettaala, who is the Project Manager of the Vocational Skills Training Project run by Setting Developments and Keeping the Foundation (SDKF), in Kampala, Uganda's capital city. Dennis collected me from my guesthouse, and we drove 15 minutes in both beautiful sunshine and thick traffic to

the training centre where the project trains young people in hairdressing, tailoring, carpentry or motor-cycle mechanics. These young people come from two areas: the densely populated 'slum' area of Kyebando Kisalosalalo, adjacent to the training centre; and the rural district of Buyende where Dennis has contacts and where employment opportunities for young people are few.

One trainee, is 19-year-old Joseph, whose mother died back in 2016, and who was given the training opportunity in the project after Dennis met him in Kyebando Kisalosalalo. Joseph chose to study carpentry because, as he told me, 'I love to make things'.



▲ Joseph, carpentry trainee

Farmer Patience Kakonge shows Joseph Alinda her azolla crop ▶



Sustainable Agriculture Farmers' Initiative (SAFI)

SAFI is led by Joseph Alinda in Kyegegwa District which, I discovered, was a good hour's drive from our base in Kyenjojo. Over the two days we visited eight farms, and I came to appreciate not only Joseph's impressive knowledge of agriculture, developed over years of practical experience alongside his father, the late Paul Kyalimpa, but also his amazing driving skills which enabled us to negotiate some very challenging road conditions.

Now, I am neither a farmer nor an agriculturalist by profession so I knew this would be a great learning opportunity for me. Most of my previous farm visits had been in Nepal and Sri Lanka so clearly this was a very different context. But I was curious to understand what 'sustainable agriculture' means in practice for farmers in Western Uganda. I learned that most of the farms we visited had adopted practices of zero grazing for their pigs, goats and chickens; use of animal manure, liquid manure and compost for their fruit and coffee plants; soil and water conservation

When the course is finished Joseph hopes to set up a furniture-making business with one of the other trainees on the course, using a loan from the project to buy the required equipment. To get a better idea of the context that many of the trainees live in, Dennis kindly took me on a tour of the neighbourhood, together with Mark, one of the trainers on the motorcycle mechanic course, who knows Kyebando Kisosalo well as he was brought up there. The day ended at the nearby Divine Shepherd Christian Church where Dennis is one of the leaders. The church has a hostel within its grounds where the trainees from Buyende are given a secure place to stay and eat and where, I recalled, Operation Agri had supported the purchase of beds and mattresses.

The other two projects are based in Western Uganda, so I tested the public transport system (pleasantly surprised!) using the 'Link Bus' to make the six-hour road journey to Kyenjojo.



◀ Using a donkey for ploughing

Kasisita Imerida writing her name ▼

though the use of raised beds, pit hole gardens, mulching, and walking paths; growing their own animal fodder such as azolla, black soldier fly larvae and comfrey; and the use of donkeys for transporting water and for harvests, ploughing and manure.

It was encouraging to know that the 'lead farmers' whom I had met were advising about 30 other farmers each which means that the project impact is considerable.

Women's Adult Literacy Project (WALP)

The final two days of my visit were spent with the WALP project led by Joy Ahuura in Kyenjojo District. This project is based on community outreach by churches and gathers (mostly) women of any faith who have not had the opportunity to benefit from a formal education and who want to become literate in their local language of Rutooro. There are even opportunities to progress and learn basic English and develop micro-businesses.

Over the two days I spoke to women who have gone from being unable to read or write to at least having the ability to write their own name. It was noticeable that apart from having developed this technical ability to write, there was also a glow of



pride at their achievement. (This glow of pride is echoed in the article, which is exclusively about WALP, on page 3).

Other group members were very supportive as they demonstrated their new skills. At Myeri Baptist Church one group member Kasisita Imerida demonstrated to me how she can now write her name. The last WALP group I visited was at Rwanakoora Baptist Church where I was given a very warm welcome by dancing group members led by Christine Kyalimpa who is the chairperson of the Hope Community Gracious Foundation who are the legal body running SAFI and WALP.

So that was my whistle-stop visit to Operation Agri's three Uganda projects. The focus on each project is very different, but what they have in common is inspiring leadership which creates a tapestry of hope for some of the most disadvantaged people of Uganda.

*Jerry Clewett
Operation Agri Trustee*

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