

## **Project Number #MW96852**

### **Project Name Yao Ministry Support**

#### **Vision**

With the support of this project, it is envisioned that at least one group of believers/church is formed by 2021 among the one remaining unreached, mainly Muslim, people group in Malawi, the Yao, worshipping Jesus in their own, culturally acceptable ways. By the grace of God, this will be achieved through personal/direct outreach and church planting efforts as well as the establishment of a Yao radio ministry and auxiliary ministries, which is in partnership with, and under the leadership of Operation Mobilisation (OM). It will provide further avenues for the gospel to penetrate the Yao community and create opportunities to engage in follow-up efforts on both personal and community levels.

#### **Background**

The Yao people group, with 13.4%, is the third largest ethnic group in Malawi (CIA World Factbook; July 2015 estimate), around 2.5 million people. Islam is listed as the fastest growing religion in Malawi (Pray for the World, 2015), with the Africa Muslim Agency providing funds for primary education, scholarships for tertiary students to study in Muslim nations, aid, mosque building and other means in promotion of Islam. Outreach efforts to the Yao by SIM missionaries have been in existence since the 1980s in Malawi, mainly in the areas of church planting and Bible translation. While the Bible translation was successfully completed and its distribution launched in 2014, the gospel hasn't yet reached especially into the Yao rural heartland in the districts of Mangochi and Machinga. Efforts by several mission agencies are under way, yet yield only limited fruit. Therefore, the Yao are listed by the IMB People Groups website as "engaged yet unreached". An important new aspect is that SIM Malawi will maybe have in the foreseeable future mainly missionaries from new contexts (e.g. currently from Ethiopia) being placed in this ministry. Perseverance, a willingness to sacrifice and awareness of spiritual warfare and readiness to engage in it, are attributes often found (yet not always and certainly not exclusively!) in missionaries from new contexts which in turn have very limited financial capacity to cover ministry related costs in addition to their personal support budget needs.

#### **Progress Outreach & Church Planting Ministry**

Ministry continued during the report timeframe despite the COVID-19 pandemic which has also reached Malawi. Government wanted to implement a full lock down, but this was prevented by a human rights organisation that challenged the order in court due to the massive implications a lock down would have especially on the poor population who live from what they earn each day. The measure was then suspended up to now. This allowed our missionaries in the Yao heartland to continue their outreach efforts, though observing all recommended hygiene procedures as good as possible in the rural setting.



Hand washing before a home church service



Benson &  
Ruth Banda

Abera Chemiso &  
Bizunesh Zeleke

The Ethiopian missionary couple Abera Chemiso and Bizunesh Zeleke (right) together with their Malawian col-leagues Benson & Ruth Banda (left) kept reaching out to the local communities of Namwera and surrounding vil-lages, mainly doing friendship evangelism, running bible studies with anyone who shows interest and worshipping with a growing number of believers on Sundays in their home. Visiting the hospital to see staff and patients and to pray for them is also part of their ministry approach. A highlight of the last months was the baptism of several new believers after they were prepared in baptism clas-ses. Here Abera shares two brief stories of converts:

### **Maganizo James**

Before Maganizo came to Christ she held different posi-tions in a Muslim welfare committee in the area. She only knew that if she wouldn't be doing good, she would be punished after death. For example, she was told that she could go to heaven if she sometimes would cook for old or young people for free as a sacrifice. Also, evil forces dis-turbed her. Sometimes she saw dead people who were calling her name. She went to many different places trying to find healing. At other times she fell sick, but no reason could be found at the hospital; no medicine helped. But after receiving Jesus Christ and our prayer she was set free! Today she is very excited and keeps on smiling as she knows the truth and has the hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ. She joined the church and was baptized. Namwera is blessed with her as one of the strongest believers among the villagers. We are looking forward that she might become a church elder one day.





### Julian

Julian is a young, energetic lady. She came to know Jesus Christ through the healing power of prayer. Julian was suffering of kidney failure and visited many hospitals in search for help. The situation became so bad that the doctors told her parents she would need a kidney trans-plant. In their despair they then tried many witch doc-tors / tradition healers, but to not avail. As they heard of the love of Jesus Christ that we are sharing with many people, the mother came with Julian to us, seeking ref-uge. By that time, the situation was critical. But we are praising God because after a week of praying and crying out to him all pain left, and Julian became fine. She went back to the hospital for a checkup and the doctors con-firmed that she is well. We give all praise to God for his wonderful healing power. From that time Julian is active in our church, was baptized and is still in full health.

A huge step forward for the Yao ministry was also the payment at the district headquarter in Mangochi for 2 hectares of land in Nam-wera where a church and accommodation can be built, and a ministry site developed. The payment is just one step in a lengthy process until we can occupy the land and start with any construction. But Abera and Ben with their wives as well as the young fellowship in Namwera are excited about the prospect to have a worship center one time.



Mangochi District Commissioner signing the land agreement

### Radio Lilanguka



COVID-19 has changed the world within weeks. Radio Lilanguka is part of the information system trying to tell people what they can do to help the virus not to spread, but also to teach the difference between an ordinary flue and corona. As so often, if people are driven by unknown fears, they tend to accuse just anybody. Somebody just coughing could easily be-come a victim of a mob these days. Many people don't know what to do with the information they get from the public media because they don't know anybody who has the virus as infection numbers are still comparably low in Malawi. But at the same time there is a lot of fear in the villages. People seem to think about questions like: What if I get it? Will I die? This fear has caused Radio Lilan-guka to start a new program; it is producing a number of messages on hope. This program should make listeners to know where to turn to in times of trouble.

The construction of a staff & guest house by our ministry partner Operation Mobilisation on the SIM-owned site of the radio station is nearly finished and was already partly occupied by the project coordinator.

### **Outlook**

- We plan to pursue the land purchase process in the Namwera area to develop a ministry centre and build a church.
- Abera and Bizunesh's departure for home assignment – anticipated for June 2020 – is doubtful as Malawi has suspended all international travel. On the other hand, this will allow Abera and Ben to continue ministering together, trying to reach new villages and continue to disciple new believers.
- At the site of Radio Lilanguka the construction of the guest house can hopefully be completed

### **Prayer Requests**

#### **Outreach & Church Planting Ministry**

- Thank God for His protection so far in this challenging time of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Please pray for continued good health of the team, home church members and new believers in the Yao villages.
- Praise God for his saving grace and healing power. Give thanks for the baptisms. Please pray for continued growth and strong rootedness in the gospel of the new Yao believers in the different villages and that they themselves become ambassadors of Christ among their own people group and even beyond.
- Please pray for the ongoing land acquisition process which was slowed down due to the corona situation. Please pray that the government officials nevertheless will follow through on all the necessary procedures in good manner. Please pray also for the necessary funding for the development of the land once we are given permission to start building.

#### **Radio Lilanguka**

- Please continue to pray for a workable and affordable solution of the power supply for the antenna to expand the coverage of the radio. ☐ Pray for good impact of all radio programs. May they be well received – not only informing about COVID-19 but raising the interest in the gospel and hope in Christ. Pray that the Holy Spirit will work in each listener. ☐ Please pray for continued funding to complete the building project.