

OPERATION MOBILIZATION

Annual Report 2015



Your gifts enable OM to serve around the world, taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations to see lives and communities transformed.



A Note from Andrew



“We want to see a New Testament in every household in Mugu,” Peter* the leader of OM Nepal’s Seed Sowing (evangelism) ministry stated. The 52 men participating in Discipled 2 Go (D2G) were sent for three weeks to one of OM Nepal’s focus districts, Mugu, to see this vision happen.

Mugu is known for its rugged terrain, sparse population and few believers. There are about 9,670 households in the 3,535 km² (1,365 mi²) area, and only 113 known Christians.

The 10 D2G men’s teams plan to walk to every house and distribute mini SD cards, which fit into cell phones. The SD cards contain audio recordings of the New Testament in the local language and a book called God’s promises.

“We are trusting the Lord every time we hand someone a piece of paper, or an SD card, that talks about Jesus Christ—that the Holy Spirit will use that to speak to them,” Matt*, a leader of OM Nepal shared during a prayer time for the D2G students. “That as [the students] are distributing [mini SD cards] they would have opportunities to share openly what God has done for them in their lives.”

OM Nepal has distributed Christian tracts, Gospel portions and Bibles in remote parts of Nepal since the late 1970s, and today the team still hears testimonies of people who came to faith through literature that was handed to them.

This method remains one of the first steps to making the name of Jesus known in Nepal. Pray that many people in Mugu will listen to the material on the SD cards and that their lives will be transformed.

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CHURCH

At the core of a vibrant community is a missional church, serving and sharing God's love. Wherever we plant or equip a fellowship of believers around the world, our aim is to move beyond the church walls to the unreached. We believe God wants to use the gifts, talents, abilities, and obedience of people in local congregations across the country—in partnership with believers and churches around the world—to proclaim and incarnate the message of Christ in all aspects of community.

Europe's Refugees

At one point in August of 2015, Greece and its governing officials were hurled into a state of panic. When an influx of traumatized migrants from the war-torn Middle East began pouring onto their shores and into their streets by the hundreds of thousands, the government's need to set up refugee camps became obvious. But who would run these camps and how soon could they be operational? No personnel, training, or thought had ever been devoted to this scenario, if the multitudes were overcome by desperation, greater chaos could ensue. Riots, even.

As a first step, the Falirio Sports Pavilion was opened, a martial arts stadium near Athens where the multitudes could at least be given shelter and a sense that something was being done for them. Meanwhile, the government could come up with an actual plan. Among the officials trying to come up with this plan was a vice mayor of Athens, who was trying to wrap his mind around the chaotic scene at the stadium one day when he was approached by Gabby Markus, Director of OM Greece. Introducing himself as a local pastor, Markus came that day hoping to meet with officials and find out how the Alliance of Greek Evangelical Churches— a network coordinated by OM— could help.

"Well," the Vice mayor replied, "Do you know anything about running refugee camps?"

If the question was delivered sarcastically, betraying the official's distress and doubt, Markus could appreciate why. In Greece, evangelical churches are so small and few compared to the Orthodox Church they are regarded as a cult, and any offer to help, perhaps, as a recruiting or publicity stunt. Furthermore, the vice mayor evidently did not think an obscure local pastor had the kind of experience or resources needed for large scale relief. He was in for a pleasant surprise.

Although the 2015 refugee crisis hit Greece hard and suddenly that August, the arrival of refugees at its

shores is in itself nothing new. Migrant families from Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan have been trickling in on boats the last 5-7 years in numbers that are fewer but consistent nonetheless. As such, Markus and his small staff of OM team members had already been leading a refugee ministry in Athens the previous five years, running soup kitchens, stop-in centres, and clothing donation programs with the Alliance of Greek Evangelical Churches.

Though small-framed and gentle in demeanor, Markus is a Papua New Guinea native whose warm, intelligent, and sincere manner makes him a natural leader. He has been imprisoned in Asia twice for preaching the gospel, and, in 2006, led OM's Sri Lanka relief project for the tsunami victims. In short, he is the kind of man who can make opportunity out of crisis, and by the end of his conversation with the Vice mayor that day, an agreement was reached: If the government set up more camps, providing the basic infrastructure of shelter and tents, everything else— the food, kitchenware, clothing, and crowd coordination— would be provided for by OM and the local churches.

Today, the kitchen that OM built in Athens a three years ago, intended to feed the comparatively few refugees that were then present, is now being used on a much larger scale. Our small staff in Athens is able to serve over 2,000 meals each week thanks to our network of local Greek churches, which provide the volunteers for cooking and distribution. On the island of Lesbos, we operate another camp, which refugees affectionately call the "Christian Camp." Oftentimes the refugees will even communicate with friends and family back home urging them to find the "Christian Camp," where they are certain to be received with respect, dignity, and kindness.

In addition to meeting physical needs, we provide flyers and downloadable Bible apps in languages such as Arabic, Farsi, and Dari. To see Muslim migrants eagerly

receive these has been as shocking for us as it has been shocking for them to be so well treated by "infidels." Indeed, it is because of this fundamental shake-up in their worldview that many are curious to reexamine everything else they were taught in their native land about Christianity. Though much could be said about how God is at work among Muslims through refugee ministry (such as the baptismal services being held on an almost weekly basis in Athens), Markus stated in a recent interview that none of this would be possible were it not for one of OM's core values being put into practice through this crisis.



"A highlight for me is that the churches are working together so well," says Markus. "It fits OM's core value of 'esteeming the church' and fits our vision statement that 'OM Greece exists to support and work in partnership with the church to witness Christ locally and globally.' The evangelical community in Greece is very small and we're labeled as heretics by many people [for not belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church]. But because of our work amongst refugees, OM and the evangelical community are now known by the mayor, the volunteers in the refugee camps, and Greece at large."

Fishers of Men

Stretching 420 miles long and 31 wide is Lake Tanganyika, the world's second largest body of fresh water that beautifies Africa like a glittering pool when the continent is seen from outer space. But with a lake bottom that sits almost a mile below the surface, it is also Africa's deepest lake, giving the water a dark and abysmal quality, as if to symbolize certain occult beliefs associated with the lake.

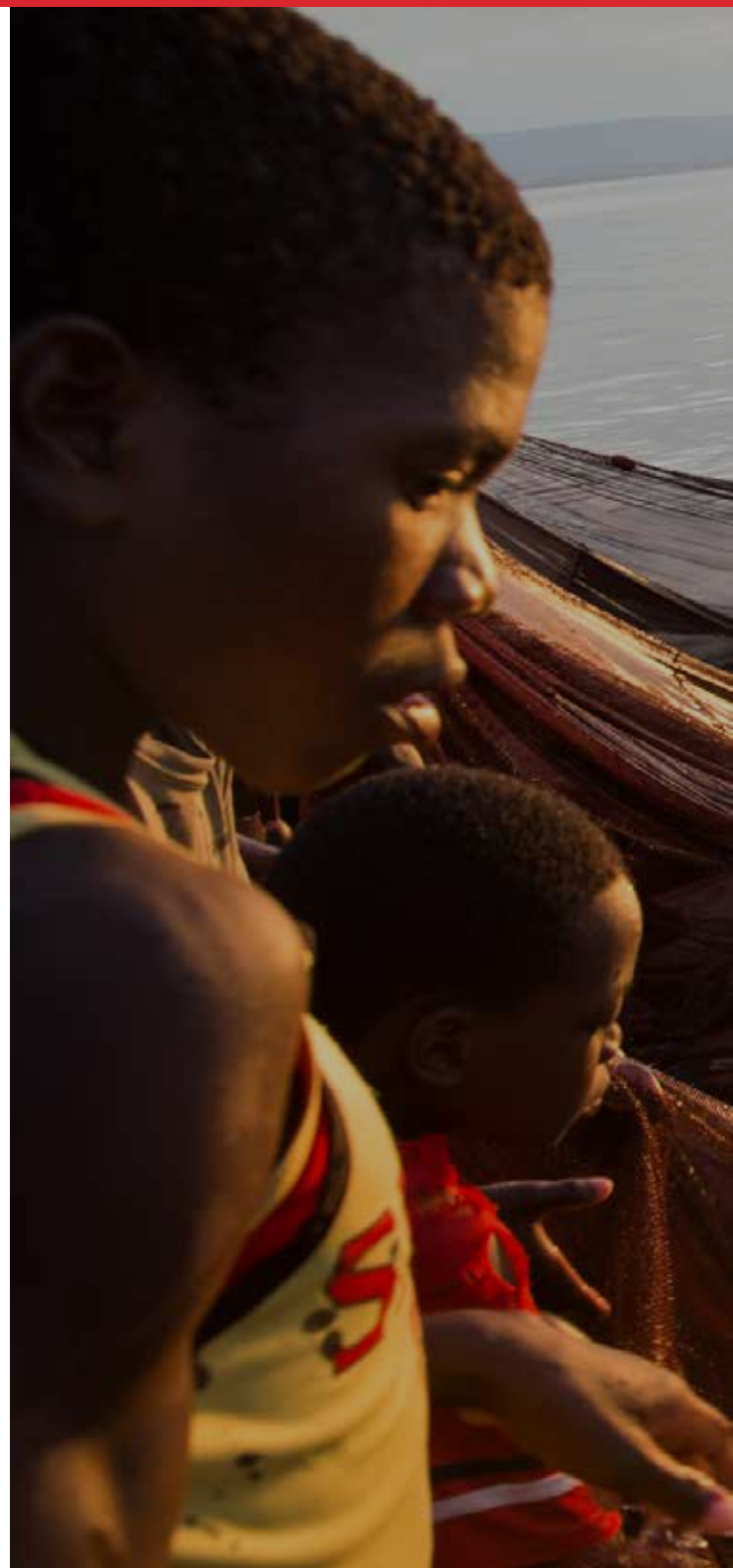
Along its shores, it is a standard practice each month for a fisherman to consult a witchdoctor, sacrifice an infant or small child as prescribed (if not more than one), and sprinkle his fishing net with the blood and body parts. This is certain to appease the lake gods and ensure their hand in an ample catch of fish until the next month, when the pact is renewed. Or so it has been believed for centuries.

In Zambia's Chitwe village, a growing band of fishermen are upsetting this tradition, in addition to other ways they are bringing fundamental change to this remote and least reached area of the world. Nicknamed the "fishers of men," they are group of OM missionaries native to Africa who own and operate the King of Kings— a fishing boat business that relies not on blood and sacrifice, but on the power of prayer, using its income to financially sustain their missionary work.

When the enterprise was launched several years back by OM's Moses [insert last name], it first became the talk of the village and gained controversial recognition as the "prayer boat" when it surprised locals with a series of bountiful catches without any aid from ritual sacrifices. As word of this "miracle" spread, other fishermen came to Moses wanting to join the boat and were welcomed, giving him the opportunity to share the message behind the boat's name and its unconventional approach involving prayer.

In brief, they learned for the first time about the Creator God who became a man and offered Himself as a human sacrifice, paying the price of sin once and for all in order to restore mankind to relationship with Himself. They learned, even, that the King of kings is Supreme, and—unlike the angry and bloodthirsty lake gods—provides for those who seek Him with no further need of sacrifice and bloodshed.

Among those who heard and embraced this message was a man named Andrew, a chief village who prayed to receive Christ in large part because he was impressed with Moses's distinct character and lifestyle. Today, Andrew is no longer consulting witchdoctors, beating his wife, or relying on alcohol to cope with the guilt and superstitious fears from which he has been freed. He is at Moses's side in ministry evangelizing Tanganyika's neighboring villages and mentoring a group of younger men to become the next generation of Africa's native missionaries. With the two other "prayer boats" that have recently been purchased, they will continue in the footsteps of their predecessors, using the business and its profits—powered by prayer—to self-sustain their missionary work.





BUSINESS

Historically, there is no question God always intended to make Himself known in and through the marketplace. Divine wisdom made King Solomon the world leader in trade and in wealth, exalting Israel and the one true God in the eyes of surrounding nations. At OM, we partner with entrepreneurs to build transformational business models—changing the spiritual, economic, social, and environmental principles of how companies are run and employees are treated. The result is a prayerfully-considered business that can prosper according to God's purpose, generating profits for ministry support and new enterprises.

OM SHIPS

On a sunny day in 1960, a young and energetic George Verwer was up in a tree praying when the words “Operation Mobilization” first struck his mind. Although short-term mission trips were not common at the time, the idea was to acquire a fleet of school buses and an army of young evangelists for outreach trips. Undergirding this was a core conviction—that with the wealth of modern-day resources at the church’s disposal, the Great Commission need not remain unfulfilled much longer. By 1970, this same visionary thinking led to the purchase of a ship, which could reach parts of the world that are hard to

access by air or land and where people have yet to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. This past year, team members visited a prison in the Seychelles, where they met an inmate who seemed especially thrilled to encounter them. Upon introducing himself, the man explained that he was once a visitor on the *Doulos* ship when it docked in 1995. Although his life took a wrong turn when he decided to make some quick money off drugs, he has since discovered the power of God’s word in prison, using the Bible he had received from the *Doulos* 20 years earlier!



MARKETPLACE WORKERS

In essence, Verwer's love for innovative thinking, combined with a heart for God's timeless purposes, set the tone for a kind of pioneering spirit that would characterize OM ministries for decades to come. And when applied today, this way of thinking gives rise to yet another unorthodox missional strategy, which is the marketplace worker.

As a young man in his twenties, Hannes resigned from a job with one of London's most prestigious architectural firms and followed God's call to become a missionary, the one thing he swore he would never become. Today in Zambia he operates his own construction company, builds homes, trains and mentors other men and is able to fund the education of 150 children for every home he rents out. Hannes is both an architect and a missionary—a new kind

of missionary—who took his profession and skills to a nation that would greatly benefit from them.

Overseas, there are thousands of jobs available in hundreds of industries, especially for young western-educated candidates. At OM, we are committed to coming alongside Christians who want to take their career overseas, helping them find and apply for jobs, fill out necessary paperwork, secure visas, learn the language, locate homes and settle into new communities. If more Christ-followers did this, it would radically multiply the number of missionaries being sent to the world's 2.8 billion unreached people, and it would enable missionaries to be self-sustaining, rather than dependent on support from a sending church.





SOCIAL SECTOR

Though easy to forget, the Gospel is about more than the salvation message. It is “the good news of the kingdom of God” that Jesus announced and demonstrated through his ministry. He went about healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and binding the broken hearted, revealing a God whose concern for human welfare is practical and holistic. Likewise, our worldwide relief projects provide food for refugees, homes for orphans, and medical teams for victims of disaster. It is through these demonstrations of God’s love that many are embracing a restorative Gospel.

Freedom for Rani

A temple prostitute? It's hard to believe the term applies in modern times. But Rani was not yet seven years old when she began her life in India as a "jogini"—young girls consecrated to the gods, forbidden to marry, and offered to men of the upper caste before they reach puberty.

Rani's mother—also raised a jogini from an early age—introduced her to the men and to the abuse that the rituals involved. When Rani was eight years old, her mother died of a mysterious disease, but this did not make life any easier for the orphan. The man who took her in was similar to the kind she had been used to meeting, and one day, tried to hang her.

Thankfully, his attempt failed and the event brought attention to Rani's situation from the right people. She is now twelve years old and living in one of our India rescue homes. It is a miracle she is alive, but even more so that she is excelling at school, describing herself as "so happy." Her goal is to become a social worker one day and help others who have suffered like her.



Moldova Girls Camp

Nestled in between Romania and the Ukraine is the Republic of Moldova, Europe's smallest and poorest country, with an unemployment rate of up to 80% in some towns. Resulting from this poverty is an epidemic of alcoholism, child abandonment and orphan exploitation, landing Moldova 6th in the world on the human trafficking index. Yet, God has not forgotten its people and neither will we.

At our Moldova Girls Camp, Freedom Challenge Team members lead activities for at-risk young girls, ages 10-14, who have been identified as vulnerable to exploitation by our Moldova Day Centers, where children come for meals, help with homework and Bible study.

One of these is a young girl named Ina, who—given her personal experience with abusive parents—had a hard

time at first appreciating the term "Heavenly Father." But when she began to pray in a somewhat experimental manner, asking God for specific requests and being surprised to find them answered in compelling ways, her heart began to soften and make room for a caring God. Ina now has many powerful testimonies of healing and provision in her life that she enjoys sharing with other girls at camp.

THE BUBBLE

Besides the marketplace worker, another method to help missionaries become self-supporting is underway. The Bubble is a geodesic dome structure of varying sizes, simple to set up and resistant to weather and earthquakes. Inside, we are refining several new kinds of greenhouse systems, including aquaponics, where fish and vegetables are farmed together, with the plants receiving the water and nutrients they need from the fish tank. What are the advantages of this system? No soil, pesticides, or chemical

fertilizers are needed. Compared to traditional farming, it requires up to 90% less water and yields five times the number of crops for the ground it occupies, making it ideal for sustaining missionaries in arid environments. Making this happen, though, requires the new types of missionaries: Scientists, engineers, economists and businessmen, along with teams for training locals to operate the Bubble. Missions in the 21st century, it turns out, is a much bigger field for innovative thinkers than ever imagined.



FREEDOM CHALLENGE

Engaging the question of how God is presently at work in global affairs compels us to confront human trafficking, the major evil of our time that enchains over 24 million women and children. Through OM's Freedom Challenge, this battle is being fought by an army of passionate, everyday women from within the United States and elsewhere. Whether it is by forming a Freedom Circle in their local communities, or by participating in one of our Freedom Challenges—such as a mountain climb or awareness-walk—funds are raised to operate our various programs overseas that prevent, rescue, and rehabilitate victims of human trafficking.

One such program is the Self-Help Group, which provides rescued or at-risk women with training in a profitable skill and a loan to start their own business, helping them to avoid the clutches of prostitution rings and money-lenders. A woman in India named Rathinamala, for example, struggled to make ends meet until she identified her skill in sewing and received business training and a loan of 20,000 rupees to establish a tailoring institute. Her institute now has 10 other women in training, granting both her and them the financial and social independence needed to make a living without feeling the need to enter prostitution or falling into indentured servitude.



Arts Engage Hearts

All things considered, Linda Wells does a fair job at keeping her cool in spite of her fiery, prophetic temperament. After arriving in France with her dance team, where they were scheduled to perform at a series of Christian outreach concerts one weekend in Paris, a major problem had just come up, when one of the lead pastors hosting the event sat down with Linda, wishing to discuss it. He explained to her that while he appreciated the ballet and more classical elements of her team's dance itinerary for that weekend, he had not anticipated the part involving a contemporary hip-hop style, which to him, did not seem appropriate for a church-sponsored event.

In response, Linda tried to explain that the hip hop music and movements were in no way sensual or inappropriate, as perhaps he was imagining; they were upbeat and energized, and coordinated to synchronize with positive lyrics. But when the pastor's associates interjected, saying, "It is the worst music I have ever heard," it became clear the matter wasn't open to discussion, and in the end, out of respect for the pastor, Linda acquiesced, agreeing to remove the hip hop.

Even so, Linda felt this was a costly mistake. On previous mission trips, the hip hop performance had always been a main draw for large crowds of youth and street people, who would engage the team afterwards with questions about the program and its purpose, making it an effective outreach tool. However this tool was now being taken from the team due to petty differences in taste from church leadership, while the more important matter of lost souls weighed in the balance.

To vent her frustration, Linda found a moon-lit path later that night near the campgrounds and prayed, asking the Lord to change the pastor's mind so that he would let them perform the hip hop after all. It was a request for the impossible. But in less than 24 hours, her faith would be re rewarded.

It happened that next morning in church, when the pastor made some announcements and asked his church to join him in prayer for a specific request—that at least 100 people would attend the choir concert that evening, which was the final event for the outreach series. For him, this request was motivated by a genuine concern for lost souls to find Christ and community. And for his small congregation of 20 members, this too may have seemed like a request for the impossible. But for Linda, who shared the pastor's burden for reaching the lost, it was an opportunity, prompting her to approach the pastor after the service with a bold proposal: "Let me and my team perform the hip hop dances on the streets with your blessing and we, in turn, will invite whoever watches to the choir concert."

Reluctantly, the pastor agreed, making no attempt to hide his skepticism. But when Linda and her team showed up to the concert that evening with their crowd of over 500 smiling people, something in the pastor's attitude toward Linda and her team suddenly changed. He has since reconsidered his view on whether contemporary art has any role in evangelizing the world, and, with a heightened level of warmth, has since invited Linda and the team to return for outreach anytime.

Hip-hop had
always been a
main draw





ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Made in the Creator's image, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and called to reflect His glory—shouldn't God's people be among the world's leading artists and innovators? As Bill Drake the director of OM Arts explains, "We are living in a day when biblical truth can be heralded, initiated, expressed, and embodied as never before through the arts. To the extent that the Church engages the arts in expressing the gospel, it not only mirrors God's creativity, but also identifies with His missional heart." OM Arts works alongside visual, performing, and technical artists to provide training and opportunities on the mission field.

EDUCATION

In communities stricken by poverty or disaster, it is often necessary to meet needs in the form of food, shelter, and clothing. But breaking the mental and cultural forces that keep people in poverty requires the more fundamental thing of education, which has its greatest potential when combined with spiritual formation. Through OM's schools and literacy programs around the globe, we empower communities for the future and share the good news of the gospel with students and families.





Talisma's Story

Like most women in rural Bangladesh, Taslima had never learned to read or write. She was fifty years old, impoverished, recently widowed, and unable to understand how money works—a perfect target for dishonest vendors at the local market. Once, she was even persuaded by a vendor that the bill in her hand—worth \$500 taka (6 US dollars)—was in fact only 100. It wasn't the first time she was swindled there, but it would be the last. What changed for her?

When OM's adult literacy program for Bangladesh finally reached her village, Taslima recognized the opportunity for a better life and immediately registered, becoming one of 300 adults to enter the program within a three month period. She is presently in that early stage of learning to read where characters from the alphabet are connecting with others in her brain to form decipherable words, concepts, and images. At her age, this is as awe-inspiring as it is challenging, but on a practical note, the basics have been absorbed and she is no longer being cheated at the bazaar.

She is no longer
being cheated at
the bazaar

In Bangladesh alone, we operate 15 adult literacy programs (3 for men and 12 for women) as well as 27 schools for children. In India, we operate 107 schools, which came about because the leaders of the Dalit class—humanity's lowest grade according to the Hindu caste system—invited missionaries to give children an English education based on a Christian worldview, wishing to foster the principles of human dignity, equality, and God-given self-worth.

Such is the power of education, when combined with a gospel that transforms individuals holistically. Promoting literacy can redeem matters of the human heart as it can edify the intellect. Making it an OM focal point is our way, even, of fulfilling the mandates to care for the orphan and widow, to stand up for the rights of the poor and needy, and to be a “voice for the voiceless,” by giving them the tools they need to have a voice of their own.

The Bible Under the Radar

In today's fast-paced world, it's possible that some people haven't slowed down enough to ponder and appreciate the profound change our world is going through: If Gutenberg's printing press catapulted humanity forward in terms of collective knowledge—making books, literacy, and libraries a commonplace thing—what could be said of the smart phone, which has managed to fit the world-wide “library” into one's pocket?

And how might this digital revolution accelerate the spread of the gospel?

Over a decade ago, OM's Joseph Matthews* was still racking his brain for ways to mass-print Bibles in the Urdu language and distribute them in countries where Bibles are forbidden. With publishing and printing costs, and the how-to of literature smuggling, it was all a rather complicated problem. But thanks in large part to smart phone inventor Steve Jobs, this problem has been largely circumnavigated by ALKITAB—the first Bible-reading app in the Urdu language—that Matthews helped to invent.

Since launching it several years back, the app has been downloaded by millions of Urdu-speaking users in closed countries, which allows them to access God's Word without fear of being caught with a forbidden book in print. Verses or passages can be bookmarked, shared on social media, and confidential feedback and faith-related questions sent to the app's managers. And yet, inventing and running such apps is only a fraction of Matthews' pioneering media ministry with OM.

On a regular basis, he is a co-host for Zindagi TV, a Christian talk show that fosters dialogue on matters of faith and religion so as to contextualize the gospel message for a Muslim audience. Although filmed in a nondescript location in Europe, the program is broadcast globally via satellite TV, and—like the ALKITAB app—commands a following of over 2 million Urdu-speaking viewers in closed countries, many of whom send in their questions using the app, wanting to know more about Isa, the Son of God.

**Name changed.*

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MEDIA

“Everyone in the world must hear the Gospel at least once.” This mantra, coined by OM founder George Verwer, was a conviction inspired by the times. The twentieth century boom in industry, broadcast, and travel presented unheard-of opportunities and strategies for accelerating the Gospel. In 1970, this meant acquiring a ship that could distribute literature in the world’s hard-to-reach places. Today, it means a great deal more. With the rise of internet and satellite technology, the Gospel is finding creative in-roads into places where it is forbidden.

Where We Serve

TOTAL ADULTS SERVING IN OM:

6804 (3644 Women, 3160 Men)

CHILDREN UNDER 18:

2115

NATIONALITIES SERVING IN OM:

113

TOP 10 NATIONALITIES ARE:

India 3479

USA 522

UK 327

Germany 252

South Africa 237

South Korea 159

Netherlands 159

Australia 122

Switzerland 120

Zambia 104

Canada 96

WHERE WE SERVE:

Europe 875

Africa 459

Ships 421

East Asia Pacific 405

Middle East/North Africa 326

West and Central Asia 277

North America 230

Latin America 157

International 123

GS/OMI (India) 3487

WE ARE MORE THAN **6,800 MISSIONARIES**

FROM **100+ NATIONS**

WORKING IN **118 COUNTRIES**

 COUNTRIES WHERE OM IS WORKING





A photograph with a warm, golden-orange color palette. In the foreground, several people are running from left to right, their forms silhouetted against the bright light. The background shows a sunset or sunrise over a body of water, with trees and foliage visible on the left and right sides. The overall mood is one of movement and hope.

Your gifts enable OM to serve around
the world, taking the Gospel of Jesus
Christ to the nations to see lives and
communities transformed.





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