

CONNECT

magazine



IMAGE
MADE WITH
AI

MISSION & TECH

MAY 2024



**AFRICA
INLAND MISSION**

TECHNOLOGY AND MISSION

Ever since the first tools were created we have seen incredible changes in technology. Some technologies come and go – Beta Max, VHS, DVD, Blu-ray and now streaming – while other technologies have stood the test of time – the binary number system that was invented in 1703 is still used in computing systems today. But with each new technology a question must be asked: how can this be used to further the kingdom of God?

In this latest issue we explore how advancing technology is impacting the spread of the gospel. Learn how our missionaries have implemented it in their ministries, enhancing their work, enabling them to reach more people, and discovering new and exciting opportunities through the online world.

How are you using technology for the kingdom?

Rosie

CONNECT EDITOR

Note: We use an * for pseudonyms, designed to protect people and people groups. Images are often representative and we will indicate when AI was used to create images.



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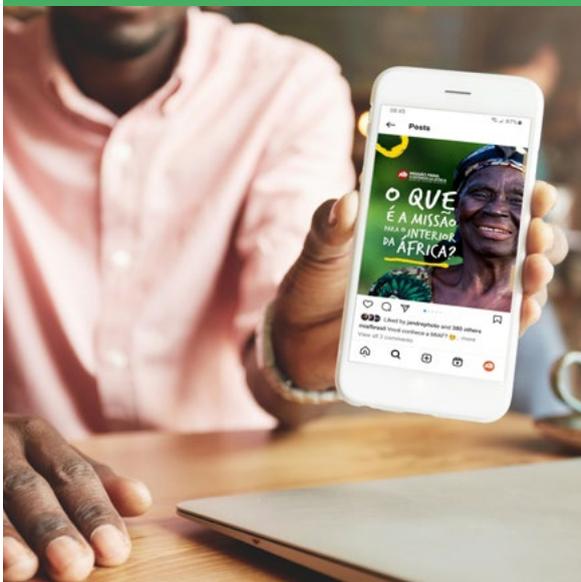
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THIS IMAGE WAS CREATED USING A TEXT PROMPT IN MICROSOFT COPILOT

“Technology like art is a soaring exercise of the human imagination.”

Daniel Bell



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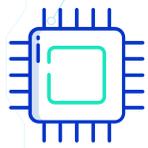


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“Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master.”

Christian Lous Lange



TECHNOLOGY AND

THE CHURCH



When people made the very first tools, it set in motion an incredible journey with technology: improving things, making others obsolete, and creating what had previously been impossible.

The journey continues at an alarming pace, every new idea bringing excitement, questions, fears and concerns. The Church has often been sceptical and slow to adopt new technologies, keen instead to hold tightly to what has gone before. And yet, with discernment, technology enables significant leaps in our ability to reach people with the gospel.

WRITING

The earliest stories of the Bible were disseminated by word of mouth. The first written words seem to have been committed to stone, wood and clay, but the invention of papyrus in Egypt meant that the Torah, and the rest of the Bible, could be written down. This was essential for Paul's ministry of writing letters to the early church. More recently the majority of

our writing is recorded digitally, but there is still a great need for physical copies of God's Word, important records, letters, and this Connect magazine.

GUTENBERG PRINTING PRESS

Before 1450, Bibles were copied by hand, a feat that would take over a year to produce one copy. They were such a rarity that churches would chain them to the pulpit to discourage theft. Only the clergy could access and understand the Bible. But the invention of the Gutenberg printing press and an English translation inspired by John Wycliffe changed all of that. Bibles became accessible and affordable, which helped to fuel the Protestant Reformation. Today with the help of Bible apps we can access a multitude of translations in multiple languages at our fingertips.

GOING DIGITAL

Harnessing electricity in the 1800s led the way for the technology we have today: televisions, computers and the internet. COVID-19 obliged churches

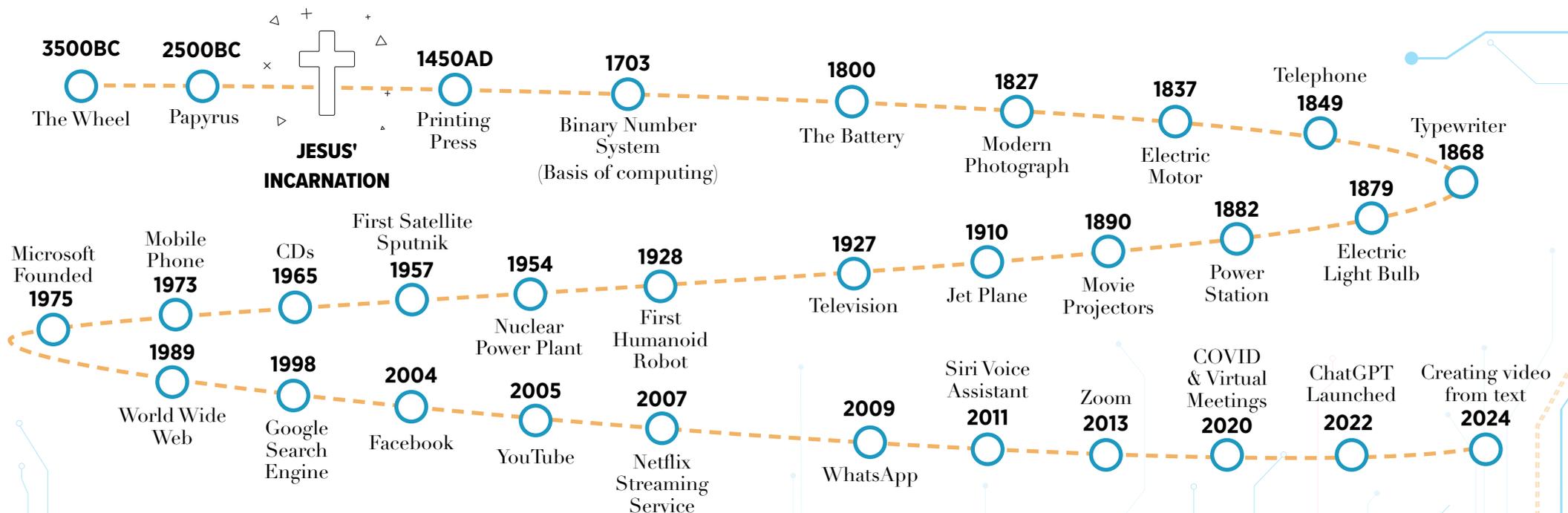
to stream services online and schools even had to teach remotely. Supporters and family members of missionaries can communicate instantly from opposite ends of the world. Geography was once a significant issue for missionaries in reaching the unreached. Today 570 million Africans are online, which means that many of the unreached are now just a click away from hearing about Jesus.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Over the last few years huge leaps in Artificial Intelligence have made it hugely popular. There are valid concerns about the way AI is disrupting things and changing the landscape of work, but it also holds great promise. It has in fact been around since the 1950s. You may not realise but we use AI everyday: in search engines, smart speakers and computer software. Previous technological advancements have become effective tools for the gospel. The Church needs to consider where AI fits into its mission.

TECHNOLOGY TODAY

- 65%** of the global population use the internet.
- 570** million people in Africa use the internet.
- No.1** Nigeria's rank in social media usage 4hrs 20mins/day.
- 1 in 6** UK organisations embracing AI technology.
- 1 in 3** medical professionals use computers to aid diagnosis.
- 60%** of UK homes now have a smart speaker.
- 8.5** billion Google searches are performed each day.
- 5-7** billion Bibles have been printed in the last 500 years.





MISSION FROM YOUR OWN HOME

LILY* LIVES IN THE UK, BUT BECAUSE OF TECHNOLOGY, SHE IS STILL ABLE TO BE PART OF MISSION WORK IN AFRICA

THE CALL

If you'd told me, just prior to the first Covid lockdown, that in three months I'd be resigning from my beloved teaching post at a great school down the road and that timeanddate.com would become one of my go-to apps, I would have told you that you didn't know me at all. But someone who knows me better than anyone, who is "intimately acquainted with all my ways" (Psalm 139:3), knew that deep down I had – for several years – been harbouring a desire to go onto the mission frontline, to be the first person to tell someone the gospel of Jesus Christ, preferably in a Muslim setting. He also knew that my like-minded husband did not (then) share that desire and therefore, we wouldn't be going any time soon.

THE MISSION

Fast forward and I am now into my fourth year of teaching with AIM in an Islamic country in North Africa from the comfort of my UK home! My tools are a laptop and a decent broadband connection. It makes me smile that God has orchestrated this arrangement just for me, with my particular skills and professional interests combined with my heart's desire to serve in a Muslim setting, while my husband can continue the necessary work he's involved in here and support what I do with AIM. Granted, I'm not (usually) physically in North Africa and granted, I'm not actually sharing the gospel with people who have never heard it, because it

is forbidden to do so in the school where I work. But, I am helping to facilitate and enable workers from AIM and other agencies who have school-aged children to live and serve in that city.

By God's grace, I am part of the team of teachers (workers and locals) who provide high quality education to missionary and local children alike. I'm helping the team on the ground by planning the curriculum, delivering lessons and grading work in my specialist area. I now better understand what the team are involved in and so can pray informatively for them. I also have the joy and privilege of teaching worker children and children from Muslim families who I can pray for and hopefully influence for good.

It makes me smile that God has orchestrated this arrangement just for me.

THE IMPACT

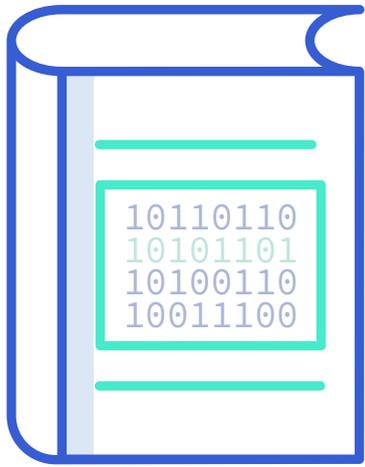
In what is classed by some as a 'closed country', my team alone shared the full gospel message with over 540 people last year! This is one team in one city! Imagine how many people could be reached if we had more workers, more teachers and more schools in more locations. Online teaching has opened the door for more of us to serve in the mission field from where we are. Is this something that you could do?

GIVE THANKS

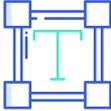
Give thanks for the way technology is enabling missionaries like Lily to play their part in the Great Commission from a distance.

Got a passion for mission and teaching? Why not check out our Teaching in Mission webinar on 8 June.

eu.aimint.org/teaching



THE WORD MADE DIGITAL

 While the Bible is available in over 700 languages, one in five people still do not have the whole Bible in their first language. Dawn* is a part of a Bible translation team in the Indian Ocean Islands. She has seen how technology has helped to advance the process of translation.



A LONG PROCESS

Each translated text goes through many stages: drafting, exegetical check, checks by other translators and facilitators, and a qualified translation consultant, as well as 10-12 people in the local community. It can take several years before it is finally ready for release in audio, app, or printed form.



COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE STAGES

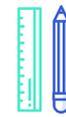
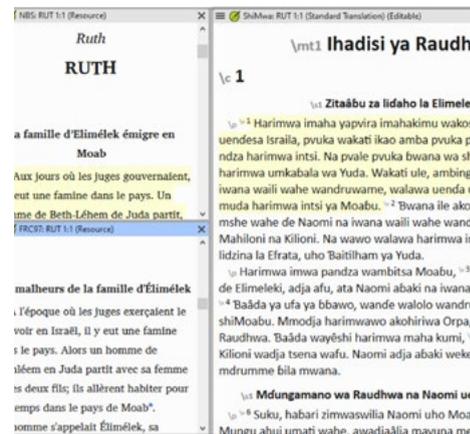
This whole process has been accelerated by a computer program which allows interaction at each stage using written notes and comments, as well as by platforms like Zoom and WhatsApp to facilitate face to face communication when necessary. As facilitators we also have many digital resources available to help us with exegesis.



THE TEXT

For apps and print we include some Arabic script of the local language as well as Roman script. This may be in the written text, or in the design features like the cover. It's even possible to create letters for sounds in the language which don't exist in an Arabic script. Sometimes people need help to recognise these, but using Arabic script makes resources much more accessible to older people who may not be literate in Roman script. It also makes the appearance of a book or app more attractive to people who are familiar with resources in the majority religion.

DAWN'S TRANSLATION SOFTWARE



DESIGN

The design aspect is greatly helped by technology but would be of no use without on-the-ground testing with Islanders. We spent a long time asking many people from different sectors of the population which colours would be appropriate and most attractive for a cover, which borders look best with the text, and we also made sure we checked whether the size of the font was legible for everyone.



FINISHED PRODUCT

In the past, the aim would have been to get a printed publication, but nowadays there are many other formats which can be used, and consequently the finished translation is more accessible to a greater number of people. Audio recordings can be made and included in an app alongside the written version, but can also be saved on a memory card and used in any mobile phone. This is also a safer way for people to have access to resources. App release has become more challenging recently due to requirements of the Google Play store, but once created they can be shared that way, or directly shared with personal contacts.



THE ISLAND TOUCH

We're grateful to the Lord for the privilege of being involved in this translation project in the Islands. Given the context we live in, we're careful how we work, especially as Islanders work closely alongside us. In fact, they're the ones who do the translation, and we work with them as facilitators on exegesis and computer skills. The Islanders are the ones who understand the best way to express the different genres (narratives, poetry, epistles etc) in their heart language.



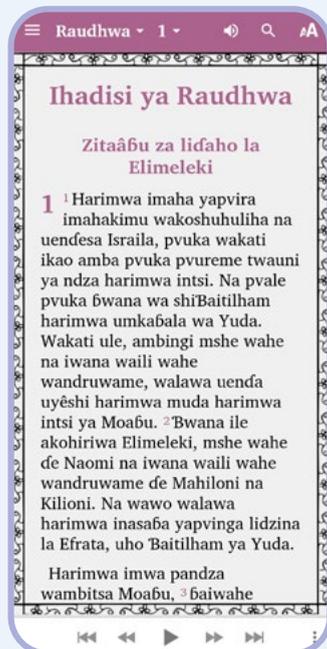
POWER OF THE WORD

None of this would be possible without the prayers of faithful supporters. We're grateful for your part in this, as well as the privilege afforded to us. This is the Word of God at work in the lives of Islanders (the few who know him, and the many who don't), and us as facilitators. His Word is powerful and doesn't return empty without achieving his purposes.





A BIBLE APP FOR THE ISLANDS



THE BIG PICTURE

7,300 languages are spoken or signed around the world

3658 languages have at least one book of the Bible

1264 languages have more than one book

1658 languages have the New Testament

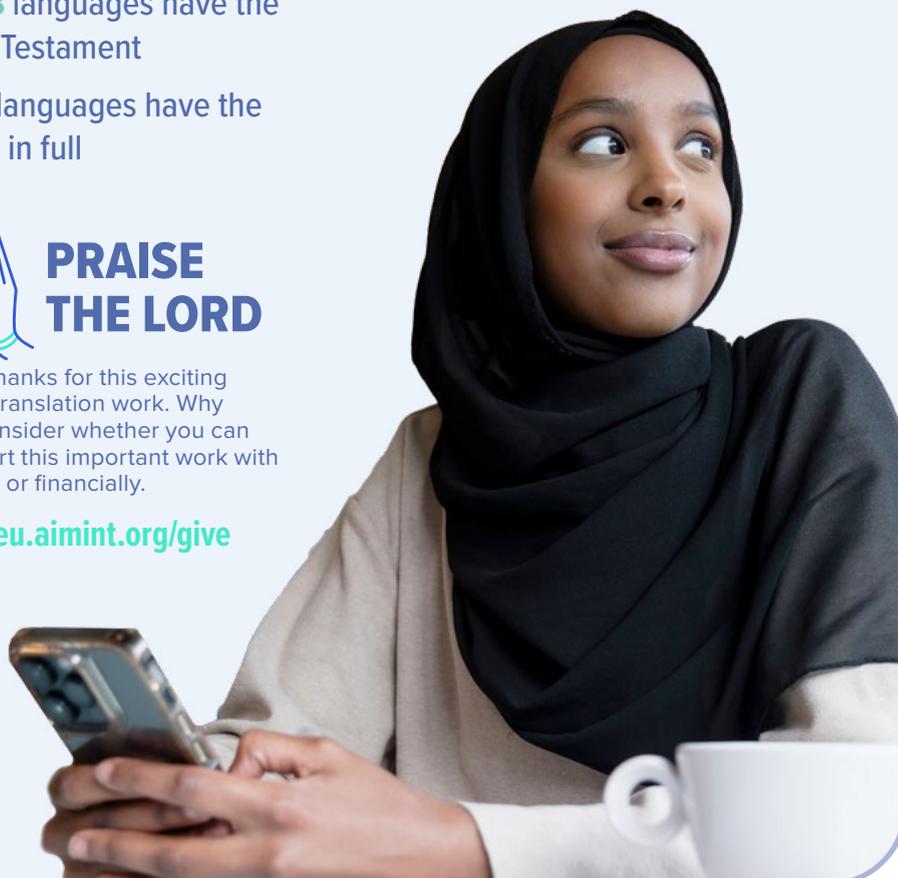
736 languages have the Bible in full



PRAISE THE LORD

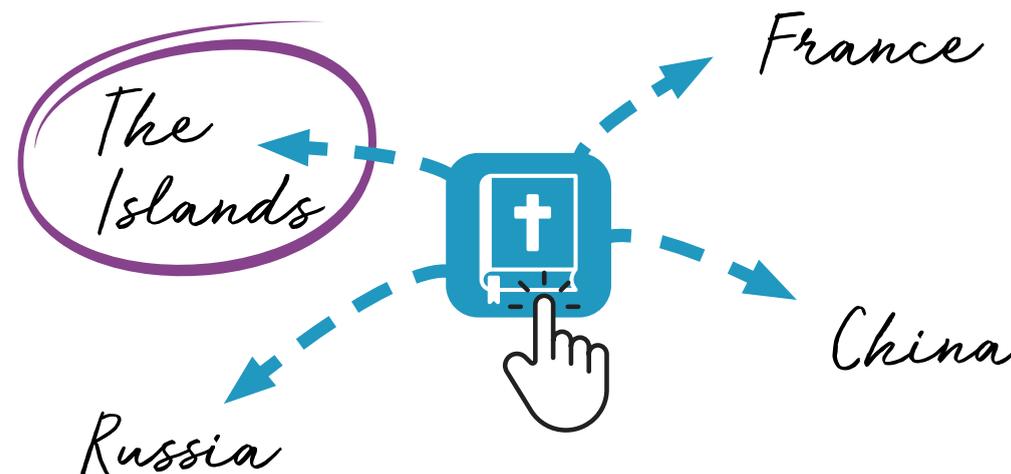
Give thanks for this exciting Bible translation work. Why not consider whether you can support this important work with prayer or financially.

Visit eu.aimint.org/give



THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

Amelia* has seen a lot of change during her time working on the Islands, especially the impact technology has had on how they do ministry.



A NEW PROJECT BRINGS NEW HOPE

Have you ever wondered what it would be like not to have God's Word in your own language? Now imagine what it would be like to disciple someone without God's Word in their language - I can assure you it is no easy thing!

This made the advent of the translation project in the Islands the start of an exciting new period in Islands ministry. It was an incredible thing to go from trying to do ministry with practically nothing available to knowing that with each passing day more and more of God's Word was being translated and tested and recorded.

And while Bible translation is a notoriously slow business, gone are the days of having to wait for an entire Bible, a New Testament, or even a book to be finished, and then printed and then shipped. These days things work a little differently - and a little more speedily!

GOING GLOBAL

We only had a few chapters of the Bible completed but that didn't mean we didn't have big plans for them. One of our very first Scripture releases was a phone app called 'The story of the prophet Adam', this was just three chapters of the Bible. It featured text paired with audio, along with locally inspired art and design. The audio was key. Many people couldn't read their own language well, but actually learned better orally.

Not only could we share this app with those we came into contact with, but we could even send it by WhatsApp to local friends who had travelled abroad. But learning from other workers around the world we realised we could also put it on Google Play and advertise it on Facebook. So we did, and it went far and wide. In the first month there were over 1000 downloads, and not just in the Islands - but everywhere that Islanders ended up: Russia, China, France. God's Word was being downloaded by Islanders all over the world!

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

STRANGERS IN A TAXI

On two different occasions Farid, one of the local translators, saw them in use in real life. On one occasion a man missed his stop while riding in their shared taxi, because he was so engrossed in what he was listening to on one of our apps. Another time, a girl sitting next to Farid had an app open on her phone and before she got out, he was able to share another app with her. These are just two examples of people in God's Word who would probably never have encountered it if not for these incredible new tech tools.



OPENING UP OPPORTUNITIES

But we don't just share these apps at a distance; it also opens up new ways to disciple and share our faith as we are no longer limited to our language ability! New workers can share a short testimony with a friend and then offer to play them a Bible story connected with it. Locals who can only haltingly read their own language are able to listen each day to a bit more of Scripture – and following along with the audio helps them to become much more fluent in their reading ability, giving them not only important literacy skills, but also broadening the ways they can access Scripture.



A PHONE GIVES PRIVACY

But speed, reach and accessibility are not the only advantages. In a country where nobody reads books but everybody is constantly on their phones, looking at your phone draws much less attention than reading a book. Anywhere, any place, any time you have God's Word with you – and you can engage with it without worrying about whose attention you might be drawing. There is still a place for the printed Word, but apps have undeniably come alongside as a vital partner in seeing God's kingdom spread and his Church grow strong.



Give thanks for the advancement of technology which has allowed the Bible to be opened up to those in nations that are closed to the gospel.

TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTRY

Africa is often overlooked as a technological innovator, but, many advances in technology originated there.

Technology has become an essential part of AIM's ministries too. Our workers are incorporating tech in new ways: to reach people, help them translate and access the Bible, get medical help, communicate and so much more.

AIM EUROPEAN MOBILISING OFFICES

UK, France, Netherlands

We seek to partner with and support churches who send people to work among Africans. It is a complex task and without technology it would be almost impossible.

SUPPORT

You, your church and people all over the world

For ministries to begin and flourish, they depend on prayer, as well as relational and financial support. Today, missionaries can involve their supporters, via instant message, photos, videos and more.

"The opportunities we have today to give insight into our lives as missionaries and keep our supporters updated are incredible." Matze Schilling (AIM Stories and South Sudan Inbound Team)

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN AFRICA

Rural places

No water, electricity, mobile signal or internet. Open fires for heating and cooking.

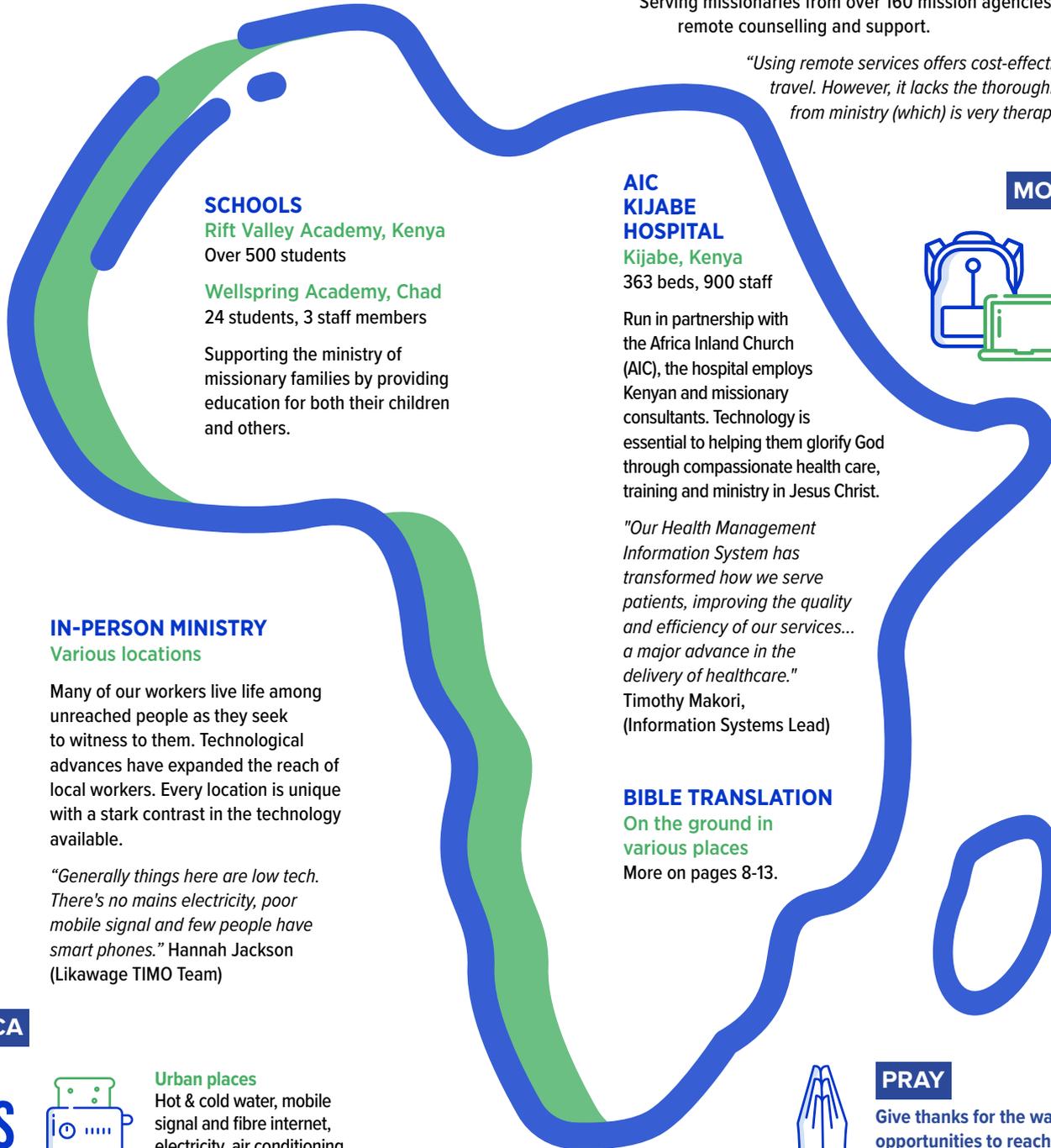


VS



Urban places

Hot & cold water, mobile signal and fibre internet, electricity, air conditioning, electric heat and cooking.



SCHOOLS

Rift Valley Academy, Kenya

Over 500 students

Wellspring Academy, Chad

24 students, 3 staff members

Supporting the ministry of missionary families by providing education for both their children and others.

IN-PERSON MINISTRY

Various locations

Many of our workers live life among unreached people as they seek to witness to them. Technological advances have expanded the reach of local workers. Every location is unique with a stark contrast in the technology available.

"Generally things here are low tech. There's no mains electricity, poor mobile signal and few people have smart phones." Hannah Jackson (Likawage TIMO Team)

TUMAINI COUNSELLING CENTRES

Nairobi, Kenya and Kampala, Uganda

1140 clients served in 2023, 76% of clients were seen online

Serving missionaries from over 160 mission agencies with a mixture of in person and remote counselling and support.

"Using remote services offers cost-effective and timely interventions, sparing a client's need to travel. However, it lacks the thoroughness of in-person assessments and reduces time away from ministry (which) is very therapeutic." Soohyun Kim, (Clinical Team Leader, AIM Care)

AIC KIJABE HOSPITAL

Kijabe, Kenya

363 beds, 900 staff

Run in partnership with the Africa Inland Church (AIC), the hospital employs Kenyan and missionary consultants. Technology is essential to helping them glorify God through compassionate health care, training and ministry in Jesus Christ.

"Our Health Management Information System has transformed how we serve patients, improving the quality and efficiency of our services... a major advance in the delivery of healthcare."

Timothy Makori, (Information Systems Lead)

BIBLE TRANSLATION

On the ground in various places

More on pages 8-13.

MODERN MISSIONARY CHECKLIST:



- ✓ Phone
- ✓ Zoom, Teams
- ✓ WhatsApp, Email
- ✓ Memory Cards
- ✓ Jesus Film, projector, power bank or generator
- ✓ Bible stories translated into the heart language of a people group
- ✓ Bible apps (multiple translations, languages and commentaries)
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ Social Media
- ✓ Google Translate
- ✓ MP3 audio player

AIM AIR

Nairobi, Kenya, and Arua, Uganda

134 different locations are served

Allowing missionaries, visiting teams, supplies and aid to get to difficult to reach or inaccessible places. Technology is essential for planning, monitoring, communicating and achieving safe flights.

"Missionaries rely on AIM AIR to respond in the face of life threatening, unexpected situations – or to simply bring their loved ones, a visiting team, or vital supplies to their locations."

Jerry Hurd (AIM Air General Manager)



PRAY

Give thanks for the way technology is providing new opportunities to reach the unreached with the gospel. Pray for workers to be wise in the way they use technology.

NIGER FOCUS



A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY

Niger has amazing people and diverse scenery - the awesome Sahara Desert, the beautiful green Niger River Valley, the fields of millet watered for less than 3 months in a year, and the vast pastoral lands with shepherds and their huge herds of livestock. The capital and other cities are rapidly urbanising and yet many live in the rural villages stretched across thousands of miles of this enormous country.

FACING DIFFICULTIES

Recent political instability, insecurity in many areas of the country, poverty, exploding population numbers, large numbers of internally displaced people, weak health infrastructure, and poor access to education can make life extremely difficult. Yet the people of this wonderful country are warm, welcoming, and resourceful. Almost all are Muslim and have no access to the good news of Jesus Christ, and many will never hear of him or even meet a Christian. The harvest is truly plentiful, but the workers are few.

A YOUNG CHURCH

The indigenous churches which have been here for nearly 100 years are working hard to share the gospel, and other churches and Christians from different parts of West Africa have recently joined the effort. Amongst some people groups fruit is beginning to be seen, yet there is a long way to go.

COULD GOD BE CALLING YOU?

There are currently various mission opportunities available in Niger, including in the education sector as tertiary educators, providing discipleship in universities, ESL teaching, and theological education. There are also other opportunities in medical spheres and various sports ministries.

Get in touch with us by visiting eu.aimint.org/contact to explore these opportunities further.



THE AIR AND TÉNÉRÉ NATURAL RESERVES

This is the largest protected area in Africa, spanning 7.7 million hectares, and is home to many endangered animals.

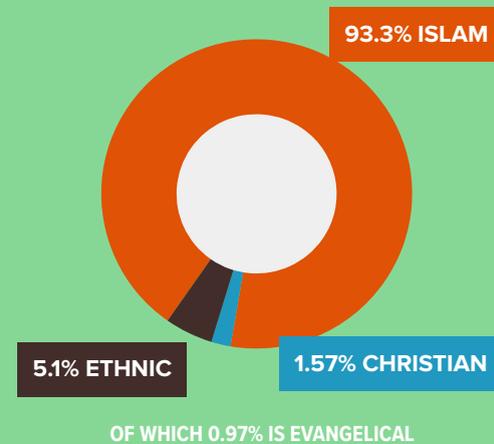
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Although the official language of Niger is French, it is only spoken by a minority of the population as a second language.



27.1 Million
Population

RELIGIONS IN NIGER



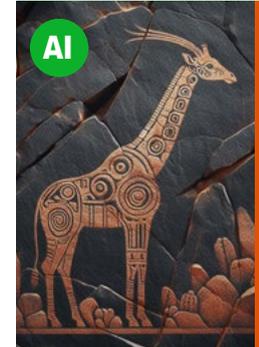
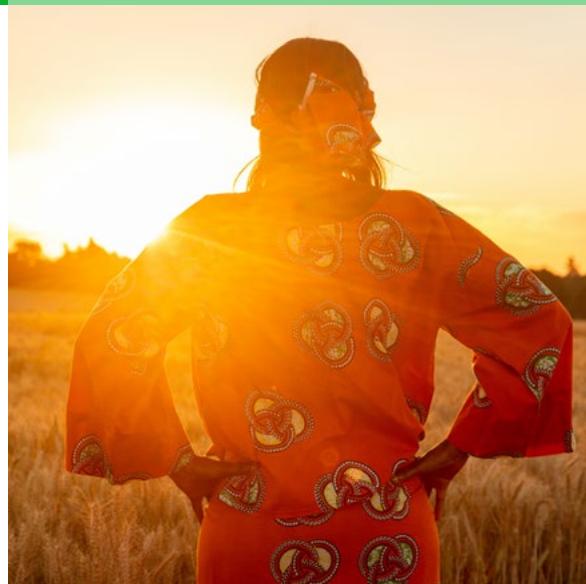
Capital
Niamey

Official language
French

No. unreached
26.6 Million

A COUNTRY IN NEED

Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world. Before the military coup in July 2023, ten million people were living in poverty. This has been exacerbated by the economic sanctions put in place, leaving many of the country's 27 million people facing hardship. Not only that, but less than 2% of the population have received the good news of Jesus.



AI

DABOUS GIRAFFE PETROGLYPH

The life-sized carving of two giraffes dates back 10,000 years and is the largest known animal carving in the world.

SAHARA DESERT

Nearly four-fifths of Niger is covered by desert, making it one of the hottest countries in the world.



NIGER RIVER

The name Niger comes from the phrase gher n-gheren, meaning "river among rivers," in the Tamashek language.

FOCUS ON THE ZARMA



THIS IMAGE WAS CREATED USING

ADOBE FIREFLY WITH A PROMPT AND A REFERENCE PICTURE

ZARMA AFRICAN WOMAN WITH JAR ON HER HEAD

AI

WHO ARE THE ZARMA?

This people group, numbering about five million, can be found living primarily in western parts of Niger, with a significant population in Nigeria, as well as in other West African countries. While they are often considered to be the same as a neighbouring group called the Songhai, there are noticeable differences in their dialects and history.



WHAT DO THEY BELIEVE?

Originally practising traditional animistic religion, by the 11th century the Zarma people had converted to Islam, attributed to North African Muslims visiting West Africa for trade. Although the younger Zarma population may not be as attached to Islam, pressure from their family keeps them from leaving the religion.

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO REACH THEM?

Missionaries have been working among the Zarma since the 1930s, but there have been few converts and the church struggles with division, hampering its growth. With only 0.2% of the population professing to be Christian, there is a lot of groundwork required. This is made harder by the social pressures which discourage new believers. The work done amongst them needs to build on existing efforts, being carried out prayerfully and in dependence on the Holy Spirit and in partnership with the local church if there is one.

Photos from Flickr (above) by Pencils for Kids, Libore, Niger and (right) by Global Partnership for Education - GPE.

PRAY FOR NIGER

- Niger experienced a military coup in July 2023 and has faced sanctions as a result, and strained relations with the rest of the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). Pray for wisdom for those in leadership, and ask that a solution will be found.
- While Niger is a secular country with a constitution that protects religious freedom, there have been outbreaks of persecution over the years, most notably in 2015 in response to the Charlie Hebdo protests. There is uncertainty about what the fallout will be as a result of the coup. Pray protection over believers at this time.
- Niger is the 7th poorest country in the world, with approximately 41% of the total population (10 million people) living in extreme poverty. The country relies heavily on foreign aid, which is currently suspended. Pray that humanitarian aid will reach those who most need it.



PRAY FOR THE ZARMA

- Pray that the hearts of the Zarma will be softened and filled with a yearning that can only be satisfied by hearing the gospel message.
- Pray God's blessing over the mission work that is already taking place among the Zarma, that its young church would be united by faith.
- Pray for the younger members of the Zarma population who want to follow Jesus but are facing pressure from their family, that their faith will remain strong.

HOPE IN THE DARK



Hope of North Africa's (HONA's) mission is to bring the hope of Jesus to North Africans by strategically reaching them online with the gospel and giving every online seeker the opportunity to meet in person with a believer and join a healthy church. Paul S Martin* gives insight into how it works.

POWER OF MEDIA

HONA harnesses the power of media to bring the gospel to places that are difficult to reach. When people don't have access to a Bible or don't know any other Christians, we can reach them through their smartphones. We use media as a workforce multiplier – it uses a small team to impact a country in a way that we simply couldn't do otherwise.

POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

HONA believes in the power and potential of healthy partnerships. Local churches often recognize how helpful the internet can be for finding seekers, but don't have the time or technical ability to implement strategic media campaigns. On the other hand, our media team wants to bless the local church with its gifts, so that we can entrust the seekers that we find into the hands of local believers and let them focus on what they do best: sharing the gospel, discipling individuals and welcoming them in their local church.

HOW IT WORKS

HONA works in partnership with North African churches in a four-step process:

A. Mass Proclamation

We run online ads and organic content targeting millions of people around North Africa, using chat bots, websites, Google Ads, Facebook, Instagram, and Messenger. These ads make up-front statements about the Christian faith. As a result, most who click on the ads have some true interest in engaging with gospel content.

B. High and Small-Scale Filtering

We look for seekers and open minds, and not arguers. This happens in two stages:

High-scale filtering: We first expose the user to Bible-driven content in the local

language, to help us determine who is interested. Then we offer the possibility of engaging online with a believer for further conversation.

When someone requests to be contacted, we ask specific, strategic questions that help reveal the person's motivations and true interest. We'll only respond to those who seem to be open-minded and genuinely interested.

Small-scale filtering: Once we're in contact through instant messaging, a brother or sister continues filtering the contact's motivation at a more personal level. This is also a wonderful opportunity to further proclaim the gospel and to correct the contact's misunderstandings about the Christian faith.

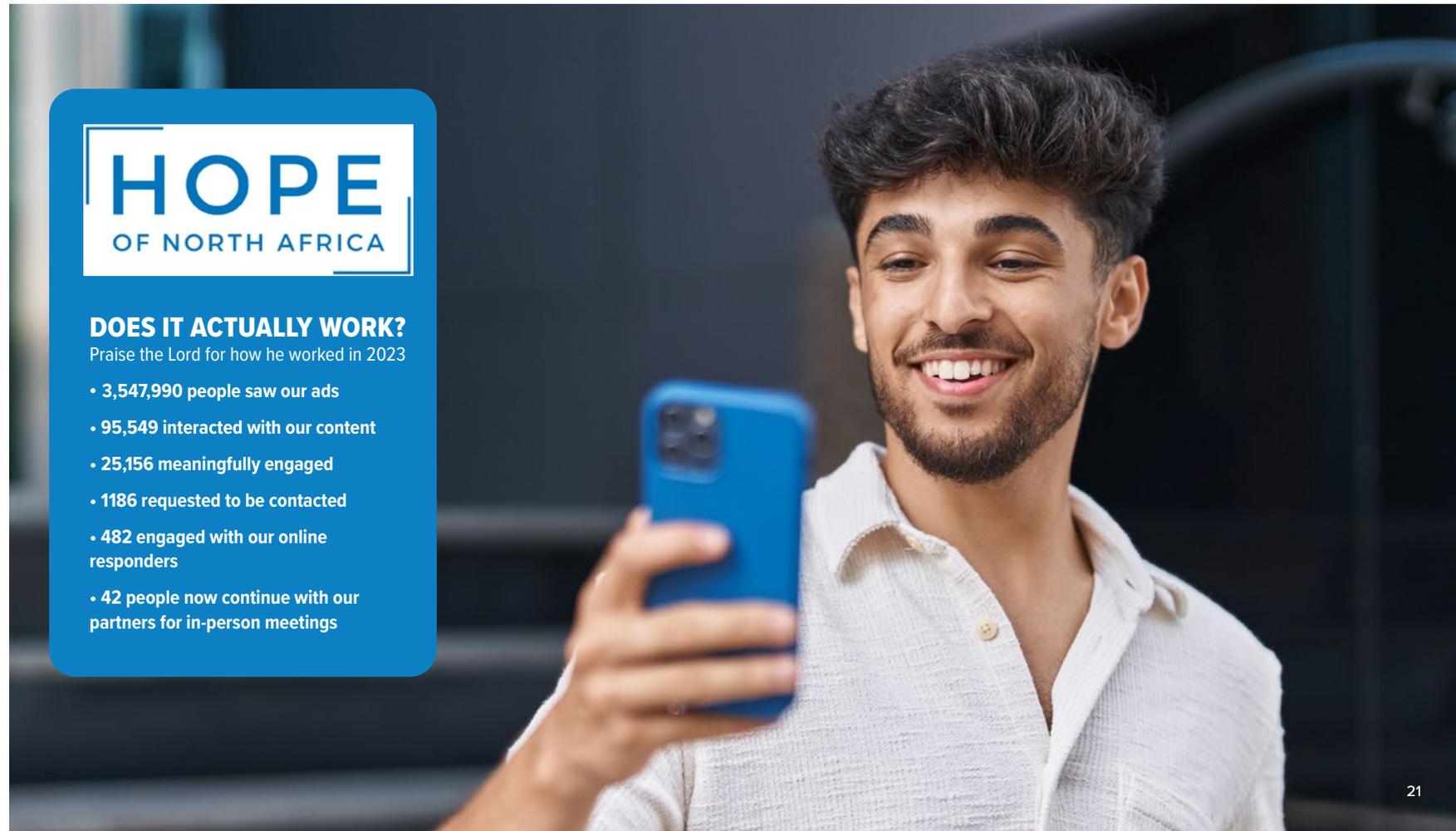
C. Personal Follow Up

After a period of conversing online, genuine seekers can meet with local Christians. We have established a strategic network of Christians who will follow up with our contacts with in-person meetings and personal discipleship.

D. Long-Term Growth Through the Local Church

These local disciplers are able to introduce these new believers to a local healthy church for long-term nurturing growth. It is not HONA's intent for discipleship to happen online. We believe in the centrality of the local church as one of the major means of grace the Lord has established.

For more information about Hope of North Africa visit honaproject.com





THE POWER OF STORIES



Matze is a missionary in a small rural mountain village among the Lopit people group in South Sudan, where he tells Bible stories, shares his faith by example, and lays the foundations of a church in Lopit. But the other part of his job is to capture and share stories for AIM Stories, the media department of AIM.

WE LOVE STORIES

Stories are essential to our lives. We are obsessed with them. We watch shows on Netflix, read biographies and study the daily news. We watch our friends' lives on Instagram and Snapchat and share our latest stories with each other over a good meal. Have you ever asked yourself why stories are so important to us? I believe it is because our God and Creator is a storyteller. Essentially, the Bible is just one big story – God's story with humanity. So, stories are embedded into our DNA. We love to hear, watch, and tell stories.

THE MISSION OF AIM STORIES

As a collective of different photographers and content creators all around the world, our goal is to show what God is doing on the mission field, so people in our home countries are encouraged, can pray more specifically and might even get called to join the work themselves. For a long time in history, stories were limited to voice and text. Sometimes artists would take the time to paint a picture about a story. But what happened in the last decades has revolutionised the way we share stories. Digital cameras and now even smartphones can capture good quality photos and videos and fill stories with life.



A WINDOW INTO THE MINISTRY

I made a short video about a kids' ministry of one of my colleagues. She sent it home and immediately got lots of support. People started praying for her, donating books and pens for the kids, and she received many encouraging messages.

It's like I'm right there with you on the field.

It's not that she had not communicated before what she was doing, but seeing a video gave her supporters a visualisation of what they have been hearing. They could better feel, grasp, and understand what she was actually doing.



And so, I take photos and videos, share what God is doing in South Sudan, and teach missionaries how to make use of their smartphones and create content for themselves.

After seeing one of my short monthly video updates, one of my supporters told me, "It's like I'm right there with you on the field." The opportunities we have today to give insight into our lives as missionaries and keep our supporters updated are incredible.

Give thanks for Matze's creativity, and the ways God is using him to help draw supporters into the missionary experience. To see more from Matze, visit his blog journeywithmatze.com





AN ONLINE STRATEGY



André Metz is the Communications Coordinator for AIM South America. He explains why the South American office is using social media as the main tool for mobilising missionaries and supporters. This article was originally written in Portuguese and translated using Google Translate.

RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

In recent years, social networks have occupied an increasingly relevant space in the digital environment and have become a vast territory to be occupied by brands and influencers. According to recent studies, Brazil has the fourth largest digital population in the world, with 133 million people connected, and ranks second highest in time spent using social networks per day.

Given this situation, some questions arise for us as a missionary agency: how do we use social networks effectively to mobilize more people for missions? How do we establish assertive communication with such a diverse audience, with such different interests and age groups?

THE STRATEGY

The initial solution we found to these challenges was to focus our efforts on the social network where we already had a significant audience and a good organic reach. We then designed a strategy widely used by influencers and companies with a strong presence on social media, called a content funnel. This strategy aims to increase the level of awareness among followers on the network for a certain type of service, product, cause, or interest.

In our case, our aim was to increase the level of awareness of missionary work among African peoples among our followers on Instagram. From then on, we started producing content for our three mobilisation fronts (intercessors, supporters and new missionaries) for people with little, moderate, and a lot of awareness about missions.

POSITIVE RESULTS

In just over a year, the results achieved were very positive, with a 40% increase in our follower base, a significant growth in post engagement and a considerable increase in people seeking more information about opportunities to serve in the field and more people showing an interest in serving as missionaries.

KEEPING IT RELEVANT

Although the results achieved so far are exciting, we know that we need to constantly innovate so that our social media does not lose relevance. We need to be aware of changes in the consumption patterns of network users. Changes and updates to the platforms can affect the engagement rates of the content you produced, and audiences are becoming increasingly selective about what they consume online.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

There is potential to reach and connect with thousands of people through these networks, and so they are a real asset for those who want to establish a closer relationship with their audience.

Our prayer is that we will always be diligent in creating these connections, remembering that social media metrics are less important than the expansion of God's kingdom through the work of AIM.

YOUR KINGDOM COME

Pray for the South American office, that their strategy will continue to stir people's heart for mission through social media.

Have you considered using social media to reach others with the gospel?

DEFINITIONS:

Audience – A specific group of people you are aiming to reach.

Follower – Individuals who subscribe to your social media account.

Reach – The total number of people who see your content.

Organic reach – The number of people who see your content without paying for advertising.

Influencer – A person who has established credibility online.

Post engagement – When people interact with your content.

Analytics / metrics – Data showing the performance of your content.



AUTUMN CONFERENCE



GLIMPSING THE GLORY OF HEAVEN

TEACHING IN MISSION



*“Uplifting, encouraging,
and challenging.” Attendee*

You are invited to join us 18 – 20 September at the Hayes Conference Centre for our exciting Autumn Conference! This will be a time of fellowship, teaching, and hearing from AIM missionaries about what God has been doing among his unreached peoples in Africa.

We will be joined by John Gillespie, previously Associate Pastor of Westbrooke Church, Kansas, as he teaches on this year's theme of Heaven: Glimpses of Glory and Motives for Missions. John and his wife, Tessa, have pastored churches in the UK and the USA for almost 40 years, as well as training pastors in developing countries with the Global Training Network. We hope you can join us.

18 –20th September at the
Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick

[More at eu.aimint.org/autumn](http://eu.aimint.org/autumn)

Did you know, 20% of parents have to leave the mission field due to the educational needs of their children? If you are a teacher with a passion for mission, then join us on 8 June at our next online Teaching in Mission webinar and discover the crucial part you could play in ensuring mission families can continue in their ministry.

There are different opportunities available, both primary and secondary, in a variety of locations, including large international schools, home-school situations, and even remote teaching. You will also be helping to spread the gospel yourself, primarily to your students, and, depending on your location, to unreached locals as well.

Saturday 8 June 10.00-12.00

To find out more and to sign up go to
eu.aimint.org/teachers

A NORTHWEST ORIENTATION

A short message from Luke Herrin,
AIM International Director

A NEW DIRECTION

While we celebrate what the Lord has done through AIM, the work remains unfinished. It is our vision and passion to see churches established among all African people groups, including those in the North and West of Africa. We believe God is now leading us into West Africa, with a particular emphasis on Niger, Mali, Senegal and the Republic of Guinea. This is not a new vision for AIM, but a new direction flowing from the original 1895 vision.

PIONEERING AND PRAYER

The equatorial countries of West Africa are ethnically mixed and although predominantly Muslim, they are somewhat religiously tolerant. Church and missionary work is allowed, and mission partners are welcome here. The long-term missionary work needed in West Africa will require pioneering and strategic thinking. It will take a careful approach with a great deal of humility and partnerships with those who have gone before us. It will also require the adoption of new methods and strategies to be fruitful. We are looking at how we can partner with churches already in these countries, and considering the role we can play. We ask you to pray with us as we explore this exciting new direction.

GOING TO THE UNREACHED

At the end of Luke 4, we find Jesus in Capernaum, doing powerful kingdom ministry and undoubtedly teaching. As more and more people arrived to receive ministry, the people of Capernaum understandably wanted him to stay, and even wanted to detain him! But Jesus said: “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose.” With this, he moved on to preach in the synagogues of Judea. Jesus left fruitful ministry to go to places that had not yet heard the gospel. There is a lesson for AIM in this.

Our ministry in Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa has been wonderful and fruitful. But some places and nations and peoples have yet to hear the gospel. Our orientation should continue to be to the North and West, and our emphasis should be towards places and people that have no church, no witness, no gospel. This is and will remain the primary role of missions: to bring the gospel to people and places where Jesus is not known.

Please pray for the missionaries venturing into these challenging regions, building partnerships and finding the best ways to reach those who have not yet heard the gospel.

Read more from Luke
and get a free prayer map
eu.aimint.org/north-west



WHAT DO YOU THINK OF CONNECT?



eu.aimint.org/survey

Help us improve Connect magazine by answering three simple questions.

Whether you have been reading the magazine for years or this is your first edition we would love to hear from you. Thank you in advance!



REACH NORTH AND WEST WITH US

28% of the population of Africa are still unreached with the gospel, mainly in the Sahel, North and West countries. Here Islam is the predominant faith, which brings unique challenges and a tiny missionary presence.

Our vision and passion is to see churches established among all African people groups, including those in the North and West of Africa.

PRAY



Pray with us for the Lord of the harvest to send more people to the millions unreached.

GIVE



Your gift can help to take the gospel to these people.

SEND



Can your church send people where there is no church, no witness, no gospel?

GO



Will you pray about how God might be calling you as a gospel bearer?



Partnering with churches • Reaching Africa's unreached

Africa Inland Mission serves and partners with churches to fulfil the Great Commission and advance the gospel among Africans who have the least opportunity to hear about Jesus.

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