



# THE CHALLENGE

June 2021

## Advancing “God’s Talk” FIA in Papua New Guinea

*“This we send to you... Listen well to our talk. Our talk is this: You must send a missionary quick and teach us about God’s talk. Do you want us to go to the place of fire or what? Many, many times we have asked. Please, you are a leader. Open your ear well and this very year you must send us someone to tell us God’s talk of the good place of heaven.”*

– James, a Papuan national from the jungles of Papua New Guinea (PNG)

In a culture steeped in superstition, the truth about Jesus is often entangled with traditional tribal beliefs. Villagers understand and fear the spirit world, and when they hear that there is hope for salvation from the place of fire, they

are desperate for it. Although villagers like James have heard bits about Christianity, they have not had the chance to have the full Gospel explained to them. Villagers request more missionaries through letters, clearing their own airstrips in hopes of attracting a missionary, and some tribes have pooled money in an attempt to “buy” someone to teach them God’s Talk!

PNG remains a country hungry for Jesus, yet there are not enough missionaries to meet the need. The hundreds of unique language groups and the physical challenges of serving in harsh and remote locations make learning the language and sharing the Gospel a marathon task. A task that cannot be accomplished on one’s own.

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## Hands-On Dedication

For more than two decades, FIA has practically supported mission partners throughout the remote northern and eastern regions of PNG. Brandon Buser of Ethnos360 recently shared the significance of FIA's work supporting their ministry to the BIEM people living on the islands off the northern coast:

*"I've had the privilege of serving here in PNG for 15 years now and it's a rough place to minister. The array of skills and capabilities one needs is too much for any single person. Friends in Action has been an incredible asset to our specific church plant, and countless others throughout PNG. To have an organization able to lead in the practical areas of motor mechanics, airstrip building, lumber milling, construction, and so much more...is indispensable to the overall church planting effort. When we were stranded 80 miles from the mainland with a sunken boat, FIA worked to get our boat righted and running...We thank God for the critical role they play in expanding His kingdom here."*



The skills of our PNG team revolve around mechanical support, wood-crafting, airstrip construction and maintenance, materials purchasing, and supply logistics. FIA's ministry is about keeping missionaries connected, operational, and effective in a practical way so they can go further and stay longer to reach the least, the last, and the lost of PNG.



This past year's COVID-19 pandemic has proved challenging but has not stopped FIA ministry work in PNG. Though field leaders Mike and Ruth Butler are in Canada, FIA's national team (Danny, Dominic, Rob, and Esther) have continued faithfully meeting the needs of the missionary community.

A well-equipped mechanical shop means tools are available to diagnose and repair bush vehicles and equipment, boats and boat motors, and airstrip maintenance equipment. Many missionaries are gifted teachers and linguists, but struggle when it comes to the technical requirements of maintaining equipment. Mike (thanks to the wonders of email and virtual technology), Danny, and the team provide these services to keep the lights on, evangelical radio stations broadcasting, and translation equipment running.

**"FIA has been an incredible asset to our specific church plant, and countless others throughout PNG. We thank God for the critical role they play in expanding His kingdom here."**

**— Brandon Buser,  
Ethnos360**



Sawmill and woodshop projects keep Danny and the team occupied with smaller projects such as providing lumber for various missions and furnishings for missionary housing (such as kitchen cabinets, cupboards, and beds). These small essentials are great blessings for missionaries setting up their homes in remote locations and something that makes life a little bit easier and manageable.

## Helping Remote Missionaries Stay Connected

A strong mission partner, Jesse Pryor and his family, (serving with Outreach International PNG-OIPNG), operate a school and medical clinic in a very remote location off of the Sepik River. This work among the ApMa people started almost 30 years ago by his parents, who translated the New Testament into the tribal language. Recent construction of a church/literacy center and subsequent classrooms have contributed to church growth through their mission work.

For Jesse to purchase construction supplies or family essentials, or even to have a reliable signal to contact family back in the States, requires a 12-hour trip by hike, boat, and vehicle over isolated bush roads. Often power outages and inadequate materials in town mean he will not have the materials he needs and can delay his return to his family.

FIA has helped make a difference for the Pryors and the OIPNG ministry. At the FIA mission compound, Jesse has access to a strong internet connection to complete his banking, order parts, connect with distant family, and has an opportunity to take a breath at the “oasis” provided by the mission guest house. The FIA team secures hard-to-find materials such as gravel for construction, services broken equipment, and even “rescued” Jesse when stranded on the side of the road. As Jesse and his family head to the States on furlough, Danny will step up to run supplies for the OIPNG ministry (a 6-hour round-trip) to meet needs in their absence.

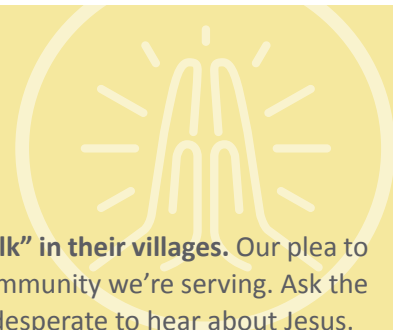
## Thank You!

As FIA works alongside missionaries like the Busers and the Pryors, we are reminded of the unmet needs of other missionaries and other ways FIA could serve to advance Gospel work, if we had sufficient resources and personnel in place to do so. We are thankful for those of you who are praying and supporting our FIA team in PNG, as there is yet more work to be done. ■



# PRAY:

**There are still so many like James who continue to wait for “God’s Talk” in their villages.** Our plea to you is to continue praying for the needs of the growing missionary community we’re serving. Ask the Lord to send more workers and resources to reach these villagers so desperate to hear about Jesus.





# Infiltrating Unreached Muslim Regions: UDG's Satellite Campuses in Tajikistan

After almost a pause of one year due to COVID-19 complications, leaders from The University of Divine Grace, Moldova were able to successfully travel to Tajikistan on an outreach and training mission.

“This is a critical time to be involved in reaching Muslims with the Gospel. Although there is some restriction and some persecution, there is more freedom than before. Now is the time to develop and infiltrate these areas,” shared UDG’s Academic Dean.\*



Since 2009, FIA has partnered with The University Of Divine Grace as a means to impact Central Asia with the Gospel.

In addition to helping with classroom and dormitory construction efforts at UDG’s main campus in Moldova, FIA

assists students through sponsorships of their studies.

Graduates return to “closed” homeland countries equipped to share a biblical worldview in their new positions within business, education, and social work.

FIA is carefully tracking UDG’s exciting venture of expanding impacts through satellite schools in three strategic locations:

- 1 Chimkert, Kazakhstan
- 2 Dushanbe, Tajikistan
- 3 Tobolsk, Siberia Russia

The satellite schools enable UDG to equip students from unreached Muslim communities for The Great Commission through studies in Theology, Missions, Sociology & Counseling, and Business. At each location, 25-30 students participate in hybrid learning which combines online learning (through Moodle) with F2F (face-to-face) sessions. Technology upgrades enable UDG to take biblical training further behind closed borders as well as ensure education continues despite COVID-related interruptions.

## The Pamir People

In March, the Academic Dean and Dean of Social Work spent two weeks teaching 20 students in-person Islamic Theology and Pastoral Ethics sessions at the Dushanbe satellite school in Tajikistan.

In addition, the deans were able to visit a variety of churches and children centers in very remote areas with poor communities. Living on the second-highest mountain only 200 km from

Currently, we have reached

**25%**

of our \$40,000 goal to ensure education funding for

**10 students.**



the border of Afghanistan, the deans obtained special permission to visit the Pamir people. The Pamir do not see themselves as Tajiks, instead identifying themselves through their unique Shia Islamic belief in 7 imams (differing from the 12 accepted by Sunni Muslims). In this less evangelized area strategically located near the Panj River separating Tajikistan from Afghanistan, the professors witnessed the impacts a recent UDG graduate is having among the people.

## Children's Center

Through opening a children's center servicing 18 youth (aged 4 to 17), the graduate is beginning to share Christ among his people. The children sleep, eat three meals, and attend an afterschool program there in which a Bible lesson is shared after homework help each day.

Many of the children are from families headed by single mothers. These women are usually the second wives of their Muslim husbands who were abandoned after they gave birth. Being put out by their husbands means homelessness, poverty, and vulnerability as their children are rejected in their communities.

"There is an immense need for prayer," shared UDG's Academic Dean. "Many new Christian women are not making a distinction between their culture and biblical truth when they marry as a second wife in a Muslim family. Their children are like sponges soaking up what is lived



and heard in front of them. When the children are exposed to good biblical teaching in the center, they have open hearts to God's Word."

The children's center is bringing the hope of Jesus to these struggling families through practical childcare and biblical training.

The university hopes to have satellite-campus students participate in outreaches in the Pamir area this summer. Although public evangelistic campaigns are not possible, students will deliver food boxes door-to-door and run biblically-focused summer camps for the children.

## Looking to the Future

The deans were also very excited to meet with two new young people who desire to study social work and



missions at the satellite campus! What an amazing and successful first trip back to Tajikistan! Further trips are slated in 2021 to continue teaching students at the satellite campus and maintain and encourage outreaches already underway.

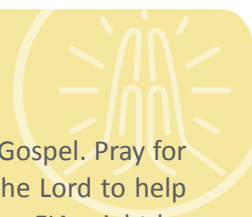
## The provost of The University of Divine Grace sends a special thank you to FIA's supporters:

*"Thank you for praying for UDG, our students coming from Central Asia, our satellite school, and the countries in which we are sharing The Good News. Your commitment to student sponsorship makes such impacts, not only on those who are studying, but also on the countless lives that will be impacted through these students' later work. Thank you for your love and care of the Muslim world."* ■

\*Names have been withheld for safety reasons.

# PRAY:

Please continue to pray for the bold witness of UDG graduates in areas hostile towards the Gospel. Pray for the success of multiple childcare centers specifically in and around the Pamir region. Ask the Lord to help us meet our student sponsorship funding goal and for direction as we begin considering how FIA might be involved in supporting and encouraging the satellite school venture.





# Good News

## Are You Ready for Some Good News For a Change?

At Friends In Action, we've got plenty to share! Our times, like yours, have not been without challenges. We easily identify with Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed..." Despite border closures, detoured plans, and natural disasters, God's Kingdom is advancing.

We are so grateful to serve the One Who works all things together for good and His glory, and Who misses no opportunity to love and redeem. Thank you for lending your prayers and giving to see tangible demonstrations of our Great God on display in the hidden places of the globe. Never underestimate what God is doing through you!



## Jesus Amid Lockdown: FIA IN BOLIVIA

*"During the lockdown, I turned the radio on for information. I happened upon Inspiración and listened. Not only did I hear important updates, but I learned there was hope even in the pandemic. I kept listening as teachings from the Bible explained how Jesus offered eternal life. I did not have to fear COVID or dying because heaven is waiting for me. The radio has been a lifeline of encouragement to our family and village."*

—Mateo, Bolivian villager

Mateo and more than 200,000 villagers hear God's Word 24/7 in Spanish, Portuguese, and the Pacaas Novas languages in remote areas of Bolivia and Brazil thanks to FM *Inspiración* Christian radio.

Friends In Action was able to help build the radio's tower in 2006, and we continue supporting repairs to keep broadcasts expanding.

In His sovereignty, before the pandemic, God enabled FIA to partner with national pastors who delivered hundreds of handheld Galcon radios door-to-door in some of the villages now hardest hit by the virus.

Thank you for enabling this amazing tool of the Gospel to bring life-saving and life-changing information to more than 200 different unreached people groups in the region.

**"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news..."**

—Isaiah 52:7a





## Prepared To Share: FIA IN “CLOSED” COUNTRIES

Nomadic tribal people from remote mountains of Kyrgyzstan have an opportunity to hear about Jesus, as Nora returns to her homeland. Nora, a native of Kyrgyzstan, was able to graduate from the University of Divine Grace in Moldova thanks, in part, to FIA’s student sponsors.

*“Without the financial help, I would not have been able to complete my studies in Missions. Even though the area of my home is predominantly Muslim, the Gospel is being accepted by the children and Syrian and Iraqi refugees that I am serving.”*

—Nora, University of Divine Grace graduate

As a refugee worker, Nora shares the love of Christ in very tangible ways through food distribution and prayer with traumatized people. “My studies at UDG prepared me to be the hands and feet of Jesus. I am glad I can serve in this way,” shares Nora.



## Building Continues: FIA IN NICARAGUA

By practicing and teaching previously learned construction skills, indigenous Rama people continue **building homes** and making progress on a **laundry/shower house** in their community.

**Intensive discipleship** also continues through missionaries on the ground and by phone to enable Rama leaders to teach the chronological teaching of the Bible in their native language to the people.

*“I am so encouraged that you in the States love us, that there are Christians who take seriously the words of Jesus when he says, ‘Go and make disciples in all the world,’ and not just in the four corners of your own church. But you pray and you give financially to us on the island. More than a year ago, some women came to teach the children, and even now, the children are still coming for more training. We are so grateful that you help us to keep reaching our people, the Rama Cay, and hope that more will come to know Jesus as Savior as they see that the projects come to them from the Most High.”*

—Demry, Rama Cay Bible teacher



## New Possibilities: FIA IN VANUATU

*“I used to think that the witch doctor was right about the spirits, that they held the power over the water and the weather. I was always very scared to anger them for fear of what would happen, so when the cyclone hit, I thought we caused it. But when the missionaries came with rice and fish, I listened when they talked about Jesus calming storms and having the power over all the other spirits.”*

—Alani, NiVan villager

**Gardens, homes, and hope is being rebuilt in Vanuatu as villagers have begun recovery efforts after Cyclone Harold leveled their communities in April 2020.** National Pastor Gabi looks forward to preaching to 3,500 people as FIA fundraising efforts will bring **clean water** opening 30 more villages to the Gospel.



## Carrying The Work Forward: FIA IN PNG

*“Danny and the national workers are doing a tremendous job in our absence. The woodshop is running, missionaries continue to be serviced, equipment is still being maintained and repaired, and they still do devotions every morning together. Isn’t this such a beautiful picture of discipleship? They continue God’s work among their people.”*

–FIA’s field leaders in Papua New Guinea

While some FIA field leaders are still homebound due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, God has provided a unique opportunity for indigenous leaders to carry on the Great Commission efforts started in their midst.

From benefitting missionaries through supply runs to faithfully milling lumber used in later construction projects, **years of previous discipleship are bearing fruit** as PNG national workers step forward to ensure kingdom work continues.



## Building Relationships: FIA IN AFRICA

**The first wells have been drilled in the new region of Africa in which FIA now serves.** Key leaders, as well as equipment, are in position as construction continues on our base camp of operations. As the work progresses, the relationships which will be the bedrock of reaching the people are developing between our field leaders and the villagers.

*“Babakar is a local farmer near FIA’s camp. When he saw us pulling up in the truck, word traveled fast, and he tore up on his motorbike to invite us home to meet his Muslim family and extended family. They were more friendly than most, especially his wife. She was so excited for us to be there, and her daughters eagerly engaged in conversation which isn’t always the norm. Our next steps will include bringing some baked goods as a gesture of appreciation as well as spending time talking over tea or coffee. Their quick welcome is definitely an answer to prayer and evidence of God at work already!”*

– FIA field leader in Africa

These are just a handful of the testimonies that you’ve helped make possible in the first quarter of this year. Thank you for praying and giving to see more Good News created through life-changing, ground-breaking, and Kingdom-expanding Great Commission work in the far-flung regions of the globe. ■

2021 FINANCIAL GOALS BY FIELD		
Field	Financial Goal	Already Raised
Africa	\$117,000	21%
Bolivia	\$53,000	29%
Moldova	\$50,000	17%
Nicaragua	\$61,000	43%
Papua New Guinea	\$72,000	25%
Vanuatu	\$204,000	5%



**FRIENDS  
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INTERNATIONAL

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