



# *the* CHALLENGE

MOVING EARTH TO SHARE HEAVEN OCTOBER 2025

**Papua New Guinea**  
The Eternal Effect of  
Partnerships:  
FULFILLING OUR PURPOSE

**Partnership from  
a Leadership  
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# Partnership from a Leadership Perspective

KOEN VERDONCK, CHRISTIAN RETREAT CENTER CONNECT

“But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” – **Hebrews 3:13 (KJV)**

For the past two decades, I have served in various mission leadership roles with Ethnos360/ New Tribes Mission (NTM) in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In these positions, one of my primary responsibilities has been to **encourage, motivate, and empower** team members so they can be effective in their ministry for the Lord.

**Empowering**, however, does not happen in isolation. In this process, meaningful partnerships become essential, providing team members with access to resources, expertise, skills, and experience that our own organization cannot offer. Too often in missions, there is a tendency to look only inward for solutions, rather than seeking the help and support of other organizations.

Over the years, Friends In Action (FIA) has been one of those invaluable partners. They have provided expertise in areas

such as diesel generators, equipment purchasing, bush building projects, shipping, and other highly technical needs. Beyond their knowledge, FIA has also sent skilled teams. These teams allow the missionaries to stay focused on Ethnos360/NTM's primary objective: planting churches in the remote regions of PNG.

The construction of a new hangar for Ethnos360's aviation program in PNG best illustrates this partnership. Without strong partnerships, a project of this scale would have been nearly impossible. Several Christian mission organizations came together to make it happen; local missions provided manpower and equipment, an international group contributed technical engineering drawings, another sent a team to pour the foundation and cement pad, and FIA supplied a team to erect the 20-foot-high steel structure.

This new hangar is a tremendous blessing. All active aircraft are housed under one roof while freeing up the older hangar for maintenance work. Our engineers are excited about the additional space, and our pilots are grateful for improved access to the aircraft. In a country like PNG, where aviation is a lifeline for the missionaries in remote areas, this facility directly strengthens the work of the gospel.

Even more important than the physical blessing is the spiritual **encouragement** these partnerships bring. Working side by side in the fellowship of Christ, sharing testimonies of God's faithfulness, and seeing His people united in a common purpose deeply **motivates** both the team and the missionaries. Partnerships like these are a beautiful expression of the unity in Christ. His body works together so that His name may be glorified among the nations. ■



**KOEN VERDONCK**, for the past decade, has led the NTM aviation program in PNG as CEO, serving with Ethnos360 and partnering closely with Friends In Action (FIA). His leadership has strengthened the mission's capacity to advance the Gospel, and he has seen the powerful results of God's people working together in unity. In April 2025, Koen and his family concluded their overseas ministry with Ethnos360 and returned to Europe. Today, they serve through Christian Retreat Center Connect, offering care and encouragement to Christians in ministry.



# Double Your Dollars By Being "ALL IN" With FIA!

Believing that God is calling each of us to make Jesus known, we are carving out 24 hours to focus on being ALL IN on Great Commission work! This year's ALL IN Give represents more than just a fundraising campaign—it's a celebration of how God uses ordinary people with extraordinary commitment to advance His kingdom worldwide.

Enjoy these powerful testimonies of people who exemplify being ALL IN and discover three ways you too can join FIA in this mission!

**JOIN US ON  
FRIDAY,  
NOV. 21, 2025**

#### **ALL IN SPIRITUALLY:**

Take time to pray for FIA's global partnerships and unreached people groups.

#### **ALL IN PRACTICALLY:**

Join a short-term mission trip or volunteer at our headquarters—discover how God can use your skills for kingdom purposes.

#### **ALL IN FINANCIALLY:**

Every dollar donated will be doubled, with processing fees waived—help us reach our \$50,000 goal.

**VISIT [FIAINTL.ORG/GIVE](https://fiaintl.org/give)  
OR SCAN WITH YOUR PHONE:**



## **Ryan & Brandyn, Young Volunteers | ALL IN SPIRITUALLY**

When Ryan Hottenstein, 18, and Brandyn Myers, 20, served in Vanuatu, they expected to make a difference but didn't anticipate how God would transform them. "I was at a low point in my spiritual growth," Brandyn shared. Through consistent devotions and studying James together, both young men developed habits that continue today. Ryan admitted the trip pushed him out of his comfort zone spiritually, but seeing God work through their welding skills to support mission infrastructure helped them understand that "you get to use your hands to spread the Gospel."

## **Rachel McKeehan, Texas | ALL IN PRACTICALLY**

Rachel McKeehan went ALL IN, serving on three FIA trips across three continents in one year. From the hot, humid conditions of Nicaragua where "every gallon of water is carried in buckets to the job site," to domestically serving Ethnos360 in Missouri, to the remote islands of Vanuatu—Rachel has embodied Isaiah 6:8's heart cry of "Here am I; send me."

Using her diverse skills in construction, electrical work, plumbing, and Spanish translation, Rachel joined us as an FIA Associate Member. "I am willing and hoping to go on six trips next time and as the Lord leads," she explains. Her commitment demonstrates how God uses willing hearts and practical skills to build His kingdom.

## **Gwen Goodrich | ALL IN FINANCIALLY**

After a legacy of missionary work in Papua New Guinea, Gwen understood that Great Commission passion doesn't end with our earthly lives. When Gwen was no longer able to be a "Goer," her generous giving to FIA and thoughtful planned giving designations in her will still empower FIA's work in Africa, Papua New Guinea, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Vanuatu. Today, as she watches down from heaven her legacy inspires future generations of givers who are ALL IN. ■



VANUATU



# CHARTING A NEW COURSE FORWARD

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." – John 4:14 (KJV)

RANDY SCHNIEDERS | PROJECT SUPERVISOR

While Jesus spoke of spiritual truth in John 4:14 when He promised "living water," we understand that drilling water wells opens doors for ministry work in Vanuatu, providing opportunities to teach people about Jesus Christ, the true Living Water.

Friends in Action (FIA) has been partnering with Pastor Gaby and local village leaders in Vanuatu for several years, working toward the dream of bringing clean, accessible water to remote communities across Espiritu Santo Island. **The project serves approximately 3,500 people across 25-30 villages, including schools and clinics, in an area where families currently walk two to three hours round-trip to collect water.**

## Assessment and Adaptation

Recently, I led a comprehensive reassessment team to evaluate the project's progress and determine the path forward. **What we discovered required a complete strategic pivot from our original plans.**

**Doug Jarvie, our water systems engineer, believes five wells will be adequate to serve the entire region.**

When we went up in 2024, we found that the original water source was still there, but a new water source had sprung up. A major earthquake had caused the mountain to open up, and that ravine now became a lake. The possibility of crossing that with any equipment or pipe wasn't going to happen.

This geological transformation forced us to abandon our original plan to pipe water from a single mountain spring. Instead, we've

adopted a well-drilling strategy that now promises greater sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

## The New Plan

Working with locally provided electromagnetic pulse equipment, our team conducted a dozen test probes throughout the target area. The results were encouraging—there are large pockets of water at every location we tested. Doug Jarvie, our water systems engineer, believes five wells will be adequate to serve the entire region.

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Our comprehensive village-by-village survey collected detailed data on elevations, populations, existing water sources, and water quality across the service area. Originally projected to take five days, we completed the assessment in just two days due to exceptional cooperation from village leaders and Pastor Gaby's network.

The new approach offers significant advantages. **By changing to well drilling, we make it more sustainable, but we also cut our costs.** The project eliminates the need for expensive runs of six-inch and four-inch pipe that would have been required for the mountain source, redirecting those funds toward well installation instead.

### Moving Forward

The project infrastructure centers around two 75,000-gallon storage tanks that FIA has already purchased. We now have at least three strategic locations identified for tank placement. The wells will pump water into these tanks,

which will then be distributed to individual villages through smaller distribution lines.

**Current projections indicate we can complete the drilling phase within a single dry season.** We estimate that the drilling process will take three to four days per well, with four wells definitely achievable in one season and possibly all five. Fortunately, the government drill rig is already operating on the island, eliminating previous logistical concerns about equipment transportation.

### God's Provision

Throughout the evolution of this project, we've witnessed God's faithful provision. He provided Christian engineers Jim Boyer and Doug Jarvie, who donated their expertise. Government approvals are secured and material exemptions granted. **Most remarkably, He prepared the hearts of village leaders who welcome our teams with extraordinary hospitality.** ■



# LIVING OFF THE GRID: Ethnos360 Training Center

PAUL BROSEY | FACILITY & GROUNDS MANAGER, USA



"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." – Galatians 5:13 (KJV)

**S**erving in the mission field comes with real-world challenges, including navigating unfamiliar environments and securing essential supplies. Workers often overlook the hurdles when they prepare to enter the jungle to minister to those who are unreached.

Living off-grid offers a distinctive experience that varies depending on the location. Typically, this means that access to electricity is limited or nonexistent. Food must be either flown in, hunted, or grown locally, and water must be purified for safe drinking. Off-grid living involves stepping away from the conveniences of modern



civilization as experienced in the Western world. Your support makes this journey possible for believers who are willing to face these challenges.

## The Training Center

In preparing their students for living off-grid, Ethnos360 established a training facility in Missouri more than 50 years ago. From cross-cultural church planting to understanding culture, language learning, and off-grid technology, the training facility equips students to communicate and minister abroad effectively. Like most things after 50 years, the facility began to need major repairs to its buildings and student housing.

## Bringing in FIA

Due to a limited staff and maintenance crew, Ethnos needed assistance with major remodeling and construction projects on the property. Although they have a decent number of work-team volunteers who come throughout the year, most of them are general laborers and can only help with a limited number of projects. As a partner organization of FIA, I believe this presents an excellent opportunity for FIA to support Ethnos in deploying workers into the field, aligning with our mission to reach the unreached.

## Partnering in Kingdom Work

Over the years, I've been blessed to lead several teams to Missouri while

training new team leaders to serve. One skilled HVAC technician, Mark Hoffman, has become a team lead for us. Sometimes his schedule doesn't always align with the trip schedules of FIA. But because of our unique relationship with Ethnos, Mark can schedule directly with Ethnos and go out when they need him. Our trips allow us to provide assisted labor for Ethnos, but we have also been able to successfully connect skilled laborers to their team directly.

## Special Projects

One of the most recent projects we did for Ethnos was to deconstruct, ship, and then reconstruct a greenhouse from their Florida headquarters to the Missouri training facility. The Ethnos team is now using this greenhouse to train their students in growing plants using a hydroponic method—a soil-less system that uses less water, which can be crucial depending on the area they are serving.

A project we worked on last winter involved a facility with a guest house that had frozen pipes. This issue wasn't detected until the pipes burst. Thirty bedrooms in this guest house were gutted to the frame, resulting in a complete remodel. We aided in this process by deploying several teams throughout the year to perform tasks such as breaking up the floor with jackhammers, installing drywall, and completing trim work, among other necessary tasks.

## Expanding the Sphere of Influence

What makes our connection to Ethnos360 special is that I can introduce students I meet at trade schools to our work in Missouri and the field of mission work. While we may offer maintenance assistance on the surface, we are actually connecting key people with Ethnos who have an interest in missions and may be critical in helping them in the field.

The Ethnos360 training facility has trained hundreds of international workers over the years. It has been a true blessing for us to assist in getting these workers out into the field and off the grid. You might not see "Friends in Action" in their literature, but we are there to support the foundational work they are accomplishing with these workers. Our goal is to help them reach the unreached people groups of the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■



“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

– Ephesians 4:11-13(KJV)

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

# THE ETERNAL EFFECT OF PARTNERSHIPS

# FULFILLING OUR PURPOSE

“

*I'll never forget walking around our island and seeing our brand-new boat drifting belly-up in the ocean.*

*This was our team's only transportation to civilization on the mainland! I called Mike on the radio, but I had little faith that he could salvage a tragedy of this magnitude.*

*I'm sure he heard the panic in my voice, but he was quintessential Mike, steady as could be.*

*Ruth held down the fort at base camp. Mike dropped everything to hop on a boat that day, traveling 80 miles of open ocean to assist us.*

*The next day, God used Mike's expertise to perform a miracle and revive our ocean-drowned engine in less than an hour.*

*For 18 years, Mike, Ruth, and the Friends in Action (FIA) team have been only a radio call away.*

*We thank the Lord for how He has used them to bring the gospel to our remote people group."*

– Brandon Buser, Biem Island Church Planter

A recurring theme in The Challenge this past year is the collaborative stories of our Kingdom work, like this account of the capsized boat. These stories are a testament to the partnerships that have been developed over the many years of FIA serving remote locations. They bring to life the amazing ways God is working through FIA, other ministries, and missionaries to bring Him glory.

For Mike and Ruth Butler, FIA Field leaders serving in Papua New Guinea (PNG), the relationship with their partners runs deep. According to them, "It's been an absolute blessing and privilege to serve and assist our partners as they seek to share the gospel through their various ministries. These partnerships are the reason why we are here."

The Butlers answered the call 27 years ago to serve abroad, reflecting Jesus' call to service and sacrifice two thousand years ago. Stories abound of God's hands at work through their faithful efforts and their partners. The following narratives exemplify how FIA's practical service and faithfulness to God have a profound effect on the gospel ministry of our partners, who, in turn, bless FIA.

## Pointing Others to Christ

As our light shines, reflecting God's character, love, and truth, others see the good things He is doing. Alongside our partners, our actions are pointing others to Christ.

In the East Sepik Province, Joseph and Amy Anderson, independent Baptist missionaries, have known the Butlers



**MIKE & RUTH BUTLER**  
FIELD LEADERS, PAPUA NEW GUINEA



**JOSEPH & AMY ANDERSON**  
MISSIONARIES, PAPUA NEW GUINEA



personally for 20 years. The Andersons have received significant assistance from the Butlers and FIA, including vehicle and generator repairs, hauling materials and supplies, providing safe storage of household items during furloughs, and advice on construction and power generation projects. This practical support has been instrumental in sustaining them during critical times of great need, allowing them to continue their mission work.

"Their able assistance has allowed us to continue in our endeavors to reach lost souls with the saving gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and to support the growth of believers and churches here in PNG," said the Andersons.

As part of the Asian Pacific mission field, LAIF FM Wewak radio station, operated by UCB PNG, seeks to reach more



souls through a Christian radio ministry. "FIA built bungalows and a shower and laundry facility for our volunteers," said Isaac Fingu, manager. "They also keep our 20kva generator running by servicing it every 200 hours of running time." Currently, FIA is assisting with the installation of solar power to keep the radio station operating in times of electric service disruption.

Grant Kennedy, of LAIF FM based in Australia, is grateful that FIA is on the ground in PNG: "To the local people who are passionate to see the gospel spread, radio technology, generator maintenance, and solar panels are foreign concepts. Our small teams in Brisbane, Australia, rarely get to visit PNG. We rely heavily on skilled local ministry teams to help our UCB PNG team on the ground. Over the years, Isaac has developed a fantastic relationship with Mike, Ruth, and FIA. This relationship has enabled the ministry to grow."

## Encouraging Our Mission Partners

Opportunities to partner enable us to share our faith and the powerful Word of God boldly. God uses the Butlers to encourage our missionary partners with their love and compassion and their gifts and talents to turn challenges into opportunities to glorify Him.

Thomas Depner, a young missionary with NTM and Biem Church Planter, has little mechanical experience. He can't count the times he has called Mike for help, often at a moment's notice, to keep their equipment going. More importantly, Thomas said, "What I like best, though, is that our times together are always laced with encouragement from the Word. Mike keeps his calm in the perfect storm, and that stems from his relationship with the Lord. Can't ask for a better friend or co-worker."

Recently, FIA played a critical role assisting Samaritan Aviation, which is dredging a river eddy in the Gulf Province to build a floating dock near a rural hospital. "On one occasion, our team contacted Mike when the dredger would

## GOOD NEWS

### NEW TESTAMENT DEDICATION ON BIEM ISLAND

**In June, a dedication of the New Testament was held on Biem Island. The wonderful people of PNG now have God's Word in their own language!**

**After 15 years of labor by missionaries, consultants, and faithful Biem believers, 7,957 verses were translated and 700 copies were printed in Taiwan. With no written words in the Biem language at the start, the process required perseverance through setbacks, late nights, and countless revisions. Many Biem believers contributed to the translation process and eagerly learned to read so they could engage God's Word.**

**The Biem Church asks us to pray for "God to get the big name." To God be the glory!**

not start. Thanks to his wealth of diesel engine experience, he coached us through getting it started again. When the dredger was out of commission due to a broken block pulley, FIA sent us an assortment of pulleys so we could continue the dredging work," said Tim Askew, Samaritan Aviation Wewak.



Samaritan Aviation is thankful, however, not only for FIA's timely technical support but also for the encouragement they bring, knowing that Mike, Ruth, and the team are standing alongside their organization and willing to help at all costs as they work together to bring God's love to the remote communities of PNG.

"For Samaritan Aviation, the staff at FIA have been an amazing resource as we began to establish and grow a ministry in PNG, whether it's fixing a critical part, lending a needed tool, or just taking the time to pray with us for God's provision, protection, and guidance," said Chris Cooke. "They consistently model that the body of Christ is made up of many parts working in harmony to accomplish the work of sharing Christ and making disciples."

### FIA's Unique Role

FIA's vision is to see every tribe, tongue, people, and nation declare Jesus as Lord! We don't accomplish this by learning local languages, church planting, and discipleship. Our strength lies in bridging the gap between practical, everyday needs and the work of missionaries who preach the gospel, share their faith, and assist communities in need.

Mike and Ruth love the friendships they have with their missionary partners: "We're able to be part of many tribal works and peoples' lives through our mechanical support and other areas of logistics and assistance. Knowing that these practical acts of service are making a difference for eternity is a huge blessing, and we're so grateful to be a part of it all!"

We feel the pleasure of the Lord when we accomplish what God has asked us to do. Mike and Ruth represent the men and women who are willing to go, serve, and sacrifice so that others may continue their works in the villages and communities. It is the fulfillment of our purpose. It is why we exist. ■



# 2026 TRIP OPPORTUNITIES

A short-term trip can be an adventure of a lifetime! On a trip with FIA, you'll see the work of God on the mission field, be a blessing to another culture, and discover how your skills can help further the Gospel. Use your trade skills to help make Christ known by volunteering on one (or more) of FIA's upcoming trips.

## DOMESTIC

### MISSOURI | March

- Renovations to buildings and student housing at the Ethnos360 training center with LeTourneau University students.
- Need general laborers.

## INTERNATIONAL

### WELL DRILLING

#### WEST AFRICA | January, February & March

- Drilling water wells to support partner ministries.
- Need general laborers and manpower.

#### NICARAGUA | March & April

- Well drilling, construction and community development.
- Need well drillers, general construction, and plumbers.

#### MEXICO | April & November

- Well drilling to support partner mission or hospital mission outreach in the mountainous communities, supplying water to community, church and pastor homes/mission stations.
- Need well drillers and general laborers.

### CONSTRUCTION

#### WEST AFRICA | April

- Intern house construction (interior finishes).
- Need electrician, plumbers, painters, and ceiling workers.

#### WEST AFRICA | May

- Construct a new roof structure for a steel fabrication workshop and national training area (steel-reinforced trusses), closing in the roof and sides while keeping ends open for airflow.
- Need welders, fabricators, and ironworkers.

#### NICARAGUA | February / March / April (2 weeks)

- Masonry, plumbing and community center development project (construction).
- Need masons, plumbers and general construction workers.

### CONSTRUCTION, CONT'D

#### UGANDA | April & June (2 weeks)

- General construction of a coffee shop.
- Need masons, drywallers, and steel construction workers.

### MECHANICS

#### VANUATU | April & September (2 weeks)

- Servicing/maintaining mission vehicles, water equipment, and generators essential for water project operations and local outreach.
- Need mechanics.

#### MEXICO | April (3 weeks) & November (2 weeks)

- Vehicle/equipment maintenance for mission hospital and community outreach equipment.
- Need mechanics.

### MAINTENANCE

#### WEST AFRICA | June/July

- Maintenance & service of well drilling equipment.
- Need mechanics.

### SPECIAL WATER PROJECT

#### VANUATU | June (2 weeks)

- **Surveyors Trip:** Complete a detailed on-site ground survey (GPS) of the routing and distribution network of the Vanuatu Water Project (rugged terrain); experienced surveyors needed (2).

#### VANUATU | June & August (3 weeks)

- Excavation & mining of base aggregate to be used throughout the Water Project
- Need truck driver (1), equipment operators (2), general laborer (1).



SCAN TO LEARN MORE  
ABOUT TRIPS:  
[FIAintl.org/get-involved](https://FIAintl.org/get-involved)

## Seeking Project Managers



FIA receives requests from partner missions to engage in both short-term and ongoing project management services to support construction and expansion projects.

We are looking for experienced managers willing to serve anywhere from two weeks to 12 months (single deployment or multiple deployments) based on the needs of the projects.

For more information, contact Andy Bachert, U.S. Chief Operating Officer, at [andybachert@fiintl.org](mailto:andybachert@fiintl.org)

## Seeking Full-Time International Workers



Is the Lord leading you to jump all-in to serve alongside our mission partners as a full-time international worker? Our team is growing, and we are ready to welcome you!

For more information and to start the conversation:

Canadians, email [FIA-CAN@fiintl.org](mailto:FIA-CAN@fiintl.org)  
Americans, email [FIA-USA@fiintl.org](mailto:FIA-USA@fiintl.org)

Open postings include Well Drilling (West Africa), Builder (Papua New Guinea & Vanuatu), Mechanic (West Africa & Papua New Guinea), Sustainable Income Project Developer (Bolivia), Farm Manager (Vanuatu)



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