

Open*Doors* NEWSLETTER

Persecuted  But never alone.

See how your prayers
and gifts encouraged
persecuted Christians
in 2019

P. 5

**JULY/
AUGUST
2020**

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You're helping keep North Korean Christians alive



Representative image used.

As the world has been gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic, North Korea still hasn't reported any cases of people being infected with the virus. Meanwhile, the country remains totally shut off from the world in a desperate attempt not to "import" the virus.

The impact of a pandemic like this would be disastrous for citizens already living in dire circumstances under the regime, which is plagued with starvation and a weak health system.

Kim Sang-Hwa* knows all too well what life is like in North Korea, especially for Christians. She was only 12 when she discovered her parents' faith and made the dangerous decision to not report them to the authorities. She became a secret believer and joined the incredible underground church.

We asked her what it's like being a secret believer in this country, and this is what she said:

"Where I live now, I can choose to go to church or not. In North Korea that's very different. You give up your life if you follow Jesus. You have to be ready to die for your faith every day."


Hundreds of North Korean Christians are serving Christ daily, irrespective of the

costs. But they're struggling to survive as they face food shortages with it being difficult to source something as simple as rice. *"Real rice in North Korea is often not possible. At least not where I lived. Most rice would go to Pyongyang anyway."*

Food is vital in keeping the Church alive as with it, the Church can thrive even in the most hostile and dangerous circumstances.

Thankfully, through our networks in China and your support, we're able to provide Christians from North Korea with much-needed aid.

"They're 'grateful that you don't forget us in your prayers,' says a North Korean church leader. 'We have a saying that a house costs 800 gold pieces, but a good neighbour is worth 1 000 gold pieces. However, what you do for us is worth more than 10 000 gold pieces. We're so thankful that God has made you our brother or our sister.'"

Thank you for your continued prayers and support for our brothers and sisters from North Korea. Your support is incredibly important to feed thousands of families and keep the Church alive. And your prayers help them to stand strong – in the face of extreme persecution and the new increased risk to their lives from the pandemic. 

*Name changed for security purposes.



**IN THE
TRENCHES**

Samson has joy because of his faith in Jesus

For many years, Samson* (60) and his family believed in Buddha and tried their best to be good. *"When I was a Buddhist, I did good in many ways. I thought I was good enough. [That] my life was enough for salvation,"* Samson shared.

But when a pastor shared the Good News of Jesus with Samson in 2017, he realised that he couldn't try to earn his own salvation. Samson and his family gave their lives to Jesus. But putting their faith in Jesus had consequences.

Soon after their conversion, a mob surrounded their house, stoned it and even tried to burn them alive inside it. *"You better die, or we will kill you. We will burn you!"* the mob screamed.

Thankfully, Samson and his family survived the ordeal relatively unscathed. *"Though we were persecuted, we didn't die."* Despite everything that has happened, Samson says: *"I have peace. I'm happy. I have joy. This is my Christian life."*

Pray for protection and sustenance for the many believers like Samson in Asia, who face danger for becoming Christians. Pray for comfort and shelter, and that Open Doors' local partners will be able to reach those most in need of support.

*Name changed for security purposes.

Christians demonstrate the love of Christ – thanks to you

In Asian countries where the main religion is Buddhism and animism, it's believed that Christians bring bad karma or anger the spirits because of their faith.

In Laos, where communism, Buddhism and animism live side by side, Christianity is seen as a religion from America, an enemy of the country. So, when Anya and many people in his communist village gave their lives to Christ, they were seen as traitors.

Many of them were thrown into jail, including Anya and his father. Some were shackled together and left in the scorching sun. One Christian was even *"tied with a rope and hung upside down in a tree. The soldiers poured big red ants all over his body. He was suspended for about an hour,"* says Anya.

In countries like Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Myanmar, where animism can't be separated from Buddhism, Christians are also met with hostility.

In Myanmar, for example, sharing the Gospel has put Pastor Joshua* in danger. Pastor Joshua, who comes from an animist background but grew up amongst many Buddhists, has seen many people come to faith under his ministry. But not everyone is happy about it.

He shared the Gospel with Mimi*, a Buddhist high priestess and spirit worshipper. When she gave her life to Christ, her husband tried to stab Pastor Joshua, and he had to run for his life. He's had to flee many times because people want to kill him for sharing the Gospel.

Thanks to your support Anya and Pastor Joshua can practically demonstrate the love of Christ to those around them. Anya received training as a health care volunteer, which he uses to help the people in his tribe. Your support enabled Pastor Joshua to receive persecution preparedness training and become a certified persecution preparedness trainer, so he can teach other persecuted believers important biblical skills to endure persecution.

Thank you! Please continue to stand with believers like Anya and Pastor Joshua in Asia and beyond.

*Names changed for security reasons.

Animism is the belief that inanimate objects and places in nature have spirits. Followers of this religion pray and sacrifice to spirits believed to live in rocks, rivers, trees, etc.

What is animism?



Representative image used.

IMPACT REPORT 2019

**"Remember those... who
are mistreated, since you
also are in the body."
Hebrews 13:3 (ESV)**

See how your prayers and gifts encouraged persecuted Christians in 2019...



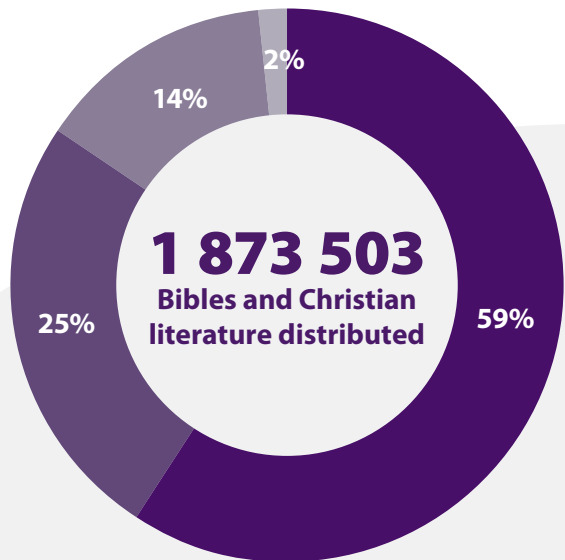
You placed God's Word in believers' hands

Your partnership ensured that Bible delivery continued to be at the heart of Open Doors' ministry in 2019.

The Bible is illegal in many countries, making it extremely difficult to get a copy. **You helped supply millions of believers with a Bible – even in the world's most dangerous places – like the Persian Gulf and other restricted nations.**

One group of Bible smugglers taking God's Word to the Middle East reported: *"We travelled with half our suitcases full of Arab Bibles."* They handed over these valuable "presents" from friends like you to local churches and said: *"It was moving to be part of a church service with about 80 believers, all coming from a Muslim background."*

The Word of God not only leads people to salvation in Jesus, it also comforts persecuted believers in times of fear and crisis – thanks to your support!



- **59%** Christian literature and resources
- **25%** Training materials
- **14%** Bibles
- **2%** Other (Preproduction, equipment, etc.)

"We are grateful for the Christian literature that we regularly receive... We now have enough in Arabic and French. Thank you that you help us."

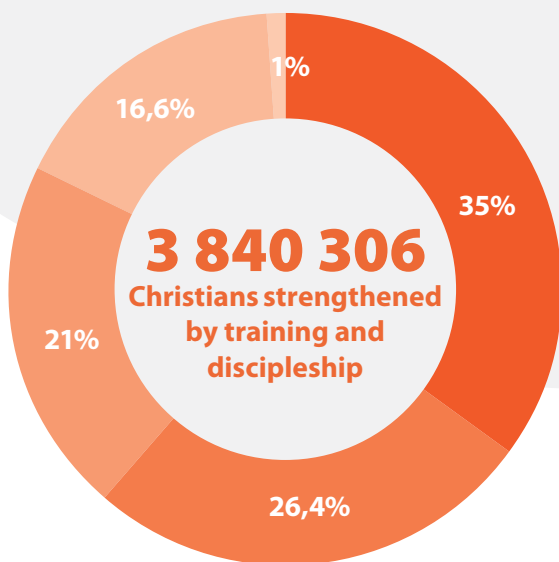
– Church leader, Middle East

You equipped the Church to grow strong

When individuals, families and congregations face fierce persecution for their faith, there's always a risk that they'll walk away from Jesus.

You helped strengthen vulnerable believers by providing discipleship training, persecution preparation and trauma recovery seminars. You also helped equip more church leaders through theological and pastoral training.

Samir is one of the new church leaders you helped train in Algeria. *"The training helped me to know God better,"* he says. *"I can start to use the talents God gave me to serve my brothers and sisters and be more effective in His Kingdom."*



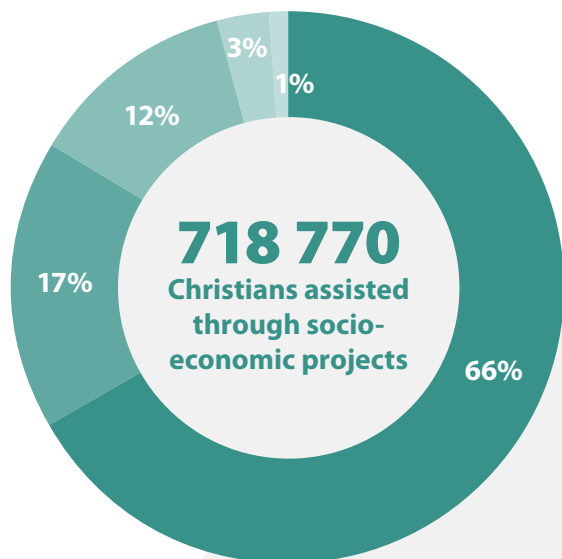
- 35% Bible trainings
- 26,4% Other
- 21% Discipleship trainings
- 16,6% Persecution preparedness trainings
- 1% Trauma counseling

"The training helped me know God better."

– Samir, Algeria



You empowered believers like Lalita to survive



- 66% Relief aid
- 17% Community development
- 12% Social services
- 3% Livelihood
- 2% Other

“Now thankfully, I can be a professional tailor and earn [more] to support my family.” – Lalita, India

You helped many impoverished Christians become self-sufficient in 2019 including Christian widows, believers forced from their homes and other victims of persecution.

Through small loans, Bible-based literacy and vocational training, you empowered hard-pressed believers to earn an income and restored their independence and dignity.

You helped equip persecuted believers like Lalita in India, by training them in tailoring. She says: *“I have three children and my husband is a daily-wages labourer. After becoming Christians, we have been socially boycotted and discriminated against in our community. I am not well educated, so I could only work as a domestic helper which doesn’t pay well. Now thankfully, I can be a professional tailor and earn [more] to support my family.”*

In other places, believers learned farming, carpentry, hairdressing and other skills. Your generous support helped families build a stable future!

You comforted believers in distress

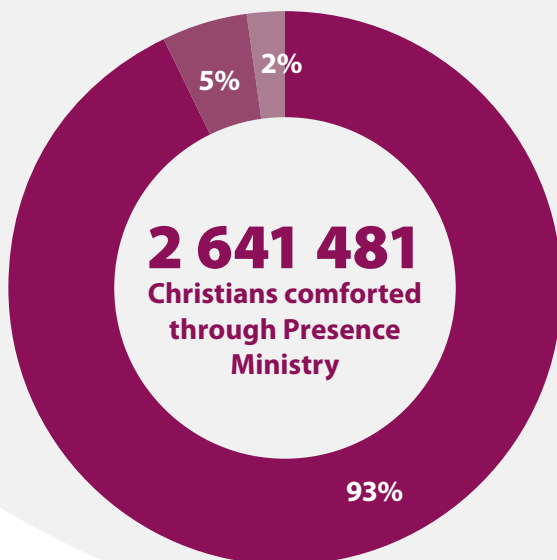
– *like the bomb victims in Sri Lanka*

In times of tragedy and distress, what you need most of all is to know you're never alone. That's the comfort you've provided for hurting believers in 2019.

Through face-to-face visits, letters and cards, you provided the physical contact our brothers and sisters need in a time of crisis. You sent Open Doors co-workers to physically sit with believers in their homes, pray for them and comfort them.

After the tragic Easter Sunday bombing in Sri Lanka last year, Pastor Roshan expressed his deep gratitude for friends like you coming alongside the Zion Church and shining a light in such dark times. Every letter, every word of encouragement and every prayer has reached their hearts and it has blessed them deeply. He asked us to share this message with you:

"I want to take this opportunity to thank each one of you. I don't know you personally, but the Lord knows you. In our time of lacking, we had nobody on our side. You all came by our side."



- 93% Support/Assistance
- 5% Presence Ministry
- 2% Relief/Aid

"Sri Lanka has forgotten us, but you haven't." – Pastor Roshan, Sri Lanka



You spoke up for the voiceless

In many countries, governing authorities persecute believers – but you helped generate campaigns to expose religious oppression worldwide.

You also advocated for believers like Imeldo with urgently needed legal assistance to defend their freedom and faith.

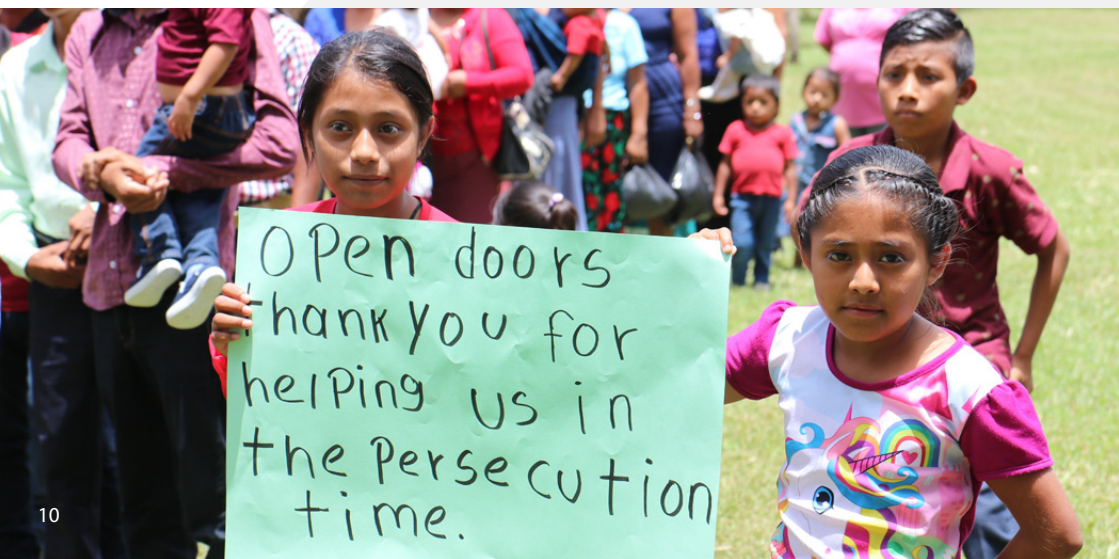
After hearing the Gospel, Imeldo returned to Oaxaca, Mexico to spread the good news to his family and neighbours. He held services in a small church built on his family's land.

But community leaders destroyed his church and expelled Pastor Imeldo from his home. He's been fighting a legal battle for 10 years, and could not return to his people.

Thanks to your support, Imeldo has been able to continue his battle. A judge also recently ruled that he would be repaid for damages from being unjustifiably expelled. Now, he's looking forward to being restored to his community so he can share Jesus' love.

14 829
Christians supported
through Advocacy

**"Open Doors lightened my load...
I have seen great changes."
– Pastor Imeldo, Mexico**



60-second testimonies

Lockdowns have been introduced in many countries worldwide to try and stop the spread of COVID-19. But even amid these lockdowns, your support is helping our persecuted family stand strong.

That's why we'd like to share a few testimonies of how your support is strengthening them to be salt and light in their communities:

India: Provision

Some prayer groups established by Open Doors partners have been providing food for the very communities that persecuted them because of their faith. *"These Christians are extremely poor, but they were able to save some money because we taught them about it in our trainings. Those savings, along with Open Doors' support and some contributions from Christians from comparatively bigger churches, are helping them support the poorer people in their communities,"* says Akash*, an Open Doors partner.



Gulf: Protection

Your support is enabling Christian healthcare workers to safely work on the front lines of this pandemic. Local partners of Open Doors, ALIVE, have found a safe and legal way to provide Christian nurses with protective clothing, which has been denied to them as they care for coronavirus patients. *"Thank you for coming to us... You've shown us who we belong to by coming in Christ's name. We have no one but Him,"* says one nurse.



Indonesia: Skills

Naomi, who attended an Open Doors Women's Training Centre, where she learnt tailoring, knitting and making women's accessories and received a sewing machine, is now using those skills to bless her community with much-needed masks. *"I'm very grateful that I had the opportunity to learn the skills because it has become a blessing to our community now. Thank you, Open Doors."*



*Representative images used and names changed for security purposes.

FROM JAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Dear partner of the persecuted Church

In many countries in South Asia Christians rely on daily wages. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of them have lost their livelihoods and face dire circumstances as they can't buy basic necessities to take care of their families. Furthermore, due to this, congregations can't pay their pastors salaries anymore.

Sadly, persecution continues amid the pandemic. In one country, Christians are treated with contempt by way of spitting on them when they want to collect government-supplied food parcels. Open Doors supports these people with food. And by doing this, *"we're giving them back their dignity,"* says our contact in the country.

These are difficult times for all of us. In our own country, we've recently experienced what it's like to not be able to come together for fellowship; giving us a glimpse into what daily life is like for our persecuted family.

Thankfully, as the Body of Christ, we're not alone. We're surrounded by the prayers of our brothers and sisters across the world.

We're grateful that no matter what, our persecuted family is strengthened by your prayers and support, as is evident by the impact you made in their lives in 2019 (see pages 5–10).

Thanks to the good you've helped bring to the bad situations they face, there are encouraging signs that the Gospel is indeed spreading, especially in Muslim-dominated areas. And believers are courageously standing firm for Christ amid increasing opposition.

May we be reminded that God will deliver, as we have set our hope on Him while helping one another through our prayers (2 Corinthians 1:11). He will carry us through this, as He's done countless times before.

Let's continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ as they pray for us too. And let's band together as the Body of Christ, supporting one another where we can.

Together in His service

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