

# Deaf Ministries International

Issue 32 | February 2021



*Taking the Gospel  
to the Deaf*

## From the Muir Family

Dear friends,

*Our lives the last half a year or so have been different to any other.*

*November 12, 2020, was a very sad day when my dear husband, Neville, father and grandfather, passed away. He was always there for us and meant so much to many other people too, right around the globe.*

*Bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to the deaf was his calling and joy. This was a community that had been forgotten for centuries. He could communicate in many different sign languages and make himself understood even with people groups whose sign language was new to him – a God-given skill.*

*My family and I would like to thank each and every one for the love and thoughtfulness shown to us during this time of mourning, for the flowers, the many cards and food, and not to forget the words of encouragement.*

*We miss Neville every day, but our faith in the Lord Jesus gives us hope for what lies ahead.*

Much love,  
Lill and family

## Myanmar Needs Our Prayers

It's time to band together in prayer for the country of Myanmar, especially for our deaf church and the teachers and students at the DMI school.

Over the last few weeks, we have been receiving distressing messages from Pa Lian about the worsening situation of the state of the country. The latest news, most importantly, is that Pa Lian and the staff at the school are safe.

After much political unrest, at 8pm, February 8th, the military took over the country and declared martial law. Much of the country's population have been involved in huge protests (now outlawed) against the military rule. Gatherings are limited to 5 people and there is a curfew from 8pm – 6am. There are serious consequences for those who decide not to comply, including serving up to 6 months in prison. Banks have been closed until further notice. Thankfully Pa Lian was able to withdraw the January budget that was sent before they were closed. The situation remains grim.

*continued...*



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# Myanmar continued...



Pa Lian

In Pa Lian's words "Our country is partially occupied by China and our future is uncertain. Many say that they are very afraid our country will become a playground for US vs China. Protests against China increase day by day and the Chinese army itself, in uniform, is already stationed in hot spots, sending a message to the US that they are now in Myanmar. I don't think the situation can be easily resolved as people are very strong in their protests against dictatorship. They shout out that they



want democracy. People are saying that they have lived for over 55 years under dictators and they can no longer tolerate it. For the Burmese Army, it is impossible to relinquish their power in normal ways."

The school hasn't re-opened since shutting due to COVID last year. We shall wait and see over the coming weeks what will happen. This has made the school a target for robbers. Just days ago, Saw Monday and his wife (who guard the school) had to chase some



Saw Monday & family

thieves off. Even though the school isn't operating, we still send funds to pay the teachers' salaries and school property costs. Food emergency funds have been sent so that the school and the church can make sure the Deaf community is cared for.

In the meantime, please pray. We have a God who is above all things, even when we don't understand why certain things are happening.

Left: Pindaw Oo Deaf Church in Myanmar

## Malawi - Feeding the hungry

We are so grateful for donations that are still being made to the Food Emergency Fund. To date we have received over AUD80,000 which means we have been able to continually send emergency food funds to those who need it the most. It is so humbling for us to see our supporters banding together to bring hope to so many who thought all was lost, giving DMI workers the opportunity to share God's love in such a practical way.

This has meant that we were able to send AUD800 to



Malawi which fed 45 families! 8 of those were families of DMI workers. Each family received 5-25kg of flour and 2-4 packets of soy depending on the size of their family.

It is now the wet season in Malawi which is crop planting time. Usually, the crops would be harvested in 4 months' time, but for many families this will not happen. Due to no income because of COVID, many families will be unable to purchase the seeds and fertiliser needed to plant their crops this year. Please be in prayer for the Deaf communities that are in such a difficult and desperate situation at this time. If you'd like to donate towards the Food Emergency Fund, details can be found on our website on the Donate page.





# DMI Art Exhibition Brings Colour to Sydney

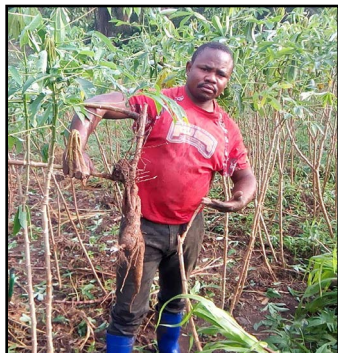


DMI's art exhibition in Sydney has been a great success. Running over two weeks from January 29, it displayed original pieces and collages of the artwork that DMI students in the Philippines and Myanmar created, raising awareness of DMI's work among the Deaf and almost \$5000 in the process! Toy Tanaka, an educational artist from Japan with years of experience holding exhibitions and working with children's art in the IB program, kindly

donated her time and talent to produce 16 collages which were widely admired. 14 of the 16 pieces sold, some several times over as buyers donated the works back to the exhibition and were then resold. Many of the collages included images of Bing, the head teacher in our Ligao school, so children visiting the gallery enjoyed playing a 'Where's Bing?' version of "Where's Wally?!" Prints of the collages are available in A3, A4 and card size for three months on the DMI website with all proceeds going to our Philippines and Myanmar schools. See them here!: [www.deafmin.org/donate](http://www.deafmin.org/donate)



## D.R.Congo - Beni School *A kitchen garden, a bike and a baby*



Our school in Beni, DR Congo has been moving ahead in leaps and bounds. Last year, thanks to generous donations from DMI supporters, we were able to build a new kitchen to cook the students' lunches in, as well as build a kitchen garden for the staff to grow staple vegetables and fruits to be put into the lunches. Alain, our school Director, pastor and DMI Congo treasurer, also took delivery of a new motorbike. This will help him to get around and to further his ministry work. Our goal for this year at the Beni school is to purchase and develop farmland as a part



of our new Self-Sustainability Fund so the students can learn farming techniques and yield crops to feed themselves and to sell for profit to support the school and church. Last month, Alain Muhindo, our school Director, pastor and DMI Congo treasurer, and his wife Grace announced the birth of the first born child, a daughter named Gabriella. Gabriella is doing well but Grace is suffering from malaria. Let's give thanks for the safe arrival of Gabriella and pray for Grace's healing.





# Extra Dormitories needed in Uganda!

Because of the pandemic, the Ugandan government is requiring two new dormitories to be built at our Neville Muir Comprehensive Disabled School in Lira. District Inspectors praised the school for being one of the best prepared to fight the virus, yet the extra dormitories are required to meet health standards. In pre-COVID times, the existing dorms were already horribly overcrowded, so the additional accommodation will be well used long after the pandemic, if not as dormitories then for extra

classrooms or workshops.

At AUS\$48,000, the cost to build the dormitories is significant so the local students and staff have already begun to assist by making bricks. Some funds have come in from Norway, yet more are needed to complete the works. This is a dire matter which threatens the continuation of the school. Please contribute to this building project if you can.



## Kenya Update - Isolation Centres On the Way

We are excited to inform you that our school in Kenya has now been allowed to re-open after nearly a year of being closed. All but two students have returned. What an amazing effort from the school staff to meet regulations in order for this to happen.

Thanks to generous supporters Ps Michael Gantt in the USA, and Barry and Gail Topples in Australia, our school in Kenya will have two new Isolation Rooms built to satisfy the Kenyan government's COVID regulations.



Just like the new dormitories required in Uganda, these Isolation Rooms will find good use post-pandemic as extra classrooms, for vocational training, and/or to house workshops. For now, the rooms will be equipped with beds, hand washing facilities and plenty of access to hand sanitiser and masks.

We're very grateful for this development, thanking God and our supporters for the provision. It's wonderful to see needs being met amidst the current challenges.





# Self-Sustainability Fund

DMI has a number of different appeals, programs and funds which can all get a bit confusing to donors (as well as to us in the office sometimes!) so here's a quick run through, finishing with an introduction to a new fund - the Self-sustainability Fund.

The **Disaster Relief Appeal** and the **Food Emergency Appeal** are separate appeals run at different times to respond to emergencies which arise. Donations for these appeals are used to repair damage and loss that occur from natural disasters which hit our schools, employment projects and churches, and to ensure that all our students and staff have enough to eat.

**Student Sponsorship Program.** This is the fund used to support our student sponsorship program. Sponsorship payments help to pay for education fees, vocational training, dormitory stay and meals at the school.

**Mask Fund.** Okay, this is not really a fund, it's just a quick plug for Susi's wonderful handmade masks. But this virus isn't going away soon so buy a mask or two and support DMI :)

**General Fund.** This is, in a sense, the least interesting fund but is also perhaps the most important. It doesn't build, restore or create anything new (things that are really good to see happen) but it does pay the wages of our staff in the field and the running costs of our schools, churches and office. Please see the attached

## General Funds Needed!

We are so thankful for the generosity of our supporters. Last year, even though the whole world was struggling with the COVID-19 situation, donations towards the food emergency fund and some of our other appeals came pouring in.

Many donations received last year came into our Deaf Action account, which is wonderful for Australian sponsors as it means tax deductibility, but at the same time, our DMI General Funds account dwindled. Yes, it's confusing, but we will try and explain.

Deaf Action is the tax-deductible arm of our organisation. It means that Australian supporters can receive tax deductibility on their donations which is great! The downside is that the government says that any donation that comes through Deaf Action can only be used for secular purposes, such as education, small business start-ups and training, student sponsorship, food, crops, animals, vehicles etc. It means we can't use Deaf Action's funds to support churches, pastors, or anything to do with ministry.

However, the donations that are received through DMI can be freely used towards any part of the ministry. It's just a little less appealing to supporters as we are unable

article (**General Funds Needed!**) for more detail.

**Ediger Fund.** This fund gives our pastors, evangelists and graduates access to micro loans to start business ventures. We have a good record of loans being fully repaid (or on track to be).

**Self-Sustainability Fund.** This is a new fund for a new priority on an old purpose. A vital goal of DMI is not just to help the Deaf in developing countries, but to help the Deaf in these countries to help themselves. By buying farmland and setting up employment projects, those graduating from our schools can have employment to move into, and the projects they work in can help sustain the local DMI schools and churches. The Deaf are then encouraged away from a welfare mentality and build self-esteem, the schools and churches are supported locally, and DMI's funds are freed up to be sent into new fields. Our goal is to raise \$100,000 over the next five years to put this plan into effect. Buying farmland for our school in Beni, Congo is a good example of what we hope this Fund will achieve (See our article on the Beni school in this newsletter). These are not loans to be paid back. They are gifts, the fruits of which are to be put back into the local community. The Self-Sustainability Fund is a marvellous way of fulfilling our mission of bringing education, employment and the gospel to the Deaf, and taking this mission into new fields.

to offer tax-deductibility due to government regulations. We have also been receiving donations through DMI as designated donations - for a specific purpose - which of course, have to be used where supporters have asked. We are so thankful for these designated donations, but these, too, cannot be used as "general funds". Why is this important? General funds are used to send our monthly budgets to the fields. It has the most unappealing name but is one of the most important funds for our organisation. It's like the head that supports the rest of the body. If it's not healthy, it puts a strain on all the other parts of the body and can't function as it should. So, if we don't have enough money in our General Fund, we struggle to send our budgets to the fields, which means pastors' and evangelists' salaries aren't met, certain ministry programs are sacrificed, churches can't pay their bills etc.

So, as you ponder your next donation to the work of DMI, we ask you to consider donating to the fund that may have the most boring name, but ultimately lets us do what we set out to do which is bring the gospel to Deaf.

# The work of DMI continues

## Gunnar Dehli - DMI's New International Director



It's still hard for us to think of DMI without Neville. We continue to miss him and we feel his absence very deeply. Yet, his legacy lives on and he has left a team which is proud to carry on the work that he began. In our November newsletter, I introduced our Australian team. In each newsletter this year, I will be introducing other DMI teams from around the world so you can know who we are and what we are doing to see DMI fulfil its mission.

Gunnar Dehli is our International Director and replaces Neville as the new head of DMI. A Norwegian, he is married to Ingrid and they have three sons and seven grandchildren. Their second son is Deaf, which has led Gunnar to work amongst the Deaf for 40 years in various senior capacities. He has known Neville and Lill for 20 years, and served with DMI for 10.

Gunnar took on the role of International Director in August last year when Neville's health began to deteriorate. I'm confident in saying there isn't a better man to take on the job. He brings to DMI a gentle wisdom, a high degree of competence, a love for the Deaf, and a passion for the gospel. Gunnar writes, "It is a big task to try to fill Neville's shoes. It cannot be done! However, together with good and skilled people in different positions, both in Australia, in Norway and many other countries, we will carry on the legacy from Neville that God has put on our shoulders. We want to see an increased number of Deaf children educated and landing stable jobs so they can provide for their own families. Our aim is to see the Kingdom of God continuing to grow among the Deaf with new churches and fellowships being planted and Deaf workers being raised up to lead this ministry both locally and internationally."

## Matthijs Terpstra - DMI CFO



Matthijs is one of these Deaf workers that Gunnar is talking about. He is a Norway-based Dutchman who has been serving with DMI for four years, the last two as DMI's CFO, Norway office head and international board member. Married to Katrine, who is Deaf, they have a young Deaf daughter, Emma Sofia, and a second child on the way. Matthijs is in every respect the very future of DMI and a role model for the many, many Deaf under DMI's care.

He writes, "As a Deaf person, I am very pleased to see the great opportunities that Deaf people worldwide are receiving from DMI in many areas. Mostly, to get to know Jesus in their own language and in their own way. I am thankful for the great opportunity to work with like-minded and resourceful people, both from a Deaf cultural perspective and in providing a fruitful and dignified life for Deaf people in developing nations. While Neville is sorely missed, we delight in seeing how God is in control by bringing Andrew into DMI Australia."

## Praise and Prayer

- Pray for the situation in Myanmar. We praise that our staff and students are safe and pray they will continue to be safe as there is so much uncertainty at this time.
- Pray for our teachers and students, as they slowly return to school after such a long time due to COVID. Praise that Kenya school has returned and for the provision to build the isolation rooms.
- Pray for Gunnar as he leads DMI through a new chapter. Please give him the strength, wisdom and guidance he needs to fulfil the role.
- Pray for Lill, Ian and the family as they learn how to live their lives without their beloved Neville.



Neville & Lill Muir  
DMI Founders



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