

# IN TOUCH MISSION

international

Monthly

1 April 2015

*"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." Isaiah 61:6*

## Reunited:

*A long-lost son hears from his mother after 20 years of separation.  
Then she tells an unbelievable story.*

### SOUTH SUDAN

**She was bone-tired, but sheer terror of her captors** kept her from collapsing into a heap on the parched dirt they trudged through. Her bare feet were cracked and bleeding from days upon days of walking over uncharted African wilderness terrain. Her eyes burned from the heat of the intense Sudan sun. Her throat parched, her lips dry and blistered from the heat and dehydration. Her legs ached with each painful step that carried her further and further away from her village.

Rebecca was widowed in an attack on her village near Juba - in what was then the country of Sudan. She and other women from her village were captured and forced to walk over 800km.

It was 1995. The Sudanese in the south had endured more than a decade of pillaging and bombing from the Islamic north. Their infrastructure decimated, their cities ravaged. Villages were burned and families displaced and torn apart as rivaling tribes took advantage of the unrest to promote their own ethnic agendas. Thousands of children were kidnapped and forced into armies where they'd face - and even be forced to commit - unspeakable atrocities.

Rebecca's heart ached so fiercely she thought it would burst through her chest as her thoughts returned to her two sons, Jahim and James, still back in her village.

As the heirs to their deceased sorcerer-father's wealth, they would have targets on their backs. It was wealth

other males in his family would want to get their hands on. Wealth they'd have to get rid of Jahim and James to get.

Rebecca ended up so far from home, that her chances of returning the 800km to her village or even sending word would have been better if she'd been stranded on the moon.

Rebecca was forced to become one of three enslaved wives to one of her captors. For nine years she was separated from her tribe and her family, at the mercy of her captor.

#### Forced to Leave Home

Eleven-year-old Jahim came to lying in the dirt. His whole body hurt from the merciless beating he'd just taken at the hand of his uncle. He lay still with his

eyes closed, hoping no one would notice he was awake. Peeking out between his almost closed eyelids, he could see he was alone. Only then did he dare get up.

He found his grandmother. "Why is my uncle trying to kill me?" he cried as she helped him with his wounds.

His grandmother looked at him sorrowfully. "He wants your father's money. He won't stop until you leave or die." So Jahim left his village.

#### Rescued from Slavery

Nine years after Rebecca had been taken from her village, she found out that some men from her tribe were among a group of commandos sent to the area she was living as a captive.

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Pretending to be Rebecca's brother and claiming to have been looking for her all these years, one of the commandos from her tribe confronted her captor husband, demanding a dowry the rival tribesman would never be able to provide in exchange for Rebecca.

Later, that commando was in the woods gathering food for his unit. Unbeknownst to him, Rebecca's captor was lying in wait. He followed the commando into the woods and killed him. Rebecca's kidnapper was never heard from again.

Still far from her village and alone, Rebecca married a man from her tribe in the Jamam area. Several years passed. It was a little better for Rebecca with her new husband, but life was still hard.

Then fighting broke out in Jamam. Rebecca's husband was killed in the upheaval. Widowed and alone, she was helpless to care for herself.

But God, in His sovereignty heard the daily prayers of a faithful and persistent young man, asking God to protect Rebecca, his mother, wherever she was.

### Jahim Remains Faithful

The civil war in Sudan between the Islamic north and the Christian south waged on for almost 3 decades. In 2011, the South gained their independence from the North, and Juba became the capital city of the newly birthed South Sudan.

By this time, Jahim had become a follower of Jesus, passionate about sharing the Good News with his people.

In 2008, Jahim met ITMI's Steve Evers. This was while he was attending ITMI partner, Muhindo Kawede's International School of Missions in neighboring Uganda, in order to learn how to teach sound doctrine and Biblical leadership. After one year there, Jahim had to return home due to lack of funding.

When he returned to Juba, he began ministering, teaching and preaching the gospel on SPLA military bases.

In 2011, Jahim partnered with **Steve Evers** and **Timothy Keller**, who equipped him with the highly effective, field-tested SALT discipleship material. Since then, Jahim has trained hundreds of Sudanese pastors, encouraging them to be Biblical, servant-leaders who reject their culture's worship of titles and self-importance.

In December 2013, tribal violence erupted in Juba. By May 2014, a UN Envoy reported thousands slaughtered, over a million displaced and five million in need of humanitarian aid. Three months later, the food crisis in South Sudan was the worst in the world according to the UN Security Council. (BBC News, 2015)

As a former refugee himself, Jahim's compassion for widows, orphans and those separated from their families led him to partner with ITMI to feed refugees whenever possible. This angered those from the opposing tribe in high positions, and Jahim began receiving threats on his life.

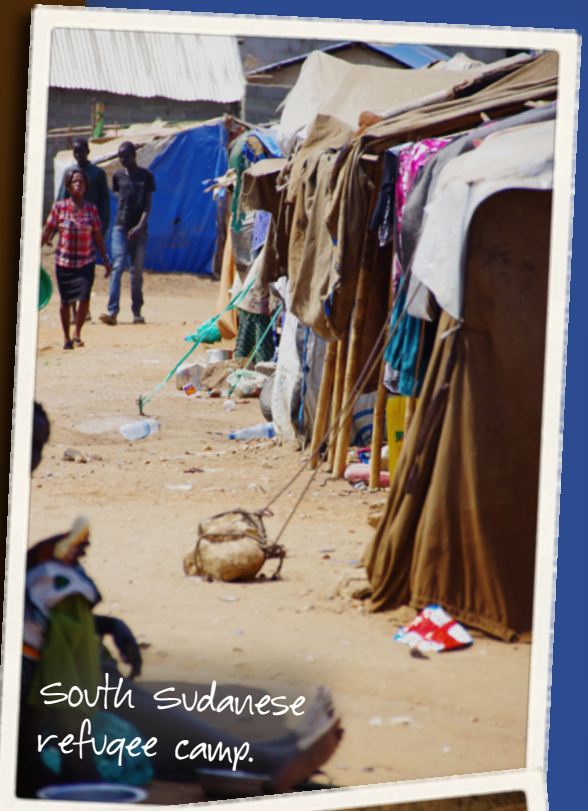
But Jahim wouldn't be intimidated. He knew His calling and he knew in Whom he trusted.

He was dragged into the office of "the Hammer" the government official who was threatening him. Jahim boldly and humbly declared the gospel to several powerful government officials that day.

Eventually, "the Hammer" became saved through his relationship with Jahim. That led to his superiors sending him to the front lines of battle, possibly in hopes of getting rid of him.

But the Hammer continues using his position to build God's Kingdom. He is discipling his troops on the front line, leading people to Jesus and bravely protecting and serving the people around him.

He often calls Jahim with a satellite phone to say, "We're being sent into a bad situation where we'll probably



South Sudanese  
refugee camp.



ITMI  
partner,  
Jahim Buli



Jahim's wife, Gisima  
and their adopted  
daughter, Maria.

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## *From the Director*

### **Dear Team,**

For sports fans, "March Madness" is a deliriously wonderful time of the year. For you non-sports fans, it might seem like just "madness" to you. Sixty-eight hungry and hopeful NCAA Basketball teams compete in a winner-take-all, battle-of-all-battles tournament. We bite our nails as the hopeful underdog teams show up to battle the powerhouse teams. We celebrate with the livin'-on-a-prayer, lucky-just-to-be-allowed-to-show-up teams when they rise above all odds for the win.

There is even an endearing name for the most unlikely, lowest rated, and probably most over matched team; a "Cinderella team." People love to see the Cinderella team overcome the deficiencies in height, skill, equipment, program and history that seem to be stacked against them.

#### **Facing the odds: a Cinderella Story in the Making**

In December 2014, ITMI's **Jahim Buli** felt led of God to have "open air" evangelistic meetings in his community outside Juba, South Sudan. **God so richly blessed the harvest of souls, that Jahim quickly had a baby church looking to him for discipleship.** So, Jahim started a church to feed and shepherd these new believers. But he's facing all the odds to do so. With no available "buildings" (tin-roofed, bamboo fenced structures) large enough to hold services or close enough to walk to, Jahim rented plastic lawn chairs and convinced a friend to "loan" the church a spot in an open dirt field. By January, the church was already up to 100 regular attenders.

Renting a hundred chairs is expensive for a newborn church. So that month, through ITMI, **you helped Jahim purchase 100 of those plastic chairs** so his baby church could save the cost of renting them. In March, Jahim shared that he was back to renting chairs because the church had grown to 150 teachable souls needing to hear God's truth. Last month, **New Life Community Church** in Scottsdale, Arizona, heard the Lord prompting them to help Jahim get the next 50 chairs his congregation needs.

Juba's rainy season is now upon the capital of South Sudan. Jahim and the church can set up in the dirt field for church services, but for the last two weeks, they have had to run for cover as the rains interrupted services.

I don't often make specific promises for funding to our partners since we don't always know what direction God wants to go in a particular situation, but while talking to Jahim over a transatlantic conversation, I felt led to make an offer to Jahim. He had already told me that he had raised approximately 30% of the basic building materials needed to put up a very basic structure that would seat about 170 people. He approached everyone he knew in this financially challenged country and asked not for money, but for poles, tin sheets, bamboo, and other basic construction material. He had also encouraged the challenged new believers who attend his church to help them build a cover for their services. My offer to Jahim was simple. You raise half of the \$10,000 cost to build the structure and ITMI will somehow help you with the other half. I felt it was the least we comfortable Western Christians could do to help our brothers and sisters who want to gather with other believers to be encouraged and equipped to impact their community, but are at the mercy of the weather when they do so.

Maybe you are interested in helping Jahim and ITMI "build a church" in South Sudan for those that have no cover from the elements, and by doing so, share the love of Christ. If so, we ask that you don't hesitate to call our office and let us know what your part of meeting this immediate need will be. If you can't say you have ever "built a church in South Sudan" now you have a chance to help a Cinderella team overcome great odds to the honor and glory of God.

Thank you for every part you play in providing partnership to these dear brothers and sisters!

In His Service,



P.S. Please pray for our team's April 7th trip to India. With **Paul and Molly**, we plan to provide [leadership training and discipleship training to about 300 pastors](#).





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all die unless God protects us. Will you pray for us?"

## Mother and Son Are Reunited

For twenty years, Jahim had prayed for his mother daily. "Please keep her safe," he asked, "and let her come to faith in you."

At the end of February 2015, Jahim got a phone call. It was a voice he hadn't heard in 20 years. It was his mother.

It turned out that "the Hammer" had been sent to recapture Rebecca's village in Jamam. Some of his men recognized her tribal markings showing where she was from, and the Hammer discovered she was Jahim's long-lost mother.

None of this miraculous story would have happened if Jahim had abandoned Juba when the violence broke out. None of this would have happened if he hadn't courageously evangelized those who persecuted him. The happy reunion was due to Jahim's bold humility and faithfulness in putting his life on the line to share the gospel with his then-enemies.

Jahim's faith was never lacking, but now his faith is hitting a new level. He knows deep in his very being that God really can do anything.

He'll need to lean heavily on that knowledge to face the challenges of living, ministering and pastoring a baby church amid the unrest in his country.

The challenges in South Sudan are great, but He who calls is greater. As God's people work together to beat back darkness and oppression, He is making great strides for His name's sake.



Thanks for being a part of South Sudan's story.

*Summer Kelley, Steve Evers*

South Sudan profile - Timeline. BBC News UK. (2015, January 22). Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14019202>.

## For Praise

1. South Africa - Charl van Wyk is praising the Lord for the funds to finish the construction of the Stone Hill building project.
2. Poland - Andrew Gorski reports of 2 generations of believers in 3 weeks and God moving in the lives of atheists.
3. Poland - Bread of Life, Poland has served over 260,000 meals since its start in Poznan, and God continues to change lives.
4. South Sudan - S.A.L.T material being translated into Classical Arabic to evangelize and disciple the Arab-speaking people.
5. USA - The ITMI Board of Directors has a new member, long-time ITMI supporter and godly business man, Jon Dekkers.

## For Prayer

1. South Sudan - Jahim and his church as they seek to minister to the spiritual, mental and physical needs of South Sudan.
2. South Africa - The Bathman's daughter, Lenora had 6 cancerous lymph nodes removed, probable radiation forthcoming.
3. India - Bob Dunn, Erik Thompson, Jon Dekkers, Steve Evers off to India to visit, encourage, and support Paul and Molly.
4. USA - ITMI partners Charl van Wyk, Richard and Adelyne Nungesser serving and encouraging in the States during April.
5. Uganda - Muhindo Kawede takes ISM to the bush over Easter Break with his Portable Bible School.



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