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# MAGAZIN

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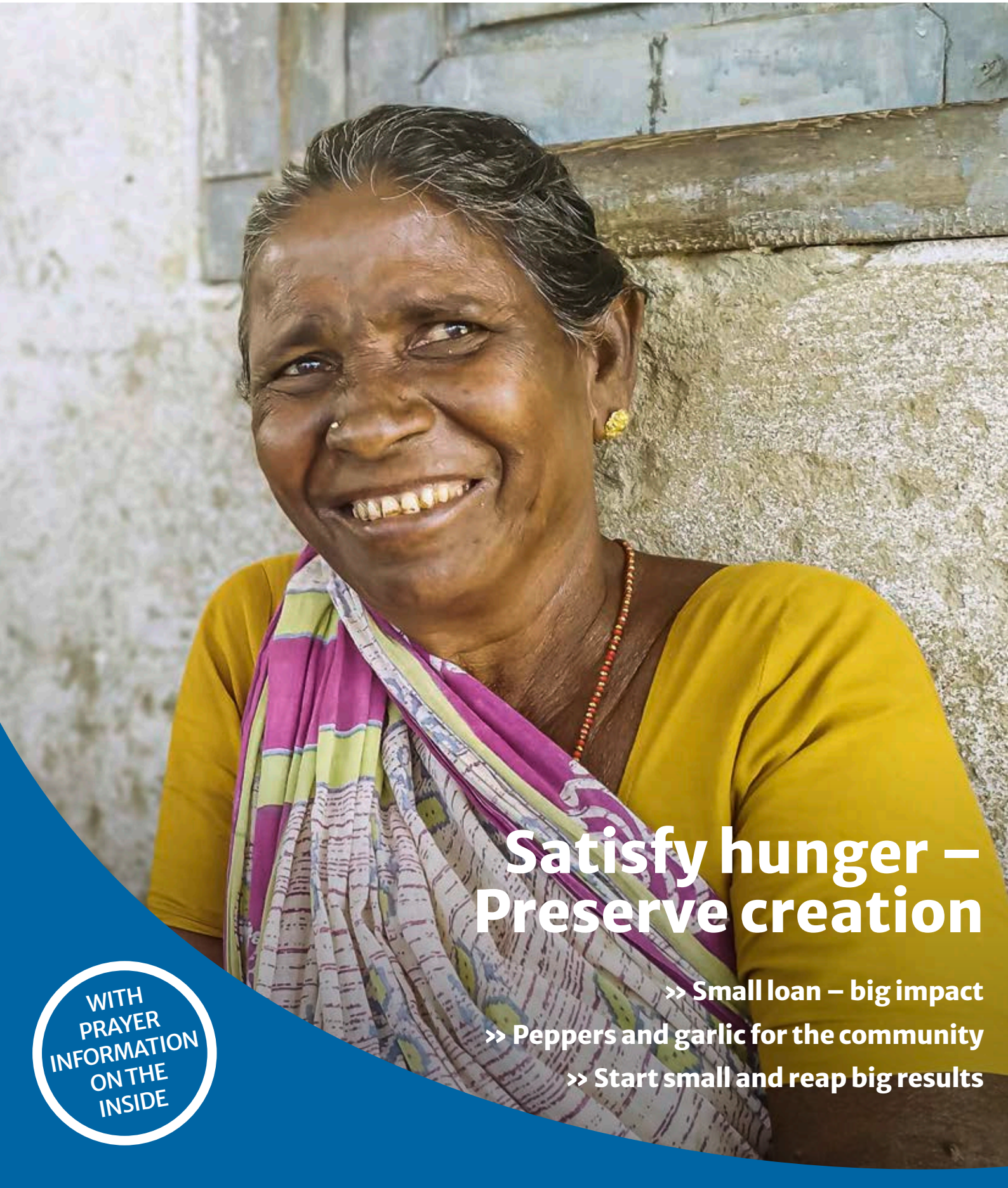

# Satisfy hunger – Preserve creation

>> Small loan – big impact

>> Peppers and garlic for the community

>> Start small and reap big results

WITH PRAYER INFORMATION ON THE INSIDE

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Further information on donations can be found in the center of this issue or online: www.ebm-international.org/spenden

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In this magazine, we have used artificial intelligence to translate foreign-language reports and improve texts editorially.

Cover photo:
Fisherwoman in India

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*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*
*Genesis 2,15 (ESV)*

# *Dear Reader!*

God gave us this earth as a home that nourishes and protects us. At the same time, he has instructed us to use this habitat carefully and keep it worth living in. "Beyond Eden", our reality looks different: People are starving, creation is increasingly being destroyed and many do not know the fullness of a life in Christ.

In this magazine, we provide an insight into projects that ensure people have enough to eat. And, at the same time, keep an eye on God's creation and preserve it. This is done, for example, through microcredits to fisherwomen in India, through "solar tents" in Bolivia or through the communal cultivation of peppers in South Africa.

These and all other EBM INTERNATIONAL initiatives are always affiliated with a local church. This is the place where Christian community is lived and steps of faith are taken. The aim of our mission is to help people find Christ, to improve the quality of their lives and to motivate them to work for creation and other people. In this way, blessings received are passed on and the gospel is proclaimed in word and deed.

At Thanksgiving we celebrate our gratitude that God provides for us and that the fruits of his creation nourish us. I invite you to be part of making this tangible for people in India, Latin America and Africa through your donations and prayers.

Thank you very much for all your prayers and financial support!

I hope you enjoy reading this magazine

*Michael Fischbeck*
*Team Leader Promotion and Fundraising*

Please feel free to send us your feedback, suggestions or requests regarding the current magazine: www.ebm-international.org/feedback

ebm INTERNATIONAL

**WHO WE ARE**

EBM INTERNATIONAL, founded in 1954 as the European Baptist Mission, works with 30 Baptist member unions and partners on four continents. As a mission organization, we share God's transforming love in about 300 projects so that people can live in hope.

In our global partnership with local Baptist churches, together we call upon Christ to bring justice, renewal and hope to the world. We are committed to achieving this goal on the basis of equality through sharing and learning, giving and receiving.

More information on our website:
www.ebm-international.org/en/about-us

*Start-up support for fisherwomen in India*

# Small loan – big impact

*Life in the fishing villages on the Bay of Bengal is not easy. Cyclones repeatedly cause floods: Individual boats and sometimes even numerous wooden huts disappear in the floods. Nevertheless, people rebuild their houses and go out to sea for days to catch fish. They hardly have a choice. But the fisherwoman Gandari found a way to escape poverty*

The hard life of a fisherman has left its mark on Gandari's (name changed) husband. For decades, he cast nets to feed his family with the catch. Today, his health is so bad that he can no longer fish. Now it is up to Gandari to provide an income.

## Education, food, crisis management: ways out of poverty

In Europe, they would both have retired long ago and would be covered by a pension and health insurance. But in India, this security is not provided. Tony Yeguri runs the Community Rural Welfare Development Society (CRWDS) initiative. This initiative helps people in rural areas to find ways out of poverty and supports them in a variety of ways. His father Jacob already had a great desire not only to tell people about God's love, but also to give them sustainable development opportunities:

In a support program for children, boys and girls receive learning assistance. Volunteer tutors and teachers help the children with their homework in the afternoons between 4 and 6 pm and prepare them for exams. Families in particular need are provided with school materials. There is also sport to balance things out. A nourishing, warm meal promotes a better nutritional status of the pupils. Around 150 adults also receive food through a branch of the "milk and eggs" program.

A particularly important training course for this region teaches people how to prepare for recurring natural events such as storms and floods. Evacuation measures are discussed and practiced. Safe emergency shelters and disaster supplies help to save lives in the event of storms or floods.

## A small business for Gandari

One of CRWDS's areas of work is the financial support for setting up one's

**Tarps, scales and bowls – everything you need to sell fish**

own business: every year, microloans enable around 20 to 25 women to earn their own income. Gandari also benefited from one of these loans. Together with other women from her region, she received scales, boxes and mats to dry fish and then sell it when there is no fresh catch. Each woman also received 10,000 rupees to start her business. That is only about 100 euros. A small loan by European standards – a great opportunity for the women and their families.

This competent elderly lady was enthusiastic and started her new business immediately: she bought fish, used the new equipment to dry it and then sold it in the neighborhood and surrounding villages. She earned 600 to 700 rupees a day (around six to seven euros). With this income, she was able to stabilize her family's income and repay the loan after only a short time.

A small loan with a big impact: not only for Gandari, but also for the other women in her group. They are all grateful for the help they have received.

**Tony Yeguri, leader of CRWDS – here in the tutoring project**

**Mutual exchange is of great importance**

*Church planting and Capacity building in Bolivia*

# Peanuts and Gospel

For almost 20 years, Anacleto Quiroga has been traveling in the Bolivian Andes and founding churches in the Rodeo Huayllas region. At an altitude of over 3,000 meters, his route often takes him six to eight hours along small paths through the impressive mountain landscape. There are no cars or buses here – donkeys and horses are the best means of transportation. Sometimes they carry luggage and sometimes Anacleto himself. He is accompanied by Rufinio, who himself comes from this region and came to faith in Jesus Christ a few years ago.

During his visits to the villages, Anacleto noticed how difficult it is to grow vegetables and cereals. The plants can hardly develop roots in the barren and stony soil and are severely damaged by wind and weather. Sometimes entire harvests fail. The missionary therefore looked for cultivation methods that would produce a good yield in remote and dry regions.

## Solar tents for a successful harvest

In the small village of Arichaca, Anacleto then started a new project – in addition to founding a church – which has greatly improved the living conditions of many families. With the support of EBM INTERNATIONAL, he began working with the small farmers there to build so-called "Carpas Solares" (solar tents). These are greenhouses that protect the plants from the wind and animals with a wall made of clay bricks and have a transparent tarpaulin roof to improve heat generation.

Greenhouse with a solar tent as its roof

Church planting in Rodeo

In these solar tents, maize, tomatoes, beans, peanuts and pumpkins can be grown much earlier. They are protected from wind and weather and therefore produce a higher yield. Around 100 families have already benefited from this. Currently, around 30 families are directly involved in the work. This food diversity has not only increased the quality of life of the families, but also improved the health of the children, as a balanced nutrition improves their overall development.

## Holistic and far-reaching

Many families from the surrounding area have become very interested in the work of this "agricultural missionary," who not only preaches about God's love, but also provides concrete support and help to people in improving their living conditions. Especially the successful corn and peanut harvests of recent years have made many neighbors curious. That is why they visited the newly founded church "Nueva Vida" (New Life) in Arichaca. At first, they only came to learn about the new farming methods. Later, they wanted to hear and learn more about God's Word.

This promising development demonstrates how holistic projects can improve the lives of people in remote regions. The combination of education, technical support, and sharing the Gospel opens up new perspectives for families, providing them with a spiritual home and a better foundation for life.

*Lars Müller*

Anacleto (right) with a farmer during the harvest

*Fundraising campaign for Thanksgiving*

# Satisfy hunger – Preserve creation

*Creation is God's gift to us humans – with the task of cultivating and preserving it. It provides sufficient food – if we distribute it justly. In partnership with churches worldwide, we are involved in around 40 projects to ensure that people have enough to eat and can lead independent lives. In agricultural initiatives in particular, this is done in harmony with creation and in a sustainable manner, for example in these countries:*

### India – Milk and egg programs prevent malnutrition

Disadvantaged and needy families, especially children and mothers, are provided with essential foods such as milk and eggs through food distribution programs in Mumbai, Kolkata, and Nellore. In addition, hundreds of farmers in many villages are supported with training, seeds, and microloans so that they can provide for themselves and their families independently.

### Cuba – Microloans provide a secure income

Microloans are part of the holistic aid provided to people in Cuba. They are granted to women and men with a business idea that will enable them to earn their own income. Support is given to small shops or craft businesses, services or livestock farming. The profit made by these activities provides the entrepreneurs with their own income and even enable them to support mission projects in their own country. In addition, churches provide meals for children and senior citizens.

### Cameroon – Trees protect the Sahel region

The Sahel zone is located in the extreme north of Cameroon. This region is characterized by aridity and drought, which leads to crop failures and hunger. The "Sahel Vert" project improves people's living conditions: newly planted trees prevent erosion and increase soil fertility. Combined with the cultivation of fruit trees and vegetables, this improves nutrition and provides sustainable protection for the Sahel zone's habitat.

Farming in India

Food for seniors in Cuba

Sahel Vert reforestation project in Cameroon

### Thanksgiving campaign: Sharing God's gifts with one another

These projects are living examples of the Gospel in action, nourishing both body and soul. Your commitment to Thanksgiving is an important contribution to finance this holistic missionary work: Your donation or offering will help feed the hungry, give people the chance to live a self-determined life, and preserve creation.

**30 EUROS** provide a farmer in India with seeds to feed his family with rice or millet.

**75 EUROS** enable a church in Cuba to offer a regular breakfasts for senior citizens.

**150 EUROS** fund 150 seedlings for climate protection and improve the quality for people in northern Cameroon in the long term.

**Your donation feeds people and preserves creation:**
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You can donate quickly and securely online on our website, for example via PayPal, direct debit, or credit card:
**www.ebm-international.org/spenden**
*Thank you for your gifts and your prayers!*

*Food security through vegetable cultivation in South Africa*

# Strengthen the community with peppers and garlic

*Something extraordinary has emerged on an old, fallow field outside Johannesburg: a farm that feeds people—in two senses of the word. The Faranani Mission, the social welfare program of the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA), has not only planted vegetables in Zuurbekom, but also sown seeds of hope. The goal is to combat poverty, create jobs, and empower disadvantaged people. And it all starts with a piece of land.*

## Agriculture as a response to hunger and poverty

South Africa faces major social challenges: high youth unemployment, growing poverty, rising living costs, and the consequences of climate change are threatening food security in the country. Poorer households in particular are suffering from sharp increases in food prices. This is where Faranani Farm comes in—with fresh, locally produced food at affordable prices.

At the same time, the project aims to generate long-term income—both for the farm and for the people in the region. Through training and participation in the work on site, people develop a sense of personal responsibility and sustainable action.

## Vegetable cultivation with obstacles – and successes

A new growing season began on the farm in early 2025. A specialized company prepared the field, vegetable patches and installed an irrigation system. Among other things, 1,500 green pepper seedlings and 25 kilograms of garlic bulbs were planted.

Unfortunately, the weather caused problems for the dedicated farmers: low temperatures, a broken water pump, and fungal infestation meant that only around 40 percent of the planned pepper harvest could be brought in. Nevertheless, three crates found their way to local markets and small shops.

On the other hand, garlic cultivation developed favorably: the plants that were planted in February grew without any major problems.

Following the peppers, spinach was planted in the field. This decision proved to be a wise one: spinach grows quickly, is robust, and produces good yields after only a short time. The cultivation area has now even been expanded, and mustard spinach is also thriving.

## Ongoing challenges

Despite the progress made, there are still many obstacles to overcome. The tractor used in the fields is old and in need of repair, which makes daily work considerably more difficult. There is also a lack of weather-protected cultivation areas. Until now, the plants have been grown outdoors, where they are exposed to heat, cold, pests, and birds.

A greenhouse would be a decisive step forward. It would increase yields, regulate the climate better, save water, and protect the plants from damage—an important investment in view of the changing climate.

## Agriculture with impact

It has been proven worldwide that investing in agriculture is particularly effective in the fight against poverty. It creates jobs, secures incomes, and improves food supplies—exactly what the Faranani Mission aims to achieve.

The project benefits not only the people of Zuurbekom, but also surrounding churches. The BCSA combines agricultural engagement with training, programs for women's empowerment,

and services for children—a holistic approach that has an impact beyond the field.

This project would not be possible without the support of our partners. EBM INTERNATIONAL and its donors are helping to turn a vision into reality. The Faranani Farm shows that when faith, commitment, and practical help come together, more than just vegetables grow—a future grows.

*Based on a report by Ria Tintswalo Mojapelo, Regional Representative for Southern Africa*

**The values of the Faranani agricultural project**

- Caring for people and our planet – We strive to develop a sustainable community that cares for its people and their environment
- Collaboration – We work in partnership and use the collective capabilities and synergy of all our partners
- Innovation – We find creative ways to solve challenges
- Passion – We are committed with all our heart and mind
- Professionalism – We want to be competent and efficient

# NEWS

**News, dates, and information about our mission work**

## Reliable and trustworthy – the EBMI Annual Report 2024

Once again, EBM INTERNATIONAL saw a decline in donations last year. Nevertheless, we remain "reliable and faithful" to our missionaries and project partners. We have published in our annual report 2024 how the funds entrusted to us were used. There we highlight the most important developments in the countries and project areas.

Gladly we send you a copy of the annual report free of charge (only in German):
Phone +4933234 74-441 or email: promotion@ebm-international.org
It is also available online at: www.ebm-international.org/jahresbericht

## Stamps for the mission

Since many years, Horst Liedtke has been voluntarily sorting and selling stamp collections and individual stamps. The proceeds go to children's projects in Latin America. In 2024, this raised €18,000!
Furthermore, we appreciate churches, companies, or individuals who collect stamps or donate entire albums. Please cut the stamps cleanly and evenly and send them to:
Horst Liedtke
Ober-Seemer-Str. 24
63688 Gedern
Due to the large number of stamps we receive, we are unfortunately unable to provide individual valuations for collections.
A big thank you to all collectors and especially to Horst Liedtke!

## Eastern Cuba: 50 graduates complete church planting training

This spring, Dr. Michael Kisskalt and Michael Fischbeck from the EBMI office in Elstal traveled to Cuba to visit the churches there and learn about the aid given through their social work.

In Santa Rosa, in eastern Cuba, they joined local leaders in presenting 50 women and men with their graduation certificates. The graduates had spent two years participating in a course on church planting and mission. Another 150 are still in training. All of them are already in the process of planting churches, resulting in the establishment of hundreds of house churches in eastern Cuba, especially in remote regions.

*Agriculture and livestock farming in northern Cameroon*

# Green ways out of poverty: Ismael's new start

*In the middle of the dry and dusty savannah in the extreme north of Cameroon, on the border with Nigeria, lies the small village of Boukla. The population tries to make a living from agriculture and livestock farming, but conditions are very harsh. The same is true for Ismael, who grew up here and knows all too well from his own experience the hard physical work in the fields and as a shepherd. After many years of hard work, he gave up in frustration and is now trying to get by with odd jobs.*

## Extreme conditions for agriculture

The extreme climatic and ecological conditions in the Sahel region pose considerable challenges for the population in northern Cameroon. Low rainfall makes agriculture and livestock farming difficult. Periods of drought and flooding occur repeatedly, placing a strain on the water infrastructure. In addition, climate change is causing increasingly irregular rainy and dry seasons, which further exacerbates the problems.

## Hope through reforestation

In this hostile landscape, the "Sahel Vert" (Green Sahel) project was initiated over 40 years ago with the support of EBM INTERNATIONAL to give the population hope again. Jonathan Woulkam has been leading this work for several years now. By planting thousands of trees and shrubs every year, the aim is to create a natural barrier that will prevent water shortages and soil erosion.

In 2022, Jonathan expanded the project by adding ecological fish and livestock farming. The initiative arose from his contact with the local people. At the existing training center in Tchévi, people are now learning how to become self-sufficient with limited resources. The center has large areas of land that are ideal for livestock farming, agriculture, and fish farming.

## From theory to practice

Jonathan Woulkam conducted a feasibility study specifically for this purpose and decided to utilize the area's untapped potential. A key objective of the project is the training of the local population. Participants learn important skills in livestock farming, water management, and marketing. A wide variety of vegetables are grown on the ground in Tchévi, including okra, moringa, eggplant, peppers, and even watermelons. The resulting employment stabilizes the local economy and improves social conditions by reducing migration from rural areas.

## Training in Tchévi: A new start for Ismael

Ismael (name changed) lives very close to the center and heard about the training opportunities in Tchévi. He decided to give it one last try. After many years of hard work without success, he had given up in frustration. Jonathan Woulkam and his team taught him how to cultivate the soil under difficult conditions, which plants thrive here, and how to water them efficiently. The trainees were also trained in livestock farming, with local breeds of sheep, goats, and chickens that are well adapted to the hot climate.

At the end of his training, Ismael was given a goat as an incentive and start-up aid. After the goat gave birth for the first time, he returned it to the center. This was the start of a new life for Ismael. He was able to buy two more goats and some chickens, built stables, and planted fodder. His good training helped him to work efficiently and invest wisely. After just one year, he now owns eight goats and 48 chickens in his stables. He has already sold his chicken brood twice and invested the profits in new chickens and fodder.

Today, Ismael can proudly show the results of his work. He has managed to stand on his own two feet and has found new self-confidence and hope for a good future. →

Ismael with his chickens

Project leader Jonathan Woulkam

## → Pioneer work in fish farming

An outstanding part of the project is the implementation of fish farming, which does not yet exist in the region. As fresh fish is very rare to find, fish farming offers a valuable addition to the traditional nutrition and is an important source of protein and omega-3 fatty acids. At the same time, local production reduces dependence on expensive imports and opens up a new source of income.

Catfish are used for breeding as they are more resistant to environmental conditions and adapt easily to the artificial environment. The fish are bred in specially designed above-ground tanks, which enable a controlled and sustainable production. In the future, it may also be possible to extend the breeding to carp.

But Jonathan's plans go far beyond that: "In a few years, we would like to expand the fish farm and equip ourselves with tanks made of robust panels, which are more durable than the weather-sensitive tanks made of tarpaulin. It might also be possible to sell fresh, dried and smoked fish or purchase machines to produce our own fish fodder."

To ensure an adequate water supply, a solar-powered water tower was built to store the water and distribute it to the fish tanks and vegetable gardens. As water is a very valuable resource in northern Cameroon, the population is also being trained in the sustainable use of it. The water used at the fish farm – which contains nutrients from the excrement of the fish – is reused for growing vegetables, thus raising awareness of the need to water plants efficiently.

## The objective: a new environmentally-conscious generation

For Jonathan Woulkam, the objective of his project is clear: "My vision is to train a generation of qualified, independent and environmentally-conscious young people who can actively contribute to food security, local employment and sustainable development through modern and integrated fish farming, agriculture and livestock farming."

In the last three years, the new project in the region around Tchévi has already achieved some of his objectives.

One of the trainees feeds the fish

However, people like Ismael, who come to him for training, remain particularly important to Jonathan. His intention is to guide them towards independence so that they can take their lives into their own hands and thereby provide better for themselves and their families. This not only improves their quality of life and self-confidence, but also gives them new hope and promotes social stability in the region.

*according to a report by Jonathan Woulkam, project leader of "Sahel Vert" in Cameroon*

Classes right next to the fish tank

*Young people experience change in Türkiye*

# Light on the way

*Cesar Sotomayor, part of the voluntary EBMI board, is in close and regular contact with the church plants in Türkiye. The pastor from Graz is also employed by the European Baptist Federation (EBF) as a coordinator for church planting. He reports on his experiences with the various church planting projects.*

It is truly inspiring to witness the amazing impact of our church planters from the Turkish Baptist Union. They are leading the way and are spreading the love of Christ in the society, helping people in need and encouraging the next generation of followers of Jesus in universities and schools. They are building real friendships and relationships, and it is amazing to see the positive impact they are having on society. I invite you to read the following testimonies and join us in prayer for these wonderful churches that are making a change in Türkiye.

## Testimonies of change in Bergama

In Bergama, church leader Onur reports on very special moments, such as the baptism of Yusuf (his and all other names have been changed). His journey of faith began with a baptism course with Onur. The meetings were not only informative, but also life-changing for Yusuf. They helped him to develop a deeper understanding of the Bible and his personal faith in Jesus Christ: "Since I started reading the Holy Scriptures, I have found a new calm and peace in my life," says Yusuf with a smile that reflects the strength and peace he has gained through his faith.

Yusuf has experienced many blessings in his professional life along the way. These experiences have nurtured his personal faith and serve as pillars that strengthen and vitalize his faith. All of this has led him to the conviction that he wants to profess his faith publicly through baptism. His decision has filled the still young church and especially Onur with great gratitude and joy.

A large picnic in Bergama for students, where 40 young people took part, was also a highlight of the past few months. Here, the participants were able to ask questions about Christianity and experience Christian fellowship in a relaxed atmosphere. Such events not only promote exchange, but also strengthen relationships within the church.

## Growing interest in Izmir

The church in the Buca district is currently experiencing a remarkable spiritual interest among young people in the area. Church leader Mert reports on the growing participation of young people in church services and Bible studies. Many of them have serious

**Exchange in Bergama at the picnic**

questions concerning faith and want to learn more about Jesus. Some have found faith in Jesus Christ through these activities, which is a wonderful sign of hope and encouragement for the whole church.

Elif has only recently professed her new faith in Christ and started a course for baptism. The young woman grew up in a radically religious family, but has always felt deep curiosity about Christianity. After moving to Izmir to be with her former boyfriend, she experienced violence at his hands. Through this crisis, she began to search for Jesus Christ more intensely. Surprisingly, her family did not react negatively to her new faith, but showed understanding and acceptance. Now Elif regularly shares Bible verses with her mother, and the whole church prays that the Lord will also touch the heart of her family.

## Practical help and hope

In addition to the spiritual activities, the church in Izmir also wants to help in a very practical way. In March, 500 food boxes were distributed to the needy in cooperation with a local NGO and the city administration. It is a great joy to see how God is glorified through all these activities and how people come into contact with God's love and the message of Jesus Christ.

*This article by Cesar Sotomayor also appeared on the blog of the European Baptist Federation: www.ebf.org/blog*

On the way to the neighborhood, distributing aid packages

Yusuf together with Pastor Onur

*Ecological project at Cotia social center*

# Start small and reap big results

*The social center in Cotia, Brazil, is a place where children and young people can spend valuable time several days a week. They can find new friends, take part in various activities and have space to develop their personalities. In addition to English lessons, volleyball and handicraft workshops, there is also an ecological project. There they learn what it means to live in a sustainable way and grow fruit and vegetables. Edith Landenberger runs the project together with a group of volunteers. We asked her a few questions about it.*

**Edith, how did you come up with the idea of starting this project?**

We saw the misery in Cotia: the garbage dumped everywhere, the floods caused by waste thrown into rivers and streams, the fires. We decided to do something to make children, young people and their families aware that they can make a contribution that has a positive impact on their health and the environment.

**Why is this so important to you?**

Because we see the need to teach future generations, children and young people how important it is to look after the environment – the beautiful world that God has created. We also want to make them aware of the importance of preventing air and water pollution. We also want to show them the importance of producing healthy food.

**What do you want to teach the children in your gardening project?**

The main goal is to motivate them to take care of the environment they live in and to see that we can grow food in a small space without pesticides and at low cost. At best, they should learn that they can contribute to preserving the beautiful world that God has created. Everyone does their bit by collecting waste separately: Organic waste, recyclable waste and residual waste. This is taught through videos, lectures, Bible readings and practical exercises. We teach them that decomposed organic waste is an excellent fertilizer for plants and that other materials can in turn be reused to make handicrafts. It also reduces landfill waste.

**What do you plant?**

We plant mainly vegetables and fruit trees, whereby we revive the existing trees with fertilizer and pruning. The cultivated area is a terraced vegetable garden. It used to be a grassy, steep slope.

We harvest mainly vegetables such as lettuce, cabbage, rocket salad, watercress, green herbs, tomatoes, chayote (a pumpkin plant) – depending on the season. And also fruits such as papaya, bananas, mandarins, avocados, jaboticaba (tree trunk cherry or Brazilian grape), pitangas (cherry myrtle). We use and consume these together with the children at the social center. If the harvest is good, they also take fruit or vegetables home for their families.

**How do you involve the children?**

There are currently 118 children and young people aged 6 to 15 taking part in this project, in small groups depending on their abilities. Most of the children really enjoy it and are happy to take part. They help with planting the seedlings, watering in times of drought, fertilizing, harvesting, cleaning the vegetables, preparing the recipes and eating.

Many of them now treat nature more consciously: they throw garbage in the right garbage can and are more careful with plants. They pray and thank God for creation. Eliza (name changed) in particular is always ready to help: She shows a lot of love for the plants and works very hard in looking after the plants and harvesting them.

The families also benefit from this: the parents give us feedback on how much they appreciate this nature-based learning. This also motivates me time and time again: the love for and amazement at God's wonderful creation – I want to pass this on to new generations.

**Thank you for this wonderful insight into this work!**

There is great joy about the rich harvest

A barren slope became a terraced garden

There are enough mandarins for everyone

*A former volunteer at Balaka Farm reports*

# About the comfort room and planting trees

**It's worth the effort! Deborah with fresh lemons from Karin's garden.**

*Together with her husband Daniel, Deborah Naujoks spent a year on the Balaka farm in Malawi. They put their skills to good use in various areas and left their mark. In the following, Deborah tells us what planting trees and the daily visit to the toilet have to do with a worthwhile future.*

**"And if the world should end tomorrow, I'll plant a tree today."**
When I was a little girl, a poster with this quote from Martin Luther was stuck on our toilet door. I read the sentence every time I sat on the toilet. Today, many years later, it comes back to me. My article will combine two themes: Planting trees and going to the toilet. What do these two things have in common? A good question!

## Trees for a future worth living

The problems in Malawi are immediately apparent. It is one of the poorest countries in the world. The population is suffering from hunger, the rainy seasons are becoming increasingly unreliable, inflation is taking on grotesque proportions and corruption permeates the entire country. So what to do in the midst of this "doomsday atmosphere"? – Plant trees!

Karin Schwarz and her team have planted well over 5,000 trees on the Balaka farm in recent years. If you look at the area on Google Earth, the farm stands out as a green spot in the middle of the barren, dry wasteland. Trees offer protection, create a pleasant climate even in the scorching heat, provide a habitat for numerous animals, improve soil quality, protect against erosion and some even bear fruit!

In Malawi, where there are hardly any trees left due to heavy deforestation, planting trees is vital for the next generation. The Balaka Farm is an agricultural training farm that trains young Malawians in sustainable agriculture. In addition to practical know-how and a lot of hard work in the fields, they

**Delicious passion fruit right outside the front door**

learn above all to have hope. They discover that they are not powerless in the face of fate, but can actively work towards their future – with Jesus in their hearts.

For me, planting trees became a symbol of turning hope into action: To look to the future, but to act in the present.

And the fruits are visible! The countless papaya trees produce a sweet harvest every year. In December, the mango trees are hung with large fruits that are just waiting to be eaten. Thanks to the shade provided by the many trees, the vegetables thrive despite the heat. The trees nourish the severely depleted soil with much-needed nutrients.

But what does all this have to do with going to the toilet?

## The comfort room – an underrated place

The toilets on the Balaka farm are something special. They consist of two stools, each with a bucket underneath. One is used for the big job, the other for the small job. Full concentration and body control are required here! The urine can be used as liquid fertilizer in a dilution of 1:5. The feces are covered with dry material such as leaves and grass and, when the bucket is full, are placed in a compost pit. Once the pit is full, it is covered with soil, and over the course of about six months, it turns into mature, nutrient-rich compost. When the students plant a tree on the farm, they dig a large hole and fill it with this soil—their "starting capital" for the tree. I find this idea inspiring: our waste becomes starting capital!

With this in mind, I would like to encourage you: No matter what situation you find yourself in, plant a tree (perhaps only figuratively speaking)! Because every small beginning, every act of faith and hope contributes to shape a better future. Our waste, our mistakes, and our weaknesses can become valuable start-up capital for growth, renewal and hope if we entrust them to God.

*Deborah Naujoks*
*Deborah and Daniel are from Switzerland and spent a year at Balaka Farm in 2023/2024. Deborah is an intensive care nurse and Daniel is a teacher and outdoor educator.*

**Samuel after finishing his work. The moringa tree is covered with a layer of mulch to prevent it from drying out.**

**Deborah and Daniel with their chicken Valerie**

# Mission Council in Massy
# Blessed are the peacemakers!

From May 21 to 24, the newly inaugurated building of the Christian center "Les Cèdres" in Massy near Paris became the conference venue for more than 120 participants, guests, and helpers from all over the world: The annual Mission Council of EBM INTERNATIONAL gathered in France to discuss the theme "Blessed are the peacemakers" from Matthew 5:9 and to hear about current developments in the mission.

Claiton Kunz (Brazil) emphasized that peace in this world is only possible through Jesus Christ. Ria Tintswalo Mojapelo (South Africa) encouraged everyone to pursue peace with all their strength. Yosvany Padrón (Cuba) warned against settling for false peace. Nicolas Farelly (France) showed that "blessed peacemakers" walk a path of humility and turn to the poor, the persecuted, and the weak.

### Challenging financial situation

General Secretary Dr. Michael Kisskalt explained the financial situation: Donations have repeatedly declined. The year 2024 could only be closed on a positive note because many reserves were dissolved. One consequence is a reduction in the current budget for the second half of 2025.

Michael Fischbeck, team leader for public relations and fundraising, called on the Mission Council to distribute the financial responsibility for the joint mission more equitably among all partner countries. He particularly encouraged the EBMI countries in the Global South to break new ground and activate more local resources.

Nathan and Loïs Minard were bid farewell at the Mission Council as well. In 2024, they have already completed their 14-year service at the Technical Center in Garoua, Cameroon.

The participants particularly praised the spiritual unity and a strong sense of community: in small groups, they shared experiences beyond national borders. The communion and the sending of all participants on the final evening with Jesus' words from John 20:21 "As the Father has sent me, so I send you!" was also encouraging.

### Save the Date: Mission Council May 6–9, 2026 in Norderstedt

Next year, the EBMI Mission Council will take place in the Baptist Church of Norderstedt near Hamburg. Guests – not only from the north of Germany – are very welcome! If you would like to meet international leaders from the EBMI partner countries, experience an evening service or volunteer to help on site, please make a note of this date and contact the missions office for more information!