



# Heather Johnstone

Link Letter no. 33 | October 2026

Contact details:  
hfjohnstone@gmail.com



**Location:** Tanzania



**What I do:** Helping to empower the most disadvantaged women and children in Mara through the Rehema Project



**Empowering** people pushed to the edges of life to release their God-given potential

Dear friends,

Tumshukuru Mungu! God's grace and timing are always perfect, even when our patience is tested. After six long, often frustrating, months of navigating paperwork, malfunctioning websites and being told more times than I care to remember to "be patient", I am overjoyed to share that my official work and residence permits have finally been granted, valid until July 2028. It was a tedious journey, but God placed an incredible helper in my path – a man named Festo. Though I have never met him in person and know nothing about where he lives or works, he was extremely helpful and managed to get my approvals processed where so many others, including government employees, had failed.

**Praise/prayer point:** We give thanks for the ways God uses unexpected people to clear the road ahead!

God's divine protection was powerfully evident in the life of one of our beloved seamstresses recently. For a long time, her family has faced ongoing structural issues because historically their house was built directly on top of a massive termite nest. A few years ago, we tried to help secure and tile the floor, but the resilient termites persisted, silently eroding the home from the inside out at weaker access points.

One evening, she came to me in floods of tears to share a terrifying ordeal. She had left her youngest daughter, Abigail (two years old), at home under the watchful eye of her 18-year-old son. Abigail was playing in the bedroom while her big brother was doing his own thing nearby. Soon, he heard her calling out "mjusi" – the Swahili word for lizard. Abigail's calls grew increasingly persistent as she shouted, "Brother, lizard!"

Deciding to investigate, he walked into the bedroom and froze. The "lizard" was actually a large, dangerous snake next to Abigail on the bed, coiled and ready to strike. Acting quickly, he threw something at the snake, simultaneously grabbed little Abigail and rushed out. In the chaos, they were initially unsure if the snake had bitten her, but by the absolute grace of God, Abigail was completely unharmed! The snake slithered away and was killed by a neighbour. Moments later, a second snake was discovered inside the house.

When I visited the house the following morning, the extent of the damage was shocking. Termites were eating away the inner structure; touching the outer pebble dashing and causing it to simply fall off the brickwork. There were gaping holes leading directly from the outside into the bedrooms and every morning brought new piles of sand inside.

Knowing the family could not remain in such danger, we immediately gathered quotations to rebuild and strengthen the walls, shutting off all access points to unwanted dangerous visitors. Thanks to our assistance



One of the Rehema seamstresses, Ericka, with her daughter Abigail

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With each other  
To the edges**



programme and the incredible generosity of our Rehema Project friends and supporters, this vital construction was completed expeditiously.

**Praise/prayer point:** Thanks be to God for keeping Abigail safe and providing the resources to restore their home!

The Diocese of Mara recently celebrated its 41st anniversary with a vibrant, week-long programme packed with seminars, worship and deep gratitude for God's continued mercy. The celebration culminated in a glorious Sunday service featuring visiting choirs from various regions across Tanzania, alongside a delegation of 51 pastors who travelled all the way from Butere, Kenya. The bishop of Butere, Bishop Rose, delivered a powerful sermon to an energetic congregation.

The joyous service lasted seven hours and at the end included a crucial fundraiser to purchase motorbikes for pastors serving in remote, hard-to-reach areas.

Our catering team was kept extraordinarily busy feeding the crowds throughout the week:

- ▶ Bishops and guests: our cafe catered lunch and dinner for the visiting bishops, their wives and their drivers all week long, finishing with a grand festive meal for 80 special guests following the Sunday service.
- ▶ Hall catering: our external food service team prepared and served meals for 200 people at a nearby hall.
- ▶ Mass gathering: combined with two other food stations, our collective efforts helped feed an estimated 1,000 people who gathered to mark this milestone.

**Praise/prayer point:** Give thanks that the Rehema team performed so brilliantly, as evidenced by the many satisfied delegates and the praise received from the diocesan management team for a job well done.

It was also a pleasure to host teams from UK Christian charity Go MAD ([gomakeadifference.co.uk](http://gomakeadifference.co.uk)) again this year. They visited Musoma over a nine-week period from mid-June until the end of August. The Go MAD teams ate at Rehema four times a week and our onsite craft shop saw the benefit of a lot of visitors. Many of the 190 volunteers also had items of clothing made by our seamstresses, which is part of the volunteers' Tanzanian experience and a real blessing for our seamstresses and to the project.

**Praise/prayer point:** Give thanks for the busy season and the positive energy it has brought. Pray for more visitors during our "quiet" season.

To cap off an already eventful season, I was blessed with very special visitors from South Africa: two dear friends I've known and loved dearly since primary school, along with one of their husbands. Celebrating a cherished friendship of nearly 60 years was a profound gift.

A special celebration was held in their honour on the following Sunday, giving my childhood friends the opportunity to witness firsthand the extraordinary love, compassion, hard work and unity of the Rehema women. It was a beautiful bridge between my past and my present ministry here in Tanzania.

Thank you all for your continued prayers, encouragement and support that make the work of the Rehema Project possible every single day.

Mungu awabariki sana!

Heather



**Photos from top to bottom:**

Bishop Rose with Kenyan pastors from Butere; the Rehema team serving Bishop Rose from Kenya; the Rehema team post service; Rob, Debbie and Alison, who came to visit me from South Africa



## Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

I hope that you're inspired as you read about Alison in Kyiv, Ukraine, who is seeing many answers to prayer as she faithfully serves God. And that you get a moment to read about the displaced disciples in Ethiopia – church leaders taking part in bespoke training designed for people living in refugee camps. Read more stories about empowering people pushed to the edges at [churchmissionsociety.org/empower](http://churchmissionsociety.org/empower)

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