



Elise and Jon Fletcher

Update from the Edges 2 | August 2025



Location: Thailand



What we do: Immersing ourselves in the life of a vibrant slum community, sharing Jesus' love with people around us



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

Dear friends,

It is a joy to hear from other CMS partners as they support people pushed to the edges of society to thrive and grow as God intends. It is so inspiring to read about indigenous women being trained for mission in Argentina and humbling to hear from our friends in DR Congo who are delivering trauma support to children impacted by conflict. God is their strength, and ours too as we come alongside our neighbours in Bangkok. We hope you are encouraged by this update and by our colleagues' stories.

The monsoon rains have arrived in Bangkok, breaking the relentless heat. Green leaves unfurl and our sapped energy gradually returns too.

In Khlong Toei, the dry-season worry of fire gives way to worry of flooding. Many live in solid structures with concrete beams anchoring them to the swampland. Others live in sinking shacks made of pallet wood from the nearby port.

While many of the slum communities have been modernised, there are always those left behind. The elderly population, mostly female and uneducated, are often left to fend for themselves with very few resources. Throw in a history of drug addiction or violence, and life is hard. In the Thai Buddhist mindset there is no escaping karma.

When we moved here a decade ago, it took a while to realise that those who seemed beyond help were exactly the people we were called to share life with. It all started with one incredible woman called Aunty Noi.

Aunty Noi was our immediate neighbour when we arrived in Khlong Toei. She lived in a precarious shack and worked as a day labourer at the port. In her late 50s, she had a tough exterior and our landlord and others warned us against her.

Thankfully, Aunty Noi harboured no hostility towards us! Shunned by others, she extended a welcome far beyond anything we had experienced before. When we painted the house, she joined in! Soon Aunty Noi was a fixture on our front step after the kids were in bed. Our Thai was limited and her speech was slurred from the whisky that had replaced heroin. Sometimes we wished for a night off, but our relationship grew as we shared our stories.

One night Aunty Noi was dozing on the bench outside our house. Sometimes she was too afraid of spirits to sleep in her own house. In the middle of the night, she felt herself pushed to the ground and she was terrified.



Khlong Toei slum community

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



She saw that the wooden cross over our door was askew and she was prompted to straighten it. Remembering we'd told her she could always try asking Jesus for help, she prayed and the frightening presence left her. Jesus worked!

When we woke the next morning, Auntie Noi had been to the market and bought jasmine flowers to adorn the cross.

Another morning Auntie Noi was on the doorstep bursting with excitement:

"I met Jesus in a dream!"

"Well, what did he say?" This was going to be our big missionary moment!

"He was talking in French..."

"Oh." We don't speak French; you can imagine our deflation.

"But I could understand him! Jesus told me, 'You are accepted.'"

Yes. This was Jesus, and this was the only thing our friend needed to hear. Understanding her God-given value was truly transformative. And though life was still hard, Auntie Noi thrived. She began going to the local temple to joyfully wash dishes for the monks and for "the poor" as an act of service. We had the joy of taking Auntie Noi out of the city for the very first time before her health began to decline.

One night Auntie Noi didn't come home from work. When she didn't turn up the following day we searched for her at the local hospital. Auntie Noi was in end stage liver failure with a severe infection. She died that same night.

We are forever thankful for the short but significant time that we shared with Auntie Noi. We will always tell her story and keep her memory alive! Her influence guided us towards the relationships that we most treasure today.

While the programmes we run are fruitful, and our advocacy roles keep us busy, we are convinced that God has invited us here to be good neighbours to people like Auntie Noi.

Jesus met Auntie Noi on her own terms – we were simply in the right place at the right time to bear witness. I don't think she would've described herself as a Christian... but we are not here to change labels, we're here to see hearts changed. When any of our friends at the edges grasps an ounce of their true worth and experiences the insufferable burden of karma lifting, then we can be sure that God is at work; the kingdom of God coming before our eyes!

Please pray with us:

- Praise God for the opportunities we've had to provide family strengthening training over the past few months. Pray for lasting impact and responses.
- In his role with Alternative Care Thailand (ACT) Jon was able to speak to diplomats from 15 countries about the dangers of institutionalised care. Please pray for government action to regulate the care system and act in the best interests of Thai children.
- Pray for God's provision and strength for our neighbour Nairn who is struggling to maintain care support for her daughter despite significant health challenges and no regular income.
- We are in the UK until August speaking at churches to promote CMS. Pray that this will be fruitful and that the work, people, and places we leave behind will be blessed.

Much love, Jon and Elise



Photos from top to bottom: Auntie Noi outside her house; Flowers adorn the cross over our door; We will always remember Auntie Noi's smile; Visiting a community leader



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

It builds our faith when we hear stories from other CMS partners working with people pushed to the edges of life – like we are in Thailand. We hope that you're inspired as you read about indigenous women training for ministry in Argentina, and about children receiving trauma support in the DR Congo. You can read their stories, and others, at churchmissionsociety.org/empower

Please note that opinions expressed in updates are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

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