



Elise and Jon Fletcher

Update from the Edges 3 | November 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 grows our faith to hear inspirational stories from other CMS mission partners working with people pushed to the edges of life. As well as our update, you can read about a man, who was left disabled after a crash, learning new skills in a wood workshop. He now supports his family with his new talents. And, about Makol in South Sudan whose life was dramatically saved at a peace rally.

We'd like to introduce you to Ora. Ora lives next door to us and recently begun working for the Keeping Families Together (KFT) programme alongside Elise as a part-time case worker. Her local insight and experience are a great addition to the Step Ahead team. As single mum to five incredible teenage girls, she's the ideal person for the work of family strengthening in the Khlong Toey slum community. She also runs a handmade jewellery business employing local women and educating customers about the challenges of urban poverty. Somehow, she finds time to study for a business diploma too!

Ora recently advocated for a disabled neighbour who lost her cleaning job and is struggling to provide for her child. Ora coordinated a meeting between Step Ahead, school teachers and the local Catholic Church. Everyone was keen to help this family and Ora made a plan to provide accessible work and financial support to keep the child in school. We were inspired to see how she drew on local resources and created unity between the different groups. Her quiet commitment to justice and second chances is so rare.

Life hasn't been easy for Ora. She has fought hard to keep her family together in challenging circumstances and rise above the judgements of others. She has helped us to see life from the perspective of people on the underside of the economic systems that have benefitted us. She brings balance to our outsider's perspective and helps us to navigate cultural complexities.

Ora grew up in the slum community with her dad and grandmother at their busy market stall, until she reached 14 and both caregivers died within a period of three months. She describes how everything switched off – losing everything and shouldering adult responsibilities overnight. Ora had to drop out of school due to financial constraints and work for a controlling Aunty. During this period a slum fire



Family photo with a neighbour

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With each other
To the edges**



devastated her community after which a house was cobbled together using whatever building materials they could find.

Keen to escape the home situation, Ora entered into marriage at a very young age and was left to raise her children alone. This is not uncommon in the local culture but still carries unfair stigma. She did everything in her power to shield her children from the effects of poverty even when they had to regularly move rental rooms and Ora had to work all hours in whatever jobs she could find. Her biggest fear was that she would be pressured to put her children into one of the local institutions which actively recruit children into orphanage care. Through sheer determination she

managed to keep all the girls in education and build a strong sense of family identity. They are all thriving and pursuing their own goals today – and all taller than their mum!

Ora remembers meeting God in a rainstorm. At her lowest point as a young adult, she went out alone at night and got caught in heavy monsoon rain. As it washed over her, she felt a presence that she described as pure love restoring her human dignity. The only Christian teaching she knew was the story of the Prodigal Son which had stuck with her since school. She identified as the son returning to the Father who welcomed her with open arms. It was only much later that she identified herself as a follower of Jesus, but this moment was a turning point.

Things did not get better overnight but Ora can look back and see Jesus walking with her through the struggle. For the past 16 years Ora has gravitated towards working for social enterprises and helping others to navigate traumatic life experiences. Her wage for working with the KFT programme will be part funded by CMS. As mission partners we are honoured to work with Ora and see her flourish in the work God has shaped her for. We have so much to learn from each other about the world and about our boundary-defying faith. Thank you to CMS partner churches and individual givers for making this possible!

Please pray with us:

- ▶ Ora is training to take on a caseload of families in the next KFT programme cohort. Please pray that many families will be strengthened through her support.
- ▶ Please pray for continued healing for Ora, especially when self-doubt creeps in and the reality of slum life is hard. Pray that she will be strengthened to love and serve.
- ▶ Pray for Jon and the Alternative Care Thailand coalition as they work for care reform in Thailand. They are working to educate international schools in Thailand about the harms of residential care for child development and the prevalence of orphanage trafficking. Schools will have the opportunity to commit to ethical volunteering and fundraising practice to avoid inadvertent harms. Pray that schools will be open to dialogue and that there will be some strong allies.

Much love, Jon and Elise



Photos from top to bottom: Ora home visiting in the community; Ora in case-work mode; Ora leading a networking event for Khlong Toei community leaders; The KFT team ready for work in all weathers!



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. We hope that you're inspired as you read about Elinaja in Tanzania who has found new skills as a wood turner. And about Makol in South Sudan whose life got dramatically saved during a peace rally. 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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