Faith in action
Partnering with Middle East Christians

Embrace the Middle East
Strategic plan 2016 – 2020
‘Whoever embraces one of these children as I do embraces me, and far more than me – God who sent me.’
Mark 9:37 The Message
Faith in action

A bold strategic plan to

- Strengthen existing partnerships, establish new ones and expand into new countries
- Increase grant expenditure by 50% over the plan period by growing income
- Focus more on targeted advocacy and campaigning
- Secure the long-term future of the Helen Keller School
- Invest in a stronger, more effective UK operation
Countries where Embrace hopes to be working by 2020:

- Egypt
- Israel
- Syria
- Lebanon
- Palestine
- Jordan
- Iraq
In 2011, we launched a new strategy for our 157-year old charity, then known as BibleLands. Our aim at all times was to build on our many decades of development and humanitarian work in the Middle East, and the deep partnerships we have formed with the local Christian communities. We also wanted to position the charity for future expansion, so that we could respond more effectively to the many and growing needs in the region. A key step in our new strategy was our successful name-change to Embrace the Middle East in 2012, which brought our work to the attention of a much wider range of supporters. This was accompanied by significant additional investment in our UK-based programmes and partnerships team, so that we could better support our Christian partners in the Middle East.

During the last five years, momentous events in the Middle East have created huge additional needs. Throughout the turmoil of the so-called Arab Spring, and the devastating conflicts in Gaza and Syria, we have expanded our work of partnering with Middle East Christians as they express their faith in their communities through social action.

Our Christian partners in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Israel and Palestine run hospitals, clinics, schools, and centres for people with disabilities as well as projects dealing with refugees, women’s empowerment, community development and humanitarian relief. Their projects are open to marginalised people of all faiths and most of our beneficiaries are Muslims. In this way, we also help bring about much-needed positive relationships between communities.

With these strong foundations in place, we have set ambitious strategic goals for the future. By 2020, we plan to build a stronger and more effective Embrace, expanding to support the witness of other historic Christian communities in the Middle East, and to see the ministry of all the Christians in the region grow in confidence and effectiveness. In these troubled times, the need for a vibrant Christian social witness in the Middle East has surely never been greater.

None of this could be achieved without the support of our stakeholders: our Christian partners in the Middle East, our loyal and generous supporters, our trustees, staff and volunteers. We commend this strategic plan to you, and hope you will be inspired to join us on our journey.

Brian Jolly
Chair of Trustees

Jeremy Moodey
Chief Executive
Examples of our impact 2012 – 2015

107,565 individuals received health education support

106,317 medical consultations in hospitals or clinics

37,041 family food parcels were distributed

10,809 medical consultations delivered to rural communities
Examples of our impact 2012 - 2015

- **4,269** microloans distributed to start or improve small businesses
- **3,612** children/young adults with disabilities received specialist education or rehabilitation
- **3,406** disadvantaged children educated
- **1,656** young people received psychosocial support
Our core values

Our core values are rooted in our belief as Christians that we are to follow the example of Jesus. We aim to ensure that our values permeate everything we do as a charity. We apply the same values to our principles of partnership:

- **Respect**
  We respect the human dignity and value of all people – no matter what their beliefs – for we are all made in God’s image.

- **Accountability**
  We seek to be accountable to the people whom we serve, to supporters and, ultimately, to God, who is at the heart of our ministry.

- **Compassion**
  Our calling is to be Christ-like in our compassion, focusing especially on those who are the most marginalised in society.

- **Excellence**
  We seek to attain high levels of professionalism and excellence in all areas, that our work might honour and glorify God.

- **Integrity**
  We strive at all times for honesty and integrity, seeing these as the hallmarks of any Christian organisation and of its partners, trustees, staff and volunteers.

Hassan, pictured above with his class queueing to have an eye test, is 13 years old. He lives in a mud brick house in rural Egypt, a long and expensive journey away from the nearest doctor. Although his father works hard there is no money to cover medical bills, so this free test at a mobile ‘pop up’ clinic is a godsend. The twice monthly service, part of a programme to identify and treat common preventable disabilities, picked up Hassan’s need for glasses and provided them free of charge. Hassan had suffered mockery from his classmates as he had been struggling to keep up at school. Now able to see the board clearly, he is able to take part in lessons and his future is much brighter.
Embrace supports transformational projects in the Middle East which help vulnerable and marginalised people to achieve their potential. We work through the historic Christian communities of the region, who for two thousand years have been ‘salt and light’ to the people they serve. Until 2020, our over-arching strategic goals are to:

1. **TRANSFORM** the lives of vulnerable and marginalised people across the Middle East, enabling them to live life in all its fullness.

2. **STRENGTHEN** and **ENCOURAGE** Middle East Christians as they bring about positive change in their communities.

3. **CHALLENGE** injustice, poverty and exclusion in the Middle East through targeted advocacy and campaigning.

**How will we do this?**

**Vision:**
Lives and communities in the Middle East transformed by the compassion of Christ.

**Mission:**
To partner with Middle East Christians as they bring healing and hope to all who face poverty and injustice.
Goal one: **TRANSFORM** the lives of vulnerable and marginalised people across the Middle East, enabling them to live life in all its fullness.

‘I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.’ Psalm 140:12

In recent years, the Middle East has endured one crisis after another: the Arab Spring, the revolutions in Egypt, the humanitarian and political crisis in Gaza, the wider conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the Syrian civil war (which in turn has led to instability in Lebanon) and the advance of ‘Islamic State’ extremists across parts of Syria and Iraq.

Conservative estimates point to 20 million refugees and displaced persons across the region, including over eleven million Syrians (many now in Lebanon and Jordan), three million Iraqis and five million Palestinians. Many of those who remain in their homes face significant economic and social hardship.

More needs to be done to respond to the humanitarian crises in the region and to support development work among the vulnerable and marginalised. Our focus will be on people who, without effective intervention by our partners, will never have the opportunity to achieve their potential.
Many Syrian refugee families arrive in Lebanon with only the possessions they can carry and live in private temporary accommodation until their savings run out. Fadia and her family are typical. She is softly spoken with kind eyes and a soothing voice. Her family fled after extensive bombing led to a couple of near misses and it became obvious that it was only a matter of time before one or more of the family was killed.

‘In our country we weren’t wealthy, but we lived comfortably’ she explains ‘never in our life had we asked for assistance from someone’. Most of their savings went on advance rent on a small apartment. There was no work to be had and no schooling for her six children. Fadia wept knowing that her children’s chances in life were being wiped away through lack of education.

Everything changed when an Embrace funded initiative providing food parcels started a school specifically tailored for the needs of Syrian children. It started with little, desks were cardboard boxes and resources were scarce. The teachers, all Syrian refugees themselves, are able to support the pupils and offer lessons in their native tongue. Fadia was first in line to register and now reports ‘Our situation has become much better. Psychologically we are able to rest a bit. And, praise God, we’re still alive’.

To transform the lives of vulnerable and marginalised people, we will prioritise work which:

- Supports people affected by poverty* and assists them to overcome it.
- Delivers basic services and livelihood opportunities to under-served and excluded people.
- Provides humanitarian assistance to people affected by conflict and other sudden onset crises.

We will deliver this through supporting work in the areas of healthcare, disability, education and community development.

Our targets are to:

- Increase financial support to our Christian partners in the Middle East from just over £2 million in 2015 to a sustainable figure of over £3 million.
- Commit approximately one third of our annual short-term grants budget to humanitarian and relief projects.
- Establish new partnerships within our existing geographical boundaries and expand into at least one additional Middle Eastern country.
- Develop our programmes and partnerships team and our approach to partner and grant management, including improving our monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning.

*We share the broad definitions of poverty as used in Sustainable Development Goal 1 - targets 1.1 & 1.2 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics
Goal two: STRENGTHEN and ENCOURAGE Middle East Christians as they bring about positive change in their communities.

‘Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.’
1 Thessalonians 5:11

Too often the Christian communities of the Middle East are seen in the West through one prism only: that of persecuted minorities. While we recognise that persecution and even fear of death have become a daily reality for many Christians in the Middle East, we do not want to lose sight of the fact that they have also been rooted in their communities for hundreds of years, in many cases since the time of Christ. Thus they do not see themselves as an ‘alien’ minority, but as part of the fabric of their societies, people who have expressed their historic faith through involvement in their communities, through work for reconciliation and healing between divided groups, and through vibrant social action for people of all faiths.
To strengthen and encourage Middle East Christians, we will:

- Develop and invest in stronger partnerships with local Christian civil society organisations, focusing on targeted capacity-building initiatives which enable our partners to be more self-reliant and better equipped to engage a broader range of donors.
- Engage and inspire more UK Christians and churches to get involved in supporting the social witness – and indeed continued presence in the region – of Middle East Christians.
- Maintain a range of Middle East Christian partners, covering the broad range of Christian traditions represented in the region.
- Strengthen the governance and ministry of the Helen Keller School, enabling it to continue its excellent service to future generations of Palestinian children with disabilities.

Our targets are to:

- Commit approximately one third of our annual short-term grants budget to projects which develop the capacity of our partners.
- Expand our programmes and partnerships team so that we can invest even more time and resources in supporting our partners to grow and be more effective.
- Expand our active UK supporter base, defined as those who give, buy, volunteer, pray or advocate, from 23,000 in 2015 to at least 30,000.
- Transfer the Helen Keller School by the start of the 2016/17 academic term into the care and ownership of the local church in Jerusalem, continuing to support their work through targeted grants.

No one wants to rely on charity. Mokhles, from the Egyptian village of Nag Sadalla, was frustrated that at the age of 26, he had no opportunity to earn an income. As a wheelchair user he was marginalised by his community until Embrace partners BLESS set up a development project to improve the residents’ standard of living. Their inclusive programme ensured that people with disabilities were offered the opportunity to become involved at every level. Mokhles attended all the public meetings and seminars and applied for a microloan to open a shop selling sweets and soft drinks. His enterprise was a great success. Mokhles’ confidence grew and he joined the community organising committee’s Economic Specialist Group. He is now a valued member of society and plays a significant role in further village development. The community have gained the skills, confidence and resources to continue the project independently, and BLESS, supported by Embrace, have moved on to another village.
Goal three: CHALLENGE injustice, poverty and exclusion in the Middle East through targeted advocacy and campaigning.

‘...loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke...’ Isaiah 58:6

The chains of injustice come in many shapes and sizes across the Middle East and our Christian partners are working hard to tackle some of their underlying causes. We want to support them. A key issue is political instability, leading to the displacement of millions of people across the region. Lebanon’s population has swollen by roughly a quarter because of the influx of refugees from Syria. This has placed immense strains on Lebanese society and throughout the region. Another underlying cause of instability is the unresolved conflict between Israel and Palestine. The ongoing occupation has now lasted for almost 50 years, and the prospects of a negotiated two-state solution seem as distant as ever.

Photo: Ryan Rodrick Beiler
To challenge injustice, poverty and exclusion, we will:

- Promote a greater understanding of, and responsiveness to, the issues affecting Middle East Christians and their role as positive agents for change in their communities.

- Raise awareness of the issues affecting refugees and displaced people in the region so as to encourage an active and informed response.

- Highlight the issues arising from the unresolved Israeli/Palestinian conflict and work for a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

- Identify and highlight other areas, such as gender issues, children in conflict and disability rights, where advocacy and campaigning could make a difference, whether through Embrace in the UK or through our partners’ activity in-country.

Our targets are to:

- Work with our Middle East partners to identify advocacy and campaigning issues of concern to them, where Embrace support can make a difference.

- Support focused advocacy projects and campaigns, both in the UK and through our Christian partners in the Middle East.

- Improve the coordination of our advocacy and campaigning activity by appointing an advocacy and campaigns manager.

Daoud Nassar’s family have worked their fields in Nahhalin, Bethlehem, for the last 100 years. In 1991 Israel declared that the farm belonged to the state and the fields have been under threat of confiscation ever since. Nassar explains that his family will not give up, nor will they resort to violence and he points to a notice at the farm entrance which declares ‘we refuse to be enemies’. He welcomes international volunteer groups who help with the planting and harvesting of the trees and who go back and tell their stories. The olive trees, which are sponsored by Embrace supporters and other agencies, are destroyed from time to time by settlers. Each time they are replanted and the sponsors are encouraged to use the destruction to campaign on the issue of land annexation. The farm has become known as the Tent of Nations, where groups can meet, learn and work together. Olive trees planted here produce far more than just food.
The centre of our model for achieving transformation is partnership. For us, partnership means supporting local solutions through local people, not imposing projects and priorities from afar.

The main focus of our charitable expenditure up to 2020 will be to provide medium-term multi-year grants for Christian partners in the Middle East. We also want to be responsive and will make available short-term grants, reacting quickly to developing situations such as humanitarian emergencies or supporting innovative projects which tackle emerging social problems. We will strengthen our partners, helping them become more sustainable and better equipped. We will work to address the root causes of poverty and injustice, not only the symptoms, by encouraging programmes which tackle both systemic and human causes of suffering. We will build upon our membership of umbrella organisations like Global Connections, Churches Together in Britain & Ireland and the Association of International Development Agencies in Jerusalem and search out other organisations and networks with whom we can work.

In the period 2016-20, our approach to relief and development will be characterised by the following guiding principles:

- The promotion of gender equality and empowerment and the inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Response on the basis of need alone.
- Reaching across religion, ethnicity and culture.

We will achieve this by supporting local Christian partners delivering projects in the areas of healthcare, disability, education and community development.

We will allocate grants based on the following:

- The extent to which the project serves the needs of vulnerable and marginalised people in keeping with our guiding principles.
- Absolute and relative need.
- Project effectiveness and inclusion of a clear and measurable impact.
- The presence of a ‘multiplier-effect’ which will extend the impact beyond the immediate beneficiary group.
- The level of sustainable benefit that will be derived from the project.
But how?

We will:

- Work with our partners to ensure that project beneficiaries are, where possible, included in the design, delivery, and evaluation of their programmes.
- Provide additional support for training initiatives to improve the skills of local staff and volunteers.
- Support investment in facilities and equipment to give beneficiaries access to the highest quality services.
- Provide access to experts offering advice and direction in specialist fields, and encourage more skilled UK volunteers to contribute time and resources via our SendME volunteer programme.
- Invest more of our UK-based programme managers’ time in visiting Middle East partners, building relationships and capacity.
- Increase support of in-country partner advocacy initiatives to improve national provision for marginalised groups or raise awareness of issues related to the vulnerable and marginalised within society.
- Participate actively in international development networks and coordination bodies.
Delivering the strategy – organisation and funding

To achieve the above strategic goals and objectives, by 2020 we will build a stronger and more effective UK charity which is achieving the highest standards across all of its operations.

At the heart of this will be an ambitious strategy to grow income from its current level of £3 million to £5 million by 2020. The majority of our resources will continue to be devoted to supporting our programmes and partnerships in the Middle East, but we will also target investment in fundraising and marketing, enabling us to deliver an increase in programme work so that we can be even more effective and far-reaching in our mission.

Every mother wants to protect her child. Sahirah is no different. Elation when she gave birth to her longed-for son soon turned to anguish and overnight her life became a nightmare. Ashaz had cerebral palsy, and his father and grandparents were furious. To them Sahirah had brought shame on the family.

‘You are damaged’ Sahirah’s husband told her ‘My son is not perfect and you are to blame. I will never forgive you’. The emotional abuse was almost too much to bear and then Sahirah’s husband brought a new wife into the family home in the hope that she would produce ‘perfect’ children. Sahirah and Ashaz were relegated to a miserable, undignified and forgotten existence in one corner of the house.

Ashaz grew up thinking that it was all his fault until Sahirah found help for them both at the Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation where mothers are empowered as equal partners in their child’s rehabilitation and receive accommodation, education, self-confidence and knowledge of their rights. The centre works tirelessly to dispel the myths about disability and empowers parents to enable their children to reach their full potential.
But how?

We will:

- Increase our strategic marketing and communications work, so that more people in the UK become aware of our ministry.
- Expand our use of digital media, including our website and social media, to engage more effectively with both existing and potential supporters.
- Diversify our income streams by offering new products to existing supporters and strengthening our existing products by offering them to new markets.
- Develop a stronger story-telling capability so that we can better engage supporters in the work of our partners.
- Increase our UK volunteer network to around 500 active people.
- Ensure that the financial efficiency of the charity (measured by fundraising efficiency and programme ratio*) will match or better that of other similar charities.
- Introduce a new contact relationship management (CRM) system, allowing us to serve our supporters, volunteers and other stakeholders more effectively.
- Improve our grant procedures, and develop new ones as necessary, for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, so that we can ensure the quality and better understand the impact of the projects we fund.
- Implement a supportive organisational development programme to ensure the optimal contribution from our staff team.
- Improve our knowledge management systems so that we become more effective.
- Continually review our charity governance to ensure the organisation’s effectiveness and compliance with best practice.
- Regularly review our UK operations to ensure that they are as effective as possible.

---

*Programme ratio is the total value of our charitable spend divided by total expenditure, both as reported in our annual accounts. We have a target programme ratio of 80%, which is in line with our international NGO peers.
Faith in action
Partnering with Middle East Christians

Embrace the Middle East
Strategic plan 2016 – 2020