

walking and working with God

A new chapter of my life started shortly after my husband died in 1992. I was in my late forties, with a married daughter and two grandchildren... and learning to cope with being a widow instead of a farmer's wife. The chapter started with just one word – "available." Something just went 'ping' in me when I heard it (in a prayer by an Interserve partner headed to Mongolia) and I began to explore what this could mean for me in the context of overseas mission.

At a Mission Expo I realised that Mongolia and Interserve were the right choices for me: no need to shop around. So I studied Mongolia's history, and learned about the fall of communism, and the depressing religious and economic situation the state had fallen into. The people no longer knew what to believe – they were a people without hope. It was God's timing for mission there; the Bible was already translated and ready to be shipped in. It coincided with God's timing for my new beginning, new adventure: I wanted to walk and work with God in Mongolia.

My first visit was for three months in 1996 on a tourist visa. I went as a 'gap-filler, gopher and granny,' and I was based in the capital city of Ulaan Baatar. My tasks included ironing, reading books to children, listening, child-minding, teaching

(English lessons and drug and alcohol awareness) and writing. I hired a tutor and enjoyed learning the language, I regularly attended six different churches and would ask everyone lots of questions all the time.

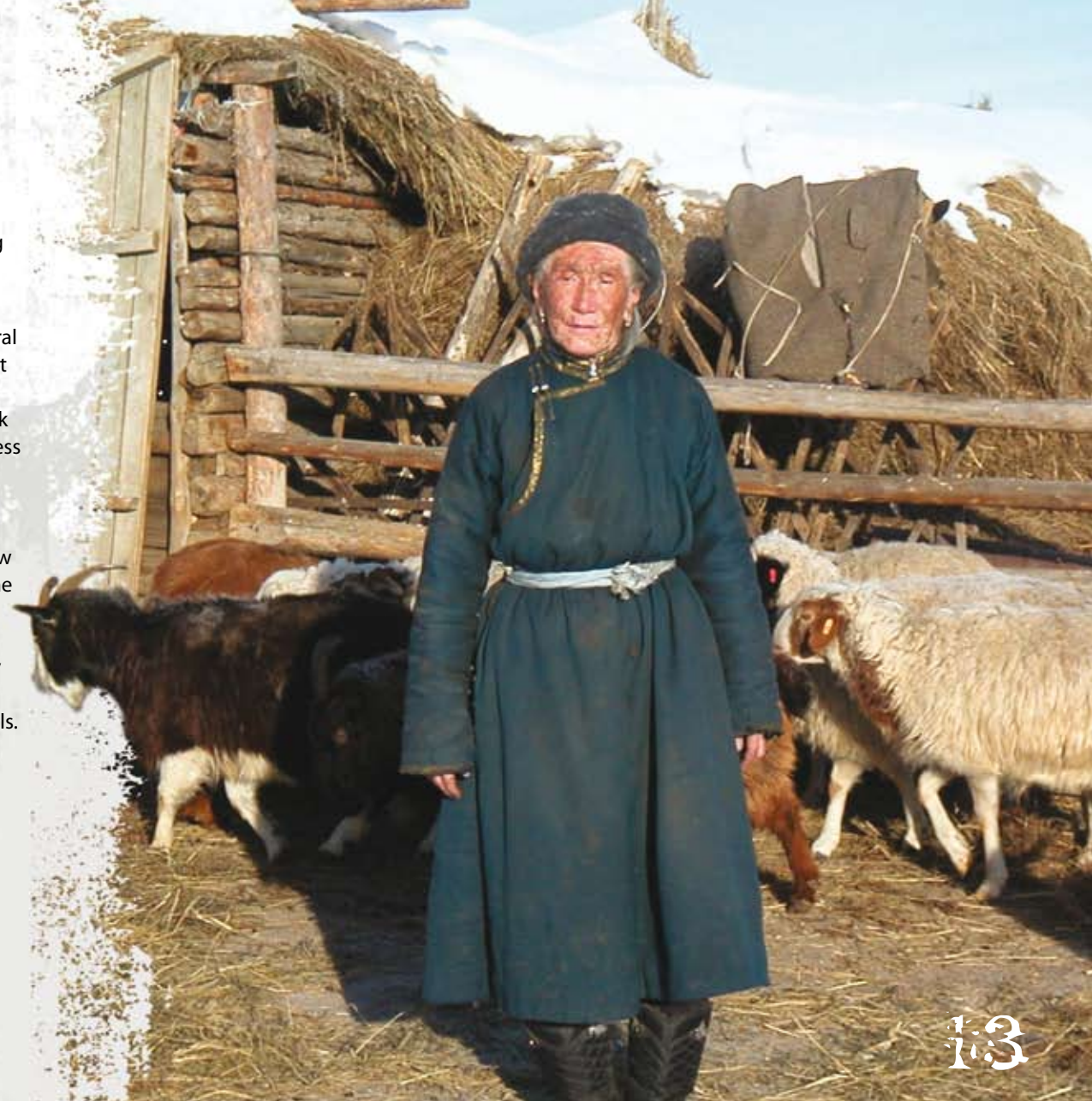
I returned to Mongolia at the beginning of 1999, to take up a twelve-month position teaching conversational English in a school run by Korean Christians. It was my first ever full-time salaried job and I loved it! I taught both children and adults, Mongolians and Koreans. The highlight for me was the day I discovered two small boys in the classroom, joking and playing together in English; one was Korean and the other Mongolian, and when they first started my class they had been unable to communicate with each other. God taught me that my role in Mongolia was that of encouragement (Romans 12:8), and it was equally valid whether it was directed toward Mongolians or Koreans.

In early 2000, after being accepted as a full mission partner by Interserve, I returned once again to Mongolia. I had volunteered to move from Ulaan Baatar to the smaller centre of Darhan, confident in my ability to live without the benefits of a big international city. I was involved with further language study, helped an Interserve family teach their three girls in a small

international school setting and then, with my newly acquired TEFL Certificate (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) taught in a university.

Then, in 2003, I volunteered to go live in a rural area to become the community development manager for a project focused on improving the food security of families through livestock herding, vegetable growing and small business loans. My sector was vegetables but my farming background was useful for livestock too! So many of the skills acquired through my farming years were needed, and I saw how God's hand had been on my life, preparing me for this role; my life skills, honed as a farmer's wife, were exactly what was needed for this project. New skills were added in as well - my language increased with everyday use and I was challenged to improve my computer skills.

Living a very rural life I had to haul my own water, use fires for heating and cooking, use 'longdrops,' ride my bicycle on rough dirt roads, and deal with dogs and drunks. My boss and I were the only foreigners in the area for some time which meant we were very visible! I didn't adjust well when it came to the 'correct' Mongolian dress code for a teacher - my wardrobe was rather too casual



Altantsetseg joined the 'Hope for the Future' project in 2005. She and her family live near the centre of the township and were allocated an area of the community field so that their vegetable growing would not only provide them with food, but also some cash income.

For the first year Altantsetseg was provided with free seed, along with gardening tools and 'how-to' gardening and vegetable processing books. She was also required to attend four instructional seminars.

Since that time her family's cash income has more than doubled, and vegetable growing has become an important part of this family's life.

Altantsetseg actively joins in maintenance work at the community field and is of great assistance to other participants. She has taken other seminars offered by the project - how to run a small business, and how to set up a co-operative. After completing a felting course Altantsetseg now also produces felt items both for selling and for her family's use. ■

Lindsay was community development manager for the 'Hope for the Future' garden development project.

This family joined the 'Hope for the Future' project in spring 2004. Sarantsetseg, 55, is ten years older than her husband and recently started receiving the national pension. She is a trained cook. Her husband Nyamchuluun works with a chain-saw, cutting firewood for families. They have three adult children. Their daughter is a doctor and has children; one son works in the local timber yard; and another son is a student.

They are a hardworking and hospitable couple. When they joined the project they were living in a ger (Mongolian tent) but had plans to build a house using income from their vegetables. They worked very hard and were successful in achieving their dream. After they moved into their house they turned part of it into a shop. The stock for this was bought using a small business loan from the project, which they repaid.

Similarly they applied for a loan to start a business cutting wood into kindling and selling it to city dwellers. Nyamchuluun and his wife were very happy when their wood business became profitable as well. ■

Here are just two of the many success stories from the project.

and comfortable. As an older lady on my own, wearing jeans and boots, I was certainly 'a curiosity for Christ'! But I did occasionally wear the traditional del (a long coat-like garment) which the locals appreciated.

I went to a local church and, like the others I had attended, saw it grow fast in numbers and more gradually in depth. My church participation was a joy and I was happy to host a home group. I feel particularly strongly about continuity and have endeavoured to keep up friendships made in my early years in Mongolia. I continued to go to all my churches in Ulaan Baatar whenever I had an opportunity to visit.

Faith, evangelism, seed planting, prayer for healing, and teaching where all areas I stepped out in, and I learned to depend on God far more for many things, especially physical safety. But mostly I had many opportunities to be a helper for those in need and out of that saw people become believers and go on to serve in the church.

Because of increasing back problems I had retired from physically helping my husband on the farm, but before my first trip in 1996 I put it to God that if He wanted me in Mongolia He would have to keep my back in good shape – which He did.

If you have a desire to serve God, if something is going 'ping' in your life but you feel there are too many obstacles – don't give up! I am

living proof that if God is leading you into service for Him, no matter your age, occupation or marital status, there's no barrier that can stop you. ■

Lindsay King has recently returned to NZ to spend more time with family and grandchildren – but is already plotting plans for short trips back to the country she now loves.

