

OPERATION ORANGE RIBBON BRINGS THE GOSPEL TO AFRICAN TEENAGERS

BY SYDNEY FOWLER

OPERATION ORANGE RIBBON IS EXPANDING

its ministry by partnering with missionaries to implement a new program to bring the gospel to teenagers of Muslim and indigenous religious backgrounds in African east coast cities.

The program meets on Sundays and focuses on bringing the gospel to teenagers from drug- and gang-related areas through mentorship and fulfilling needs such as homework help, developing talents and skills, and providing counseling. The teens are split into groups of 10 based on age and class. The program is already averaging 38 students a session; the current goal is 50.

Parents are also encouraged to get involved. Once a month, the parents are invited to attend and watch their children demonstrate what they have been learning. That time is also spent talking about family issues and the Bible.

OOR founder Jesse French emphasized the importance of ministering to the kids. “We can reach out and share the word of Christ with them and give them an alternative [to their current situation] and some hope.”

French said that he decided to join this mission because he heard from missionaries he works with about a man who had recently converted to Christianity and had run into financial difficulty. The man’s decision to become a Christian resulted in his Muslim family disowning him.

Shortly afterward, he lost his job and could not afford to pay for his daughters’ schooling. His family took custody of the girls and put them in a Muslim school. OOR decided to step in



▲ Operation Orange Ribbon has teamed up with missionaries working with teenagers in east coast cities in Africa.

on his behalf. French and OOR were able to raise enough money to cover the cost to put both girls into a Christian school.

French said they also were able to assist a young teenager from a Muslim family who was left to raise his younger siblings after his family separated. Through their work, he was able to attend school and also find a part-time job so he could continue to provide for his siblings.

These two instances — among others — prompted French to see if he could do more.

“I got a hold of [our contact] and asked him if he had any projects he would like to start,” French said. The missionary sent him an outline of the youth club, and French knew he had found his next ministry.

“I got excited thinking about how we could influence and reach 50 or more children!”

French agreed to pay for the program for six months. After that time, they would evaluate the progress and determine if they could still support it.

“So far the Lord’s blessed everything we’ve done,” French said. “It’s just something that has been unbelievable!”

When asked about what is next for OOR, French says that it’s up to the Lord. They do have a few programs in the works, such as an ambassador program to their partner churches. They are also still focused on continuing their original mission of raising awareness for persecuted Christians.

“I’ve kinda let the Lord lead me and open the doors for me,” French said. “So far it’s been a phenomenal ride.” ■



▲ Local African women prepare a meal for a program that focuses on bringing the gospel to teenagers from drug- and gang-related areas.

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