**Interview 008 Pseudonym: Sarah**

INTERVIEWER: Can you confirm for me please that you’ve read the information that I sent and that you’re happy to go ahead with this interview?

SARAH: Yep, yeah. I’m in agreement with all that; I read it.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Just to start off with, can you tell me about your faith history?

SARAH: Erm, I suppose growing up… I grew up in a Christian home and I always would have considered myself a Christian. But kind of it was when I was more in my teens that my faith kind of became more my own. Yeah and that was when it really started to actually mean something and affect my life more, but I always would have, yeah, said that I believed all the things that a Christian would be expected to believe, but it started to affect my life more as a teenager as I started to mature more in that way. [pause]

INTERVIEWER: At what point did you leave home and how did that impact your faith?

SARAH: Erm, so I suppose, after my A-Levels, so when I was eighteen, I took a gap-year. Cos… for various reasons I delayed my university application for a year. All to do with God. But I then spent six months working in a boarding school and I lived there during the week and then came home at the weekend. And so that for the first six months was sort of a half-way house. And it was nice actually that the school that I was working at was only forty minutes away from my parents and I passed my driving test in that time so then I was able to, yeah… It was interesting because it was technically a Christian school, an Anglican school, but most of the students in the boarding house didn’t really have a personal faith themselves. So I think at that stage our church had like a Wednesday evening prayer meeting. They were doing that for a while instead of having home groups or study groups. And so Wednesday was one of my evenings off so I’d disappear and go to my church meeting. And all the girls would be like “oh, where are you going? Where are you going?” All these twelve year old girls. And I’d say “oh, I’m going to church!” And they said, “but it’s not Sunday!” And then I’d try and explain that it was a prayer meeting and why it was important. They just looked at me like I was an alien sort of thing. But yeah, I guess that was a good time to actually have to – I don’t know what the right word it – but assert my faith for myself I suppose. And then, after those six months was the first time I went to [African country] for a few months to live with a family who were working in [African country]. So then that was for a few months. And then after that I then came back to the UK and was at university for a few years.

INTERVIEWER: So tell me about why you deferred university. Tell me the story!

SARAH: So I suppose as far back as I can remember until I was seventeen I wanted to be a [career]. And wanted very passionately to be a [career]. And kind of was on the right track and did all the work experience and all that kind of thing and the right subjects and the right grades and blah blah blah. And then it was the summer holiday between my two years of sixth form, between the A-level years, and I was away on a youth camp with my church youth group. And it wasn’t – I can’t even remember what the talk was about – but I seem to remember that the speaker mentioned something about sacrifice. And I just felt, em, not challenged in a particularly strong way but I just started to wonder, you know, in theory what would be the hardest thing for me to sacrifice, because usually around Lent there’s not really anything obvious for me to give up. So I thought, oh what would be the hardest thing? And I decided after a day or so that it was probably my life-long dream to be a [career]. And then I kind of … this was kind of a week-long youth camp and so it kind of went throughout the week. And then the next day I started thinking, you know, hypothetically at some point in the future – I’m thinking when I’m thirty, forty, whatever – if God were to ask me to give up my dream to be a [career], would I be able to do it? And I thought about it and I thought yes, sure. If God at some point in my life wants to direct me on a new path then I hope I would trust him in that. Sure God. And then it was in one of the evening sessions, and I think it was… they were playing a song and one of the words, one of the chorus or verse or whatever, has a bit where it says “can a child presume to choose where or how to live? Can a father’s love refuse all the best to give?” And I really strongly felt challenged that actually God was saying, “actually now is when I would like you to give up that dream.” And “it’s not My best plan for you; My plan is something else but you need to trust me and do what you said you’d do and give up that dream.” And I was quite upset, and cross with God. [laughter] And felt a bit like I was going crazy. So then the next day or later on that evening – I can’t remember exactly – I talked with my youth worker and his wife. And they said, “[name] that’s really interesting because you know six months ago when you got baptised we had been praying for you and we’ve been really feeling these months that God wanted to change your plans somehow but we didn’t want to say anything to you until we felt that God had said something. And we think this is God saying something so we don’t think you’re crazy.” So that was really helpful. And then I kind of came home and said to my parents, ok, you need to sit down! And it was a case of “I think God doesn’t want me to be a [career], but I don’t really know what he does want me to be.” And so that was August – July or August or something. So then over the next two months or so it was a lot of “I really want to be a [career]” but I’m gradually more and more and more certain that that’s not what God wants. And it got to like the deadline in October when I had to hand in – I was applying to Cambridge and you had to hand in the application form in the middle of October. So I went to my youth worker and his wife’s house and we had this whole big conversation and em … and at one point [name] the wife says to me, “OK [name], just say you do hand in the form tomorrow” which I’d already filled in; it was all ready to go in. She said, you do get in, you get into Cambridge, they give you an interview and they say “why do you want to be a [career]?” what would you say? And it: the weirdest thing was in that moment I suddenly could not think of why I wanted to be a [career]. Just suddenly my mind was just blank; I couldn’t… I could kind of come up with all the reasons that you’re meant to say in interview or whatever, but I couldn’t think of any more. I didn’t have that desire that had been driving me for however many years. So I decided that I probably shouldn’t hand in the form the next day.

So I didn’t hand in the form and then over the rest of that year was a lot of talking with my youth worker and his wife, talking with my teachers at school. And that was actually another encouragement and confirmation for me was a lot of my teachers at school being very supportive. It was a Catholic school, but not all the staff or students were Christian. But I just felt incredibly supported and even the careers advisor who was usually a really terrifying lady was very supportive. And in fact a lot of my teachers who were teaching the subjects I was doing actually kind of revealed to me their own Christian faith and said, you know, yes I’m disappointed as your teacher that you’re probably not going to study biology or chemistry or whatever, but I’m excited for you in your faith and I’m praying for you in this process. So actually that was a real encouragement for me. Yeah. So at some point during that year I was talking with my pastor and his wife. I can’t think exactly why I was at their house on a Sunday afternoon. And by that point I’d started looking at Classics courses: Latin and Greek. Because I was studying biology, chemistry, maths and Latin. And the Latin was more just something on the side for fun. So I started looking at it and I was talking with the pastor’s wife about it and she said, OK, so Classics – why? And I said, you know, I just have no idea. It just feels like the logical next step. I don’t really want to study biology or chemistry or maths. But I do like studying. And she said oh, you should speak to this person in our church; they used to work for [Mission Organisation]. And I had never heard of [Mission Organisation] or Bible translation or anything like that before. And so, the more I read about [Mission Organisation], and that kind of work, it kind of was like a lightbulb kind of thing and suddenly it felt like it made sense. Yeah. So that was still in my last year of school. So then when I had to take the year out because I’d delayed my university application, I then started talking more with [Mission Organisation] and finding out a bit more about them. Which is why then in the second part of my year off I then lived with a family in [country] for three months, who were working with [Mission Organisation]. Just as a kind of what does normal life working overseas look like? Can I imagine myself doing this at some point? Yeah, so then by the time I got to university I already had in the back of my mind working with [Mission Organisation] at some point afterwards. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: interesting. So have there been times when your faith has been tested, challenged, in different ways?

SARAH: yeah. I mean, I don’t think I’ve ever had a sort of doubting my faith moment. But whenever things have been difficult, I’ve felt able to sort of grow through that I suppose looking back. I mean there’ve been ups and downs. Some of the most difficult things have been to do with my family. Both my parents suffer from depression. My father has since I was maybe fifteen. And my sister was very ill with anorexia at some point in my early twenties I think that was. So those have been more like challenges for our family. And trying to see why and how, how God is working through that. And yeah, those are still challenges. And now it’s my brother who’s quite ill with his mental health. But, I think, I’m trying to think for me personally. There have certainly been years that have been harder than other years. Definitely at university for my undergraduate degree, it was really hard. And I was quite ill actually quite frequently; I had like chest infections every four months from about the age of fifteen to what? Twenty-two. So at university every single term I had a chest infection by the end of it. And it was really quite frustrating. But then that culminated in getting pneumonia when I was twenty-three. That was when I was doing various part-time jobs, working myself into the ground really, trying to pay the rent. And yeah I got pneumonia one summer and kind of just had to stop everything. And I moved home because I was hospitalised for a few days. And just basically lived with my parents for three, three-and-a-half months and had to really just start from nothing again. Had to quit my jobs and then find new jobs once I was well enough again. But actually it was really, kind of looking from the end of it I could already see that it had been a really kind of precious time. Because I had been able to be at home with my parents for three months. Like especially with my mum, when I was really ill I kind of didn’t have the mental capacity to sort of read, or even to listen to an audio book, and so she’d often read to me, which was really nice. And just having that, em, sort of more intensive time with her at home was then really nice because after a year I then was applying to [Mission Organisation] and then I was doing the training and then I was going overseas. So actually to have had that time at home was really good for us, for our relationship. And also in terms of being rested and knowing what it feels like to have had proper rest. I just basically had lived exhausted until that point for quite a few years. And so having to just stop everything helped me to realise what good sleep feels like. That kind of thing. Yeah, so that was certainly a difficult time. But even by the end of – not even looking back from now – but looking back from the end of being so ill I could see the benefits that had come from it. Yeah. Oh and actually – I’m now remembering things that now don’t occur to me every day. When I had a year off…. So later, when I started my [Mission Organisation] training, em, I started in the July, the course was meant to finish in December and then I was meant to be going to [African country] in January. At the end of November my mum was diagnosed with cancer. And it was – it was cancer of the womb – and it was just randomly caught through a smear test. And she then had surgery in the December. And then, like my Christmas holidays when I was preparing for going to [country] was sort of looking after her and trying to keep things going in the house. And cooking and cleaning and just trying to do all the normal things. And that was just really hard and tiring. Just a lot to sort of take on. And it just felt really counter-intuitive to be planning to go overseas for a couple of years when it felt like my family needed me at home. But incredibly, when I was studying there was a couple that I’d already become good friends with, em, and it turned out that the husband of that couple when he was – it was his wife who was doing the training, he had done it like five years previously – and when he had been doing the training, his own mother had been diagnosed with cancer. And so he knew exactly what I was going through. And it was just incredible to me that I’d already developed that close friendship with them and then really needed their friendship and they totally understood. So that was exactly the friendship that I needed at that time. Yeah. So that was… yeah, that was hard, but clearly God was in it.

INTERVIEWER: so you still went at that point?

SARAH: yeah, I still went. I mean, by… I didn’t book my tickets until quite last minute because I didn’t really want to think about going. But by the beginning of January my mum had been given the all-clear. And em, although she wasn’t very strong… It was weird because she wasn’t ill before the surgery. So she was still recovering obviously but it wasn’t like she was then having to undergo chemo or whatever; that was the end of the treatment. So I felt like I could go. But it was still hard, so…. It was kind of towards the end of the January that I eventually went I think.

Sorry a box has fallen down underneath my desk.

INTERVIEWER: [re cat: oh where’s she going? She’s seen a bird out the window!] The cats came back from Romania with me. So, er, I was going to ask about how you came to be doing what you’re doing but you’ve told some of the story. So you went in the January and that was for two years, is that how it works?

SARAH: so part of – the standard way of how [Mission Organisation] training works is that you do some introductory study modules and then you go and work with a project for almost two years. So I went from the January until the November the following year, so it was more like 22-23 months. And then once you’re in the UK – well it doesn’t work this way any more, they’ve rejigged the months around – but when I did it you then studied from the January until the July. Yeah, so I worked, I went to [country]: a different part from where I’d visited a few years before that. Yeah, I worked with a project and it was – is – a “cluster” project where it’s sort of lots of languages and there’s one sort of central office that works with all the different language groups and it’s based in a more central location and then you do your trips out to the villages. Rather than the old style where there’s this person working over here with this remote group, this person working over here: it’s more a collaborative working together thing. It was good for me starting out that I was in a team of – at that stage – three other linguists and so could learn from them. And the team was working with eight different languages, so there were eight different translation teams. So translators from the different languages working in the office with non-citizen translation experts and that kind of thing. So it was a big team and really good for learning a lot. It was quite a steep learning curve. And also because I had to learn [major African language] first. Was it three months? Twelve weeks? My initial three months was intensive [language] learning so…. But then, after that I moved to the project. So I was with that team for the first almost two years. And then after doing some more training I’ve then returned to the same team. So that’s the same team that I still work with.

INTERVIEWER: So you’re in a town then?

SARAH: Yeah. A small town. It’s kind of two hours from [country] border; four hours from [city name] which is the next biggest city, which is where we usually go to fly. There is a dirt runway in our town; they used to fly commercial ones on it, but then they got told off because it wasn’t technically long enough. So no, we don’t fly in and out. We go to [city] a few hours away. So it’s a town, but it’s quite close to a lot of the surrounding villages, surrounding language area.

INTERVIEWER: So how did you find moving to a different country, culture?

SARAH: Yeah. It definitely helped that I’d done that small trip in my year out because then when I was applying to officially join Mission Organisation they said, you know, is there a part of the world, or a country, or a language area you would like to go to? And I said well, I’ve been to [country] and also so [other country] and I liked [country] and I liked the bit of [language] that I learnt, but I don’t have to go there. I’ll go somewhere else if you want me to go somewhere else. But they said, you know… one of the people in my interview I remember said to me, you know, “it doesn’t have to be the hardest situation it possibly could be. If there’s a way we can make this transition easier then let’s go for it.” Which I thought was quite fun. So then they made enquiries in [country] and because it’s quite a big branch, there are a number of these cluster projects going on in the country, they had some requests out for linguists, so that was kind of the first thing that we looked into and it went through, so we kind of didn’t really look anywhere else. But yeah, having been there, having already seen it a bit and I could kind of picture it a bit before I went, it made it a bit easier. Certainly being in a team with a lot of non-citizen staff from various different countries – no other Brits in my project, but lots from America and different European countries – that made it easier. And I was living with another single lady at the time, from America. And just being able to live and work with other people who knew what it was like to be in a totally different country certainly made it far easier than it would have been had I been much more on my own.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a bit about team work. How have you found working in teams?

SARAH: Yeah. I mean I really love our team in [town]. I think it’s … yeah, it’s interesting comparing it with some of the other teams in some of the other parts of [country]. We socialise a lot together which I think helps. Not just the non-citizen staff. I mean, we play a lot of – well we used to play a lot of sport in the weekends but also trying to do that with the [country]-an staff in the office as well. We used to do a lot of either volleyball or soccer, football, maybe once a month on a Friday afternoon. And that just seemed a really good way to let out some of the tension or whatever that had built up, just to do something [Mission Organisation 2]ly and fun together. Just seems to have been a really good thing for the team. It was interesting… I was very nervous when I first went to be working with so many Americans. [laughter] But actually it was fine. It’s like some of the, yeah, some of the Americans are more different from each other than I feel I am from them. Because they’re from many different states sort of thing. I mean it’s been really interesting to learn what some of the stereotypes are and how they’re right and how they’re not right. But generally I think our team has worked really well together. I mean there are obviously more challenges when working with [country]-an colleagues. It’s tricky, like, as much as you say yes, we do share the same faith and the same vision and we’re working towards the same goal. Just the backgrounds and perspectives are so different, in a good way, that you approach a problem in a very different way. You come with different perspectives for any work but also for translation work. You come with different views and perspectives. Which is helpful but it does make things challenging. And I think particularly when you’re working for an organisation where most of our funding comes from the US or the Netherlands. I’ve done some finance work as well as linguistics work. It’s one of those jobs that everyone takes a turn doing at some point. But that’s when a lot of the challenges come in. When you’re dealing with planning and financial accountability, which the way we have to do it is the way that the US want us to do it. But that’s not the way that [country]-ans work. And so trying to enforce or encourage all that kind of financial accountability and receipts and all that kind of stuff while not harming your relationship with your colleague… it’s really tricky, it’s a real challenge. And if something does go wrong – like forging of receipts or whatever, trying to both enforce the correct way to do it while also understanding that it’s just not a value or a priority in [country-an] culture. Yeah, it’s … that’s an ongoing… that’s probably the trickiest issue. Because the different cultures just approach finance in a totally different way. Yeah. And it’s not really an area where you can compromise on. There are a lot of areas where you can find a halfway point. But when you’re having to be financially accountable to the US you kind of have to follow their way of doing things. Which is, yeah, which is a challenge.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I can see that. How do you think Britishness is viewed?

SARAH: I’m viewed as being very British! My Dutch colleagues in particular love to make fun of me for how I request things. So like, “would it be alright, do you think it would be OK if… could you, if it’s not to much trouble…” Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. One of my Dutch colleagues, he’s often like, “just ask [name]!!” Or like if I’m at their house and he’s offering drinks and I’m like, “oh, if you’re putting the kettle on, I’ll have a cup of tea.” And he’s like, “no [name], if you would like a cup of tea, I will put the kettle on just for you.” So it’s quite funny. But generally it’s very good natured. But yes, that’s one of the things that does get picked up on a lot. Which I guess I wasn’t aware of before because to me it’s so normal to ask in that really round-about way, yeah. But now sometimes I do it just deliberately. Yeah, it’s one of those funny things where you become more aware of yourself, how you do things. I certainly drink a lot more tea than some of them. My American housemate, she said that by the end of two years living with me she definitely drank more tea than she had done before.

INTERVIEWER: What about from a [country]-an perspective? How do you think they would…?

SARAH: I don’t think… They don’t really remember that I’m from England and not from America. They just, yeah. They know I’m not Dutch or German. But they often say, “how is America?” And I’m like, “England is great!” So, I think also because I’m the only Brit. If I was in one of the other teams where it’s kind of half-half or majority British, then it might be more of a normal thing. But I don’t think they really see me any different from the other, what’s the word? I was going to say [African word]. The other foreigners. I don’t think they see much of a difference between us. Although, actually there’s one thing. Sometimes they – there was a group that sometimes do English learning. A colleague who’s now left did English training for some of them who are doing further education. And sometimes the teacher, who was an American, would sometimes come and check with me how I would say things. Because she didn’t want them to learn just American English. And so sometimes those students were more aware of me saying things differently in English than the American colleagues and so they’d sometimes comment on that. But aside from that minor thing, I don’t think there’s much awareness of me being any different.

INTERVIEWER: Where shall we go next….. Do you consider yourself a “missionary”? How would you define the term?

SARAH: Interesting. I mean, yes. Although I suppose if somebody asks me what do I do – somebody who doesn’t know me at all – I would probably say I was a linguist first. Because when you say a missionary, they usually don’t think of a linguist. It’s kind of quite specialised. How do I see the word? It was interesting, I was listening to a sermon a few months ago or something when the person was defining missionary as someone, well, I don’t know, the most “pure” is the wrong word but the most prototypical or the most missionary missionary being someone who is going to a totally unreached people group. Which actually we’re not because [country] is about 50% Christian, 50% Muslim. But yeah, I would describe myself as a missionary. I think because, erm… I think to me a missionary… I don’t agree with the theology that says oh everyone’s a missionary, some of you are just a missionary to your next door neighbours. I think everyone should be an evangelist and should be somebody who shares Christ with those around them, but I think sharing Christ doesn’t necessarily make you a missionary. I think it has to be something to do with crossing borders, whether that physical borders, or cultural borders or linguistic borders. And somehow taking Christ into an area in a way that it wasn’t before. So for us the focus is of course very much on people’s mother tongue. And enabling people to have that access to Scripture in a way that they didn’t before. And we hope enabling true faith. Because we often find that without having the mother tongue Scriptures – oh, hang on a second… Sorry my dad needs to re-boot the router at some point!

INTERVIEWER: I thought they were bringing you a cup of tea!

SARAH: no, no. What was I saying? We often find that without the mother tongue Scriptures, faith can be more nominal and that there can still be the traditional religion. Because traditional religion is in the mother tongue and then Christianity is in the national language. And then there isn’t really a clash between them. So yeah, I think that that’s our focus obviously. And the way that we are trying to take Christ into a new – not necessarily geographical area – but a new, in a new way for people, in a new domain of life. Yeah. I can’t remember what your original question was.

INTERVIEWER: It was how do you define a missionary?

SARAH: Ah, OK

INTERVIEWER: Who have been your models in your faith?

SARAH: I think for me it’s usually been people around me, rather than having like a historical model or someone, reading a biography of someone being a model for me. For me it’s been a youth group leader or, yeah, someone older than me in my church, whether that was my church as a teenager or as a student, those who were students older than me or student workers or people employed by the church or people… or in home groups and Bible study groups and that kind of thing. And I mean even in our [country] team now. I think I’m still the youngest somehow, even after five years. Yeah, there are plenty of Christians older than me, both who have been overseas longer or doing the job longer or a Christian or adult longer than I have been. There are definitely plenty of people to emulate, want to emulate, desire to emulate in different ways. Yeah, certainly in our team I’m not short of people to admire in different ways.

INTERVIEWER: how are you supported? In terms of finance, prayer, practical things.

SARAH: So first of all with finance, we are 100% supported by churches or individuals. None of it – it kind of goes through Mission Organisation mostly and they use 10% of our financial support for running the UK office, or the [European country] office because my husband is [from there] so we have money coming from both sides. But yeah, all of our support was raised by us personally by contacts in churches or individuals. In terms of prayer, the same. It’s… we try and send out regular monthly, mostly, newsletters and when we’re in Europe – when there’s not a lockdown – we try and visit our supporting churches and friends. That’s becoming more difficult as the years go by. Sort of when I first started with Mission Organisation most of my contacts and supporters and people who receive my news and pray for me were in kind of two or three locations. But people of course move around, so they’re even more spread across the UK and now the world. But as much as we can we try and see people personally when we can, because I know that we really appreciate that personal contact and I know that I – for the people whose newsletters I receive – I always enjoy, as good as the newsletters are, it’s the in-person that really helps you to rekindle a relationship. Yeah, so back in – we were in the UK last year from May to November and sort of September, October, November we did a lot of travelling around. And that was partly because we’d got married in July and so I was wanting my supporters to get to know [husband’s name] and he was wanting his supporters to get to know me. So there was a lot of travelling around. Yeah and even when we’re overseas I try and email personally when I can, aside from the newsletters. Yeah. I have a few newsletter and/or financial supporters who are people that I haven’t personally met but there’s usually some sort of connection. So some of them are people at my university in the Christian Union. When they have, some of them wanted like a personal connection to a missionary who was connected with the university, so some of those current Christian Union reps have my newsletter and email me sometimes and then there’s… sometimes it’s just really random people. I think for a while we were on the Mission Organisation UK website: they kind of do a “introducing” different people who are working, and there were some people who wanted to support somebody through Mission Organisation and they had a connection somehow to East Africa and saw our names and thought yes, I’d like to support them. So I’ve never met them. But generally it’s people that we know personally.

INTERVIEWER: What about more practical things, like just helping you out with things back here?

SARAH: I mean I think, I think it’s a bit different for us at the moment in terms of, for example, somewhere to live… it was very obvious for us to ask my parents. We don’t have children yet, so it’s very easy for us to just stay with my parents. And if we were in [husband’s home country] also we would stay with my husband’s mother in her flat, if it wasn’t for a very long time. So in terms of that, at the moment it’s very obvious for us. We’re not like some of our colleagues who have four kids and are trying to find somewhere to live. When we do travelling around the UK, like I’m in [county] at the moment with my parents but one of our churches is in [city], we have a number of friends there who are always very generous in saying, ‘oh, come and stay in our spare room’ or ‘we’ve got a sofa bed that’s available if you want it’ or that kind of thing. So I definitely have a sort of shortlist of people who I can very ea[Mission Organisation 2]y call upon if we’re needing to stay. Sometimes we just decide to stay with one person for the whole week or two weeks, but the last time we stayed with one person for one night, another person for another night… just cos often that’s the easiest way to see people if they’re busy during the day, is to actually stay at their house. So, that is a bit more exhausting, but em, it’s a good way to see people. So yeah, certainly in terms of places to stay, we definitely have people who are very, em, very keen and very free with offering up their spare beds. And yeah, there was… when was it? It was a couple of years ago I think when I was finishing off my Masters dissertation and I stayed in [UK city] for a few weeks or maybe even more than a month and a friend lent me her bike for a month so I could more ea[Mission Organisation 2]y get around the city. Things like that, so… sometimes it involves a bit of asking, asking around. But sometimes people just offer, things like that. Which is really nice.

INTERVIEWER: what about prayer support?

SARAH: I mean I know that a lot of people who receive our newsletters are praying for us. And it’s nice when people reply to newsletters and say “we’re praying” and even if it’s almost a direct quotation or summary of the newsletter saying “I’m praying for X, Y, Z” it’s like yes, they are praying for us, they have read the newsletter, which is nice. And I know that there are a couple of homegroups in [UK city] and at least one of the people in the group receives our newsletter and they sort of have taken it upon themselves to kind of share our prayer news and to pray for us as a homegroup, which is really nice. Which is encouraging, yeah. And it’s really encouraging when you actually see someone in person and they say “oh – you mentioned this thing last year but I don’t remember ever hearing an answer to it!” That’s really nice when that happens.

INTERVIEWER: How do you go about making major decisions?

SARAH: it depends what kind of a major decision. I suppose a couple of weeks ago our major decision was do we leave the country or not. In the end the decision was made for us. But for about three days we were given the option of voluntary evacuation. And at first we were like, no, of course we’ll stay, we’re fine. And then we had some more meetings and we thought, hmm, ok, this is a bit more of a concern. And it was a case of praying individually, praying together, talking and praying with local colleagues. We also contacted our [Mission Organisation UK branch] – what’s she called now? They’ve changed all the terminology – our personnel support person. And also the director of Mission Organisation [European country] who’s a personal friend. Just to sort of hear their side of things. And both of them kind of said, you know, there doesn’t seem like a right or wrong answer to us. We support you either way. These are our concerns, but we also understand your feelings on both sides. That at least helped to be able to talk things through with them. And we were talking things through with HR people on … we’re kind of sent by Mission Organisation but then in [country] we work for [Mission Organisation 2] which is the kind of linguistic, translation specialist organisation. So we were both talking with our Mission Organisation home people and the HR people for [MISSION ORGANISATION 2] [country]. And it was [MISSION ORGANISATION 2] [country] who in the end three days later said actually no, we want all non-citizen staff to leave and repatriate. So in the end the decision was made for us. But actually, that day we’d come to the decision to leave ourselves and had started booking flights. And then the request to leave came through from the director. So it helped us in that process both talking and praying between us and with friends who were in the same situation kind of hearing, ok, what’s your thinking? But then also talking with people outside the immediate situation was also helpful. I’m trying to think of any other big decisions. Yeah. Not sure. That’s the most recent big decision.

INTERVIEWER: so do you have a plan for the future? Do you know how long you’re intending to … it’s so up in the air at the moment!

SARAH: The situation’s a bit unique at the moment. If I kind of ignore the global crisis… Yeah, I mean, in terms of mission and [country] and Mission Organisation, I think we both feel that we really enjoy the job that we’re doing. Yes the current job that we’re doing with the project in [country] but also generally the type of work that we do with Mission Organisation. I can’t think of anything else I would rather do. Or anything else that would fit my sort of skill set I suppose. Because I love the fact that I can do very detailed academic linguistic work and yet I hope have an eternal impact through it. And yes, I would be, I quite enjoy it when I get to sit in a library in the UK and do research for a few weeks, but I like the fact that in my current role I can be helping more than just some random group of African linguists, sort of thing. I can be helping much wider, I hope. So I mean, who knows really what the future holds for us and for [country]. But certainly with [country], we’d like to keep working with the project until there isn’t really work for us to do or until the country kicks us out. That’s the problem at the moment, that they’re not issuing work permits. So I don’t have a work permit currently, so I was secretly working from home. But my husband had a work permit so I was allowed as his dependent. But his permit runs out November next year. So yeah, there’s talk in our team of trying to set up a remote hub, perhaps somewhere in East Africa. So that all the people who want to keep working for [country] can maybe work in [city] and then make trips into [country] and things like that. So I think we would like to keep working with the project we’re working with as long as we can, as long as we’re helpful. I’d certainly be open at this stage to going somewhere else afterwards, whenever that is. But yeah, it obviously depends on us and our family situation. If we have children, their health, that kind of thing. But I’m certainly open to being overseas with children. Partly because we have so many colleagues who do that. We can see so many different models of sort of having a family overseas and the different ways that they do school and that kind of thing. Different kid personalities and things that are easier and things that are harder, so… Yeah. I’m certainly not thinking that if we have children then of course we’ll return to Europe. So, yeah. I mean, even sometimes I think I’d rather have my children overseas and homeschool them than try and navigate the ups and downs of the UK school system. But, yeah, we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it. But yeah, I’m certainly open to the possibility of staying or going somewhere else overseas. Yeah, I suppose we’ll just see how long we can keep working with [country]. See what Mission Organisation’s global needs are at that point and what our personal situation is.

INTERVIEWER: How and how much do you use social media?

SARAH: I use it more than I did before I joined Mission Organisation. I think because everybody else uses it more. And I think it’s sometimes the best way to communicate with people. I have Facebook and I sort of try and see my Facebook as – I don’t quite know how to say it – but linked with my work rather than just a personal unrelated to work type thing. So I tend to only put things up there that I wouldn’t mind being associated with Mission Organisation. Which means I use it less than I might do. Things like blogs – I do have a blog. We have one that we write on together now. And I, I know that some people appreciate it. So I don’t expect all our supporters to read our blog posts, but I know that it’s a useful platform to talk in more detail about certain things. Whether it’s just posting funny pictures of things we see in [country] or if it’s talking about some complicated linguistic issue that I don’t want to spend a whole newsletter on. I know that different people appreciate finding out a bit more about different things. So, I mean, if I have the time to do it and if some people appreciate it and it helps them understand our life and work a bit more, then sure. I don’t, I’m not into a lot of the things like Instagram and Twitter. It’s just too much. At the moment it’s sort of email, blog and Facebook and that’s kind of enough to be going on with. I can’t keep up with too much.

INTERVIEWER: I think that’s all I was going to ask you about. Thank you for your time.

SARAH: You’re very welcome.