



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER – 3rd MARCH 2023

“I Have Heard About Your Faith”

Service from Taiwan



PROJECTS TO BE SUPPORTED

Each year World Day of Prayer offerings throughout the world go to projects chosen by the National Committees. World Day of Prayer Aotearoa New Zealand worked with the following organisations when selecting projects: Christian World Service, the Bible Society and the Interchurch Council for Hospital Chaplaincy

Christian World Service – Two Projects

Developers, Philippines:

Developers Foundation consists of 3 very dedicated women who work with resource poor rural families in the Aklan Province of the Philippines. Recent and ever-increasing environmental events as a result of climate change, including typhoons, droughts and floods, combined with the effects of COVID-19 lockdowns and inflation have pushed people into intensifying poverty, food insecurity and misery. The core work of Developers Foundation is sustainable rural community development, focusing on organic agriculture, natural resource management, sustainable livelihood and community enterprise development, as well as gender and good governance. Their most recent projects focus on resilience building and disaster risk reduction for rural families and communities. This has occurred through education and training to create awareness and action plans around climate change, disaster preparedness, and planting drives (growing food crops and trees).

Gender inequalities and COVID-19 – The Women’s Centre – Sri Lanka

The Women’s Centre was established in 1982 by women garment workers themselves as a result of the Sri Lankan government’s introduction of Free Trade Zones in 1977.

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Interchurch Council for Hospital Chaplaincy in New Zealand

Chaplains are available for all patients, their families or whanau and members of staff, for people of all faiths and none,

- to offer time to listen
- to encourage
- to support
- to help in looking at life issues
- for prayer
- for sacramental ministry
- for blessings

www.ichc.org.nz/chaplaincy.htm

The Bible Society – Pakistan Beacon in the Darkness of Illiteracy

Overview

Bible Society Pakistan established this literacy programme in 2014 and they have been providing Bible-based literacy classes for illiterate Pakistani women since then. Bible Society believes that if a woman is taught to read and write, she becomes a ‘beacon of light’ to her community, with the Word of God.

Background

Despite constitutional guarantees of religious freedom, Christians in Pakistan are considered to be second-class citizens and are discriminated against in every aspect of life. Largely uneducated, they work as street sweepers, trash collectors, farm hands, or doing menial labouring. They make up some of the 4.5 million people, including one million children, who work in slave-like conditions at around 20,000 brick kilns.

On top of that, the literacy rate for women in Pakistan is one of the lowest in the world, largely due to the social structure that suppresses women’s rights. Women’s literacy rates vary throughout the country – from 62 per cent in the capital city of Islamabad, to less than 20 per cent in some rural areas. Overall, millions are lacking this life skill. Christian women, who mostly live in the rural areas and slums, are most likely to be illiterate.

The ‘beacon in the darkness of illiteracy’ programme teaches women the skills they need to read, write, and understand the Bible, leading to spiritual growth and development for themselves and their whole family. These women are then equipped to impact their communities and encourage the next generation of girls towards education.

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Due to the government's oppressive policies at the time, women, mainly from rural communities and poor economic backgrounds, were subjected to exploitation while foreign investment thrived. Since then, the Women's Centre has expanded to five branches in the Southern and Northern parts of Sri Lanka, supporting women in the garment trade industry, plantation women, and migrant women. More recently, due to COVID-19, the confined working conditions in factories have been functioning as infection hubs, and workers have been unable to access health care. Instead, workers have been subjected to work insecurity, loss of income, unemployment, labour exploitation and domestic violence, which has increased drastically amongst garment and plantation workers since the onset of covid. The programme's objectives are to empower workers' rights and to raise awareness of decent working conditions in the Free Trade Zones, garment factories, and plantation sectors.

<https://cws.org.nz/>

“Culturally, mothers are pivotal in Pakistan, responsible for passing on their knowledge to their children,” says a Bible Society supervisor of the literacy programme. “The generational impact is unstoppable.”

One of the groups Bible Society is currently focusing on is women who are working in the brick kilns. By teaching these women literacy skills, it is hoped this will put them on a pathway out of slavery and towards freedom.

Benefits of the Programme

Some of the benefits that the women gain from the programme include:

- Having reading, writing and numeracy skills.
- Being able to read the Bible.
- Developing Bible study groups in their localities.
- Being able to spread the Good News to others.
- Being able to manage a household budget properly.
- Knowing how to pay household utility bills on time.
- Being able to accurately calculate wages owed to them.
- Understanding the importance of sending their children to school.
- Helping their children with their homework.
- Finding better employment.

Impact

The project primarily impacts Christian Pakistani women in a country where their faith is often not welcome. Since the project began in 2014, 52,174 women have graduated from the programme. In 2021, despite the pandemic, over 5,000 women did literacy courses. In 2022, they are aiming to reach 3,500 – 4,500 women. In 2023, they are aiming to reach 3,000 women.

www.biblesoc.org.nz