

# IN PARTNERSHIP

December 2021



## Helping Vulnerable Women Fight Poverty in India



Tailoring Course Participant

For the first time in over 20 years, global poverty has risen<sup>1</sup> due to the COVID-19 pandemic combining with the effects of conflict and climate change. By the end of this year, it's expected that 150 million people will have been pushed into poverty as a result of these factors.<sup>2</sup>

The harshest impact will be felt by already marginalised people. That's why it's so crucial to make sure the voices of vulnerable people are heard. Frequently, some of the most vulnerable people in a community are women. GMP always wants to be listening to all these voices.

Jayshree is a young woman who lives in the slums of Ambernath in suburban Mumbai, India. Her husband works as a day labourer in the chemical industry. Like many others in India, her family has been struggling during the pandemic.

"My husband is the earning member of our family," Jayshree tells us. "Since the outbreak of the pandemic last year, my husband finds it difficult to get work every day. This has started to affect our financial condition." The lockdown regulations closed the chemical industry. Jayshree's husband was one of many labourers who lost their source of income. For more than a year, Jayshree's husband has been unable to get work. It's expected that

middle-income countries like India will be home to more than 80% of those pushed into poverty this year.<sup>3</sup>

Many people in the Ambernath slums, including Jayshree, haven't had access to the training or education needed to secure skilled employment. Project surveys have shown a high demand for skilled workers like tailors, but there are few training opportunities to develop these skills. That's why Hosanna Ministries is providing people in Ambernath with vocational training to give them more employment opportunities.

Smita Gaikwad is the Project Coordinator for the Saksham Vocational Training Centre, run by Hosanna Ministries. She shared with us about the tailoring program that ran during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The girls come for the tailoring course; it's all crowded," Smita says. "So, we asked the teachers to just do four or five girls in each [class], so they are doing a good job and things are starting to get normal. Not certainly like it was before, but slowly we have started to give them basic tailoring courses."

"Because of the outbreak of COVID-19, house visits and meetings have been affected. We try to meet on Zoom with the participants once a month. We

also regularly communicate through phone calls."

When it was safe to do so, Jayshree was able to join the tailoring course at Saksham Vocational Training Centre! Fifteen women took part in the course and completed it with near perfect attendance. When they were finished, they had new skills they could use to work from home.

"I have now completed the basic course and am able to stitch ladies' clothes from home," Jayshree says. "This has given me a new skill, and confidence, as I am able to support my family financially as well."

This tailoring course has helped Jayshree keep her family from falling deeper into poverty. It has enabled her to earn an income and take care of her husband and child. Because of people like you supporting the Saksham Vocational Training Centre, Jayshree's future is full of hope.

Your offering this Christmas can give another young woman like Jayshree vocational training. A young woman who wants to learn and equip herself but hasn't been given the chance. Your ongoing partnership will ensure that our life-changing work can continue helping vulnerable women like Jayshree fight against inequality and poverty.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/poverty-and-shared-prosperity>

<sup>2</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/updated-estimates-impact-covid-19-global-poverty-looking-back-2020-and-outlook-2021>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview#1>

## News & Events



### Great Gifts Cards - Christmas Deadlines

There is still time to get your Great Gifts cards delivered before Christmas! If you need your card posted, the last day to order is December 10. But don't worry – Print Your Own email cards will still be available until December 23.

### GMP Office Hours over Christmas and New Year

The GMP offices will be closed from noon on Friday 24th December. Normal office hours will recommence on Tuesday 4th January 2022.

### January 26 Church Service Resource Kit

On January 26, we invite all followers of Christ to open our hearts to a greater understanding, a deeper compassion and an acknowledgment of what Australia Day represents for Indigenous Australians. This Church Service Resource Kit has been developed especially for Churches of Christ congregations to use during a service on or near January 26. [Find the kit here.](#)

### International Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 3rd is International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Disability inclusion is an essential condition to upholding human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security. The commitment to realizing the rights of persons with disabilities is not only a matter of justice; it is an investment in a common future. For an insight into how our partners work to promote disability inclusion, read our spotlight article on page 3. [Find out more about International Day of Persons with Disabilities here.](#)



Photo by Jon Tyson on Unsplash

## Surrendering with Trust

A few days ago, I was reading the story of Hannah and her deep desire for a son despite her age. The promise she makes to God is striking. Most unexpectedly she conceives and gives birth to a son. In keeping with her promise, she surrenders her son to God, to be raised in the Temple. It is hard to imagine how she was able to do this, other than with a spirit of deep joy and trust.

In the story of Mary there are some parallels and differences. Mary was young, not yet married, and discovered she was pregnant – a very unexpected event. She is affirmed as having been chosen and sings of the hope that this baby will bring. In his words of blessing, Simeon foretells of the pain that this baby will bring to Mary and that the child will not be hers alone. We see this become real in the ministry of Jesus and graphically when she surrenders her son at the foot of the cross.

Both these women release their personal hopes and plans in trust and hope to God. It is this release that defines what it means to give and let go. To surrender is to allow the decisions and choices of another to take priority. This is generosity – handing over, and letting go.

We are emerging from lockdowns, border closures and uncertainty into the season of Christmas. This is the season of giving thanks for the gift of Jesus and a time of connecting with families, friends and church community. We demonstrate what we understand and how we value others in the gifts we bring and give. These carefully chosen items are surrendered to others – with the receivers having the gracious freedom to use them as they choose.

This is the heart of gift giving; a gracious handing over to another of something we decide can and will be for their benefit. In giving through GMP to our partners we seek to do the same. With them we plan what can be done. We train and equip, guide and anticipate what is needed for the gifts to become transformative in their setting.

Who benefits from the gifts? It is people and communities in need. Giving through the COCOA Christmas Offering is one way of affirming the generosity of God to us and our desire to see the world changed for the better.

I hope you can join with me in being part of bringing hope this Christmas.

*John Gilmore*  
Executive Officer

## COCOA Christmas Offering

*Together we are bringing hope to communities around the world, through our COCOA Christmas Offering. To give your offering this Christmas or find resources for your church, go to [gmp.org.au/herstory](http://gmp.org.au/herstory)*





Emmanuel Students and Paulino Malou

## Including Kids with Disability in South Sudan

In many of our partner countries, people with disability are some of the most marginalised within a community. In these settings there are beliefs or superstitions about disability and its cause. There are still places where disability is seen as punishment or a curse. This can make accessing everyday services challenging for people with disability.

At GMP, we value all people and their contributions as partners in our programs. Each person has a unique contribution to make. As we work with our partners and program participants, it's crucial to listen to all of their voices. This means making sure the most vulnerable people clearly have their voices heard. This ensures that projects are serving the needs of all people within a community.

A part of listening to, and learning from, our partners is understanding how people in their context view vulnerable people. Recently we talked with Paulino Malou, Director of Christian Mercy International (CMI), about attitudes towards disability in South Sudan. Paulino has worked with CMI's Emmanuel School since it opened 10 years ago. Through this work, he has seen first-hand how people view children with disability.

to participate in the family like other children in the household.

"The community sometimes would deny children with disability from accessing education or schooling. Some of them would need wheelchairs, and other community members thought that they would not contribute to the development in future, hence no need to waste the resources. They would prefer to allow other children without disability to access the school."

It's vital that such attitudes don't stop children with disability from being included in schooling. Time and education can change people's attitudes. Meanwhile, it's important that kids living with disability are able to access education like any other.

Paulino is not going to sit back and wait for attitudes to change by themselves! Emmanuel School is already working to make sure children with disability are included and embraced.

"Emmanuel has played a most significant role in the communities of Ayat and Aweil," Paulino says. "For example, showing the love, showing justice for all, and showing mercy to others."

In the last year, Emmanuel School gave out three wheelchairs. Two of these went to children with reduced mobility already attending the school. The use of a wheelchair has made it much easier for them to get around! The third was given to a former student, who is now married and has children. Other children who have been unable to attend school due to disability will also receive a wheelchair.

Emmanuel School also provides goats to families of vulnerable children. This helps them to raise an income to pay for their education. Some of the people given goats are families with parents or children with disability. You can read more about the Goat Project in last month's In Partnership.

We wouldn't be able to see these changes without supporters like you. Whether it's giving to the COCOA Christmas Offering, or giving the Great Gift of a Goat, your partnership in COCOA projects helps people like Paulino push for more positive change in their communities. Your support and prayers encourage Paulino as he keeps working hard to support kids with disability at Emmanuel School.

"[Some people in South Sudan] think and assume that God was very annoyed and unhappy with such a family who produced children with disability," Paulino says. "And with that, they keep them around to wait for death, rather than support them

"I have suggestions for the mothers and fathers with disability in the community, that we would help them with wheelchairs. It would help them to do something in terms of transport from one village to another."

"I'm glad to share with you my views, and what I know about the perspective of the local people here in the community," Paulino says. "Thank you very much!"



## January 26

It was on 26 January 1788 that the First Fleet anchored in Sydney Cove. It commemorates not the ‘discovery’ of Australia by the British, but the beginning of colonisation. And this is why it is problematic: it commemorates a violent invasion.

This January 26 we invite all followers of Christ to open our hearts to a greater understanding, a deeper compassion and an acknowledgment of what this day represents for Indigenous Australians.

As Mark-Yettica-Paulson, an Indigenous Christian leader from Queensland says:

‘There are many reasons why Australia is a fabulous and awesome country, so how do we celebrate that, without digging the knife into Aboriginal people? How do we celebrate without saying, ‘We never recognised you when we founded this country, and we’re not going to recognise you now?’”

As a united church let us speak love, act out forgiveness, and in humility work together for a national identity that includes and honours all Australians, particularly First Australians.

So, what could the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia look like if we leave behind fear and misunderstanding? If we choose to act in forgiveness and humility? If we believe that God is at work to do something amazing in

our nation? Honouring and including one another has the capacity to transform the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in this country.

You and your church can help make a difference to our future together. Please join us on this journey of inclusion and honouring with our Indigenous brothers and sisters and help contribute to that greater picture of what it means to be Australian.

One practical way you can show unity with our Indigenous brothers and sisters is through the new IMA Pathways Program.

When you give a Great Gift of Indigenous Ministry Training for just \$35, you are helping to support young leaders to further their learning. You’re helping them connect with their Christian Elders and find a place for themselves in the wider Church family. The Pathways Program is an Indigenous-led initiative.

Working together through the Pathways Program, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal churches are able to create the safe cultural, spiritual spaces necessary for the discipleship journey ahead. The Pathways Program enables like-minded young leaders to connect with one another and provide support and friendship, while also receiving valuable mentoring from Christian Elders.

Applications for 2022 are now open. If you’re a young Indigenous person interested in Christian leadership, or know somebody who is, go to [www.gmp.org.au/pathwaysapply](http://www.gmp.org.au/pathwaysapply) to get more information, or email Colin Battersby [colinb@gmp.org.au](mailto:colinb@gmp.org.au) (Western Australia) or Nick Wight [nick@gmp.org.au](mailto:nick@gmp.org.au) (Central and Eastern Australia).

If you’d like to explore more about January 26 then check out some of the resources from IMA, plus our friends at Common Grace and Australians Together:

**Learn:** [Here’s a great church service resource developed by IMA that we’d encourage you to use with your faith community.](#)

**Learn:** [Check out this timeline produced by our friends at Australian’s Together.](#)

**Pray:** [Join one of Common Grace’s Change the Heart prayer services in the lead up to Australia Day.](#)

*Nick Wight*  
IMA Coordinator (East)

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