

Columban Mission in Pakistan



St Elizabeth School of Midwifery
Hyderabad, Pakistan



ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY

ST ELIZABETH SCHOOL OF MIDWIFERY, HYDERABAD, PAKISTAN: 2010

70 young women from less developed areas and from marginalized communities are currently training in St. Elizabeth School of Midwifery to advance their socio-economic position by enabling them to become trained professional and qualified midwives for mother, neonatal, and infant care in Pakistan. 6 of these young women are from the tribal communities of interior Sindh.



UNESCO statistics show the urgency and relevance of the mission of St. Elizabeth School of Midwifery. Only 28% of Pakistani women have the assistance of a trained attendant during childbirth. Graduates from our School of Midwifery return to all parts of Pakistan and are directly involved through hospitals and village clinics in caring for women.

An integral and essential part of the School of Midwifery is the hostel residential facility which enables young women from distant parts of Pakistan and interior Sindh to reside on site for the duration of their studies. The hostel is located within the grounds of the Training School. We have been able to complete urgent major renovations on the first floor of the residential hostel, the first since the building was constructed 45 years ago. The same renovation has still to be completed on the ground floor.

Twenty students passed the final examinations conducted by the Sindh Nurses' Examination Board 2009, eighteen obtaining 1st Division and two 2nd Division: extremely good results indeed. Twenty-one sat for their examinations in March this year and we expect the results later in the year.

The School of Midwifery is unable to be self-supporting and continues to require funding assistance to carry out its work.

Given the background of those enrolled, fees have to be kept at the barest minimum. Currently each student is requested to provide only Rs.20,000 [= \$274]. Each student is provided with subsidized tuition fees, enrolment fees, examination fees, subsidized food and lodging, medical care, uniform and shoes, and stationary. The total cost to educate one student is approximately Rs.180,000 [= \$2,466]. We have increased the amount we ask from each student midwife by Rs.15,000 since 2007 with a view to increasing the level of local support, but there is a limit as to how much we can ask, due to the extremely poor financial circumstances that the students come from. [The favourable international exchange rate of the Australian \$ is working to our advantage at the moment as we are able to make the \$ go much further in covering our increased expenses, up from Rs.155,000 in 2009 to Rs.180,000 in 2010. Inflation in Pakistan is currently 21%].

St. Elizabeth School of Midwifery is accredited by the Sindh Nurses' Examination Board, Karachi, and the Pakistan Nursing Council, Islamabad, and is professionally answerable to the same two bodies. Both these bodies are government bodies. The Midwifery Training School continues to interact with the Shah Bhattai Public Health Centre, Hyderabad, which is a government institute for the training of Lady Health Visitors, for training in Community Health.

It has been a good year for us all at St. Elizabeth, from the perspective of both the School of Midwifery and the running of the hospital.

The School of Midwifery is linked into the work of the hospital through the maternity department and the Outreach Programme which provides the context for hands on training of the student midwives. The following description of our Outreach programme will give you an idea of the situation that the midwives will go into after graduating from St. Elizabeth School of Midwifery.



The focus of the Outreach Programme is semi-nomadic tribal people who are bonded agricultural workers. The majority are Hindu although many are Christian and some low-caste-Muslims. As bonded labourers, these people are economically enslaved to landlords who have control over every aspect of their lives.

Pregnant women are forced to work in the fields to the very last days before delivery; small children are forced to work beside their parents because the landlords insist that every member of the family is responsible for the family debt; teenage girls and boys are subject to the sexual demands of landlords; holidays and rest time are unknown realities.

The people live in primitive dwellings constructed as they never know when they will have to move to another part of

the landlord's land. The villages have no electricity or gas. Drinking water is occasionally from a hand-pump but most often the water supply is from residual water after rains.

Women walk kilometres to fetch water in clay pots, often tending to infants at the same time. Few children attend school. Those that manage to slip through the scrutiny of landlords and attend school are forced to sit on bricks at the back of the classrooms in the government schools and to bring their own drinking water. They are told that they are "unclean" and should not pollute the seats and water supply that other children use. Government vaccination teams avoid these villages since the vaccinators consider that they and their equipment will become "unclean" if they or the instruments touch the children.



St. Elizabeth Hospital is the sole medical provider for 12,000 people in such villages. Free medication was provided.

The major health issues that were addressed were:

- a. Provision of ante-natal, natal and post- natal care
- b. Infantile anaemia
- c. General medical care for all sexes and age, including diagnosis, treatment, and provision of medicines
- d. TB diagnosis with referral to the TB care centre to the Government TB Sanatorium in Hyderabad
- e. Hepatitis A, B and C diagnosis and treatment.
- f. Treatment of common ophthalmic and skin conditions and diseases

Info-discussion-education sessions on health and medical issues were carried out during each visit by the medical team. Issues dealt with included TB and its prevention, hepatitis and its prevention, breast cancer, and dietary needs of infants, children and pregnant women.

In 2011, St. Elizabeth Hospital will establish a home-based palliative care programme for the terminally ill in Hyderabad. This will be the first such programme in Pakistan.

We depend upon your generosity to keep St. Elizabeth School of Midwifery going. Your donations are used 100% for what you give them. We use them carefully and prudently with an annual external audit.

[Donations to support St. Elizabeth School of Midwifery or St. Elizabeth Hospital are tax-deductible.]

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