



Columban Mission in Pakistan 2018



FR ROBERT McCULLOCH
St Columbans Mission Society

In Partnership Together



This is my annual report about human development, education, professional training, and healthcare works in and near Hyderabad, a major city 170km northeast of Karachi on the edge of the Sindh desert in Pakistan. They are made possible by the generosity of donors and in a special way by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The report on the **Bethlehem Shelter Society** is about responding to the reality of landless and homeless people in the southern Pakistani province of Sindh.

The two education works, the **Catholic Centre of Academic Excellence** and the **Catholic Youth Development Centre**, focus on outstanding achievements in responding to specific needs of young

Christians in Pakistan. **St. Elizabeth Hospital** reaches out to the wider Pakistani community through its **Mobile Medical Outreach Programme**, its **School of Midwifery**, and home-based Palliative Care for the terminally ill.

These works are good examples of the practical and open-hearted compassion to which Pope Francis calls us all. The Catholic Church in Pakistan is small in number yet rises above financial difficulties and ever-present cultural and religious discrimination to manifest the compassion of God. A characteristic of this report is the harmonious collaboration of Christian, Hindu and Muslim male and female doctors, healthcare professionals, teachers and many others. Some are

members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. All are committed to caring for those in greatest need.

In June this year, Michael Cashman and David Butler from the Overseas Partnership Committee of the Victorian State Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society visited Pakistan to meet St Vincent de Paul members and to see their work in Karachi and Hyderabad. They were impressed by what is being achieved in spite of great difficulties and restrictions to respond to the urgent needs of people who struggle to overcome the burdens of religious discrimination.

What we have achieved is the fruit of the generosity of you, our donors. I hope this short report will show you how much we can continue to do in partnership: care for mothers and infants, hope through education for boys and young men, relief for the dying, training of young women as midwives, water in the middle of a desert, homes for the homeless, healthcare for tens of thousands poor and marginalized and forgotten suffering people.

Fr. Robert McCulloch

Fr Robert McCulloch
29 July 2018





St Elizabeth Hospital Hyderabad, Pakistan

Every year the Pakistan government publishes its Pakistan Economic Survey. Although aspirational about the government's hopes and policies to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, it is blunt about the actual situation. The most recent Economic Survey (p.165) says that in 2017 just 0.91% of GDP was spent on healthcare.

St Elizabeth Hospital is a 150-bed hospital in Hyderabad in southern Pakistan. It has a special focus on **Mother and Child Care** which responds to the crisis in the infant mortality rate, child mortality rate, and under-five child mortality rate. All these are the highest in South Asia (Pakistan Economic Survey 2018, p.170).

The **School of Midwifery** attached to **St Elizabeth** continues to make a difference in maternal, neonatal, and infant care in Pakistan through the training and annual graduation of midwives and lady health visitors. At the same time, young women from marginalized communities in less-developed areas of Pakistan who train at the School of Midwifery advance their socio-economic position by enabling them to become skilled professional and qualified midwives.

St. Elizabeth also makes available free **home-based palliative care** to terminally-ill cancer patients.

Through its **Mobile Medical Outreach Programme**, St. Elizabeth is the sole medical provider to nearly 50,000 impoverished agricultural labourers in the most appalling and unjust conditions.

Christian, Muslim and Hindu professionals, doctors and nurses work together at St. Elizabeth Hospital in the best tradition of Catholic healthcare.

Hospital income covers St Elizabeth's running costs but it is not sufficient for equipment purchase. During 2017-2018, our donors enabled St Elizabeth to purchase and install a 40kVA generator to ensure seamless electrical supply for the three operating theatres, the maternal delivery department and the neo-natal special care unit; to purchase and install a water filtration and purification system for the same departments; to buy urgently-needed new surgical and diagnostic equipment; to carry out flood control measures; to renovate wards; and to provide medicines for the poor. Upgrading of the X-Ray department and opening an extra operating theatre are priorities for 2019.

Although Pakistan depends on a "mix of public and private healthcare delivery systems" (Pakistan Economic Survey 2018, p.165) and the Sindh provincial government recognizes the high standards and scope of the healthcare given by St Elizabeth Hospital, the government provides no financial assistance and gives only minimal tax relief.

Our donors help St Elizabeth to make compassionate Catholic healthcare real in Hyderabad. It is a good partnership. St Elizabeth "squeezes" the Australian dollar to get great "value for money". The use of every donation is supervised by the hospital's internal auditor, who is a chartered accountant, and is assessed through the annual external audit.



No longer homeless A new community at Jhirruk



To have nothing and now to own. To be without for 3000 years and now to have. To have lived nowhere and now to have a home and an address. To be threatened and now to be secure. This is how it now is for 86 Hindu families from the Parkari Koli semi-nomadic tribal community in Sindh province of south-east Pakistan.

These 86 families live at Jhirruk. Jhirruk is a barren place of nothingness about 45 kilometres from Hyderabad, near nothing except a canal from the Indus River which is four kilometres away. During the major flooding of the Indus in 2011, hundreds of thousands of people in southern Pakistan lost everything. International aid agencies came for several weeks. Then they went. The Catholic Church stayed.

St Elizabeth Hospital in the Catholic diocese of Hyderabad organized its Mobile Medical Outreach Programme into three teams that provided round-the-clock free medical care for months and more after the floods had receded and the other organizations had gone.

It became obvious that people who had lost everything needed homes as well as medical care. What most had lost was nothing more than a grass and mud shack. In this crisis situation, St Elizabeth Hospital Hyderabad and the Catholic Church have made a difference. More than 860 homes for desperately poor Hindus, Christians and



Muslims have either been built completely or essential building materials been provided. With the help of many donors, including the generosity of Columban donors, we have enabled many marginalized people to assume their national identity with pride. The story of Jhirruk is a special one in this wide panorama of kindness and compassion and identity-reclaiming.

In 2012, after the floods, the St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria donated money to buy four acres of land at Jhirruk to build homes for homeless Parkari Koli tribal people. The people and especially the women chose the land because it was close to a canal of the Indus River. It wasn't too far, the women said, for them to walk twice a day to get water which they with their daughters would carry back on their heads in earthen-ware pots for bathing and drinking and cooking.

The house-building began. Two- roomed houses firmly constructed of brick with good roofs and raised well above flood level.

Eighty-six families are now happily settled in Jhirruk each with their own permanent home. After 3000 years of being dispossessed and pushed to the margins in the Indian-sub-continent, they who belong to the original peoples of India have now something about which they can say for the first time “this is ours”.

The settlement at Jhirruk is called *Bethlehem*. The housing settlement is legally registered with the Sindh provincial government as Bethlehem Shelter Society. Half the members of the governing body are from Bethlehem. None are literate but all know how to act well for one another. Their leader and the vice-president of the Bethlehem Shelter Society is a woman, Reshma. The Bethlehem Shelter Society has enabled the people living at Jhirruk to take responsibility for their lives and collective well-being.

The houses are all built. Work is now underway to build connected verandahs in front of all the houses. This will double the living area of each house, provide shelter from the intense summer sun, and give protection from the monsoon rains.



A 20,000 gallon water-tank and five 500 gallon feeder-tanks have been built throughout the village with a secure water supply piped in from the canal from the Indus River. It is not hard to imagine how this immediate accessibility to water has enabled the women and girls to reclaim their own lives instead of spending hours walking long distances several times a day to get water.

Bathing areas and toilets with septic systems have been built behind each row of houses. Trees have been planted and the greening of Jhirruk is a high priority for the Bethlehem Shelter Society Council in developing their community.

The Mobile Medical Outreach team from St Elizabeth Hospital in Hyderabad will come to the newly-built clinic each week to provide primary healthcare for all people in the area. The provincial government has agreed that it will see to education and schools in the area if the Catholic Church will see to healthcare. It is a good partnership.



Catholic Centre of Academic Excellence (CCAIE)



Ten years after its beginning, the Catholic Centre of Academic Excellence (CCAIE) in Hyderabad continues to provide a sustained environment where academically talented but disadvantaged Catholic young men can be assisted to attain high academic grades. This ensures they can gain university entrance and tertiary education on merit. We want them to be able to live and work effectively in Pakistan's multi-cultural and multi-religious society. They face the obstacles of family poverty and anti-Christian religious discrimination. There are 73 students currently enrolled in CCAE's four-year program. They attend schools in the morning and come to the Centre every week Monday-Friday from 4:30-8:30pm.

CCAIE is staffed by its director and seven teachers (5 men and 3 women).

Since its beginning in 2007 and with the continuing support of our benefactors, CCAIE has been able to provide an environment of education and personal development that has matched the enthusiasm of the students. The students at CCAIE know that their seemingly impossible dreams for their future can come true. Our graduates spoke about this during the tenth anniversary celebrations held on June 10 this year during which, Bishop Samson Shukardin of Hyderabad celebrated the anniversary Mass. Visitors from the St Vincent de Paul Society in Victoria attended to

mark the support of the St Vincent de Paul Society Australia to CCAE in collaboration with the St Vincent de Paul Society Pakistan. Our students and graduates have high academic and personal and moral standards. They all share the same inspirational motto *I can because I'm Catholic*. CCAE course work includes intensive coaching in school and college class content material. Most CCAE students come from large extended families where living arrangements are cramped and space for study is unavailable. Intensive English is a high priority to ensure that each boy

achieves excellent speaking, writing and comprehension language skills. Religious instruction and moral formation are essential to the CCAE program.

We ask nothing from CCAE students except 100% commitment. We manage to operate within the annual budget of just on AUD\$40,000 which covers all running costs and which is internally and externally audited. We continue to depend upon the generosity of our benefactors. We urgently need an extra \$8,000 to extend and upgrade the computer laboratory used by the students.



Catholic Youth Development Centre (CYDC)



One reason for the high level of illiteracy among Catholic boys and young men in Pakistan is the expectation that they should begin to work and earn as quickly as possible to enable their sisters to get married. Life for them can be a long dark tunnel with little light or hope.

The Catholic Youth Development Centre (CYDC) offers the possibility of a better life to young illiterate men in Hyderabad who have dropped out of school or who have never been to school. CYDC enables them to get from illiteracy to 10th Class (the last year of high school in Pakistan) through an accelerated programme of teaching and learning spread over two years, from primary to secondary.

CYDC began in 2008. This year 73 young men aged from 15-23 years are enrolled in CYDC. Most work either before or after the CYDC sessions and all are self-motivated to attend. They know the sort of the work they are confined to without education and are eager to grasp the possibilities before them. Sixty-nine young men have successfully completed the programme of studies at CYDC and are now well-employed or enrolled in continuing studies.

The staff consists of the director and five teachers (2 male, 3 female). Education, moral guidance, personal confidence building, religious instruction and sacramental preparation are all included in the CYDC program. The students and

staff join in the celebrations of the major liturgical feasts in the Catholic cathedral. After completing the CYDC programme, all students attend the month-long Catholic Faith Formation course at the National Pastoral Institute in Multan in the Punjab.

The morning-scheduled CYDC uses the same rented premises and the same facilities as the Catholic Centre of Academic Excellence which is held in the evenings. CYDC runs on an extraordinarily low annual budget of AUD\$20,000 which is internally and

externally audited. This covers staff salaries, medical care for students, enrolment for government Board of Education examinations, and a good morning tea each day. The financial assistance of the St. Vincent de Paul Society has been outstanding in supporting CYDC to give these young Catholic people not a handout but a hand-up in life. It is "good value for money". We struggle to operate within the annual budget. We continue to depend upon the generosity of all our benefactors. We ask nothing from CYDC students except 100% commitment.



Mobile Medical Outreach Programme (MMOP)



According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2018, p.169, there are 208,007 registered doctors in Pakistan. This is a ratio of one doctor for 957 persons. The problem is that the doctors are concentrated in cities. Access to primary health care in rural Pakistan is limited; poverty makes it almost impossible.

Through its Mobile Medical Outreach Programme (MMOP), St. Elizabeth Hospital Hyderabad is the sole medical provider to many impoverished semi-nomadic tribal people who are bonded agricultural workers in Sindh province in south-east Pakistan. The majority are Hindu although many are marginalized Christians and Muslims. They are economically enslaved to landlords who control 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.

The statistics achieved by St Elizabeth's Mobile Medical Outreach Programme are outstanding. There are 20,688 female patients, 13,792 male patients, 6,897 female children under 5 years and 4,597 male children under 5 years who were examined by doctors and received proper and necessary free medicine. This is a total of 45,974 patients in 65 villages, many of which were visited several times in the year. Most of the patients have never had access to such basic medical care.

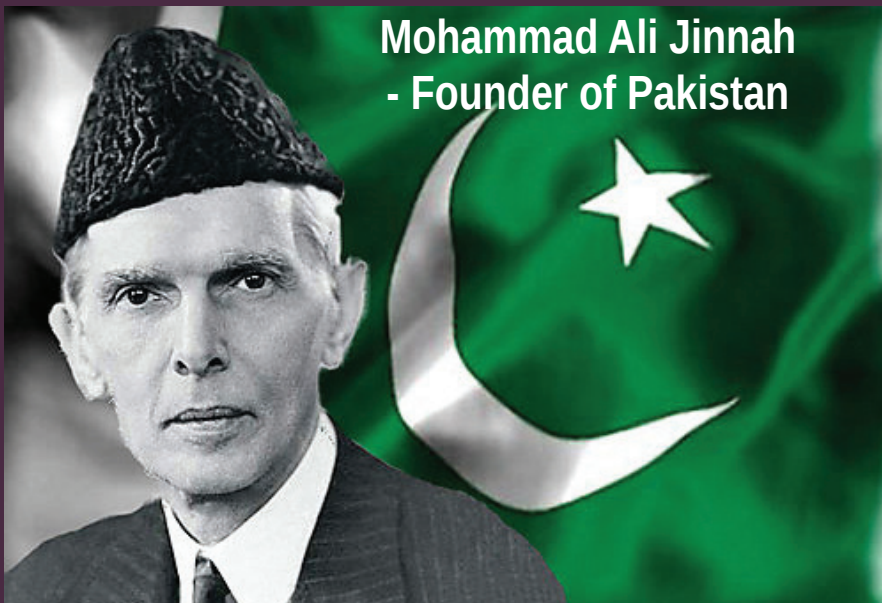
Most patients suffer from malnutrition and are anaemic. We are working on a strategy to respond effectively to this.

In addition to providing free immediate primary healthcare, MMOP refers patients for further care to Hyderabad and Karachi for which St. Elizabeth accepts financial responsibility and which it monitors through its nursing staff. Eight such referrals were made this year to St. Elizabeth Hospital.

The construction of a satellite clinic in a village 50kms from Hyderabad is nearly completed. Medical teams from the MMOP will visit this clinic twice a week to provide regular primary health care to people in the locality. We need funding to equip this clinic with essential equipment.

The Mobile Medical Outreach Programme at St Elizabeth Hospital is an outstanding example of inter-faith collaboration between Christian, Muslim and Hindu healthcare professionals. They work happily together. They are able to continue this work of compassion through the generosity of our donors.





Mohammad Ali Jinnah - Founder of Pakistan

Address to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly - August 11, 1947

You are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed - that has nothing to do with the business of the State.

We are starting in the days when there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State.

Message to the Nation - August 15, 1947

The creation of the new State has placed a tremendous responsibility on the citizens of Pakistan. It gives them an opportunity to demonstrate to the world how can a nation, containing many elements, live in peace and amity and work for the betterment of all its citizens, irrespective of caste or creed.



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