

PROJECT NO: 76501

TAX | NON-TAX

# The Gambia



## Literacy Equality



### Overview

This literacy project, in The Gambia, aims to assist girls and young women from four tribes, teaching them how to read and write in the languages of these tribal groups. This project fills a gap, since many young girls are utilised by their families as farm hands and home helpers for their mothers rather than being sent to school.

### The Need

In many parts of Africa, sons receive the benefits of schooling while daughters do not. This has clear ramifications for individual families, communities and the broader society as women remain marginalised from the workplace and opportunities to improve their lives. The Gambia in West Africa is the smallest country within the African mainland. Its needs are great as poverty is high, close to 50% of the 2.7 million population cannot read or write and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has ranked the country in the 'Low Human Development' category. Most of its people work as farmers. Girls are married very young and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still widely practiced. Daughters have no right to inherit their father's property, this goes to the first-born son. Girls are often seen as inferior and of less value to the family.

2.7m  
people in The Gambia.

51%  
of older women are non-literate.

57%  
of young women are non-literate.

4-5%  
of the population are Christian.

# Goals

Bible Society in The Gambia is partnering with local churches to offer literacy classes for all girls, where they are encouraged and empowered to be all God created them to be. Research shows that poor reading ability impacts spiritual growth and understanding of God’s message so these girls will be equipped to not only read but understand the Bible and the message of the Gospel.

In 2022, training workshops for literacy teachers were held in

Mandinka, Manjako, Wolof, English, and Jola, with the goal to start new Literacy and ESL classes. The classes teach literacy through Scripture engagement. Attendees are provided with Scriptures of their own. They also receive skills training at the conclusion of each class to help them generate income and become productive members of society.

Due to the demand for the literacy program, Bible Society in The Gambia intends to introduce more

than 1,500 girls and young women to learn how to read, write, count and most of all, engage with the Bible by 2030 in their local languages — Mandinka, Manjako, Wolof, Karon, and Jola — as well English as a second language. They also aim to set up 75-100 literacy classes and train 150-200 literacy teachers to support these classes by 2030.

## Impact

Overall, this project aims to impact 10,000 people. The impact will be measured by the literacy attainment of the participants through reading sessions, short quizzes, assignments, encouraging peer-to-peer learning sessions, and the use of audio Bibles to test their listening abilities.

Around 1143 learners are currently registered in the program, with 364 of those as new beginners. There are currently 63 facilitators, 15 coordinators and 75 classes running. There has been an overall improvement on the reading skills and interest to read in the church. Volunteers and participants have motivated others to take part as they demonstrate how they are now able to make use of the Bible during church services.

## Testimonies

“We are in prison and need to be free”, say women in The Gambia, who remain uneducated and non-literate. “Those who read for us at times give us wrong information, or sometimes are reluctant to assist us,” some non-literate women say. Freedom for these women comes when they can read for themselves, including the Scriptures. This was Fabiana’s experience, and she says, “they laughed at me when I started the class but today, I can read and even teaching those who were laughing at me.”

## Prayer Needs

- Pray for a successful literacy program.
- Pray against the discrimination of women and girls.
- Pray that as attendees become more competent in their literacy and other skills, they will be able to apply for a formal job.
- Pray that owning their own Bible written in the language of their heart will bring these new readers closer to God and to understanding his calling on their lives.

