



## Literacy for Young Girls and Women

### 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. 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.

# 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

**'But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behaviour, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,'**

Titus 2:1-3, NASB

# Goals

Bible Society in The Gambia is partnering with local churches to offer literacy classes to at least 1,500 girls per year, where they are encouraged and empowered to be all God created them to be. Girls and young women will learn how to read, write, count and most of all, engage with the Bible 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.

In 2024, there are 66 classes running currently, with 47 students expected to graduate in June 2024.

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# 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.

The literacy and ESL classes so far has had 3,046 attendees, and 62 new teachers as of June 2023, with 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.

For the 2023/2024 year, 1,903 new students are enrolled, which demonstrates the program's expansion (in the 2022/2023 school year 364 enrolled). There are 66 classes running currently, with 47 students expected to graduate in June 2024.

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# Testimonies

"We are in prison and need to be free", say women in The Gambia, who remain uneducated and illiterate. "Those who read for us at times give us wrong information, or sometimes are reluctant to assist us," some illiterate 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."

"Having this Bible is a great joy and I know I am going to learn many things, like, I will be able to read in Mandinka, understand, and be able to teach others." — Project beneficiary

"So I'm happy, this is my first time, of using my own local language to bring the gospel. I am so happy, because it will improve my life, it will improve my family life. Thank you to the Bible Society ... I am so happy!" — Project beneficiary

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# Prayer Needs

- Pray for a successful literacy program.
- Pray against the discrimination of women and girls.
- Pray for the students who are moving to English as a second language.
- 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.