



The Gambia - 76501

## Literacy for Women and Girls - *Bible Engagement in The Gambia*

### Overview

In many parts of Africa, girls are being deprived of an education while boys receive the benefits of schooling. This has clear ramifications for individual families, communities and the broader society as women remain marginalised from the workplace and without opportunities to improve their lives.

This literacy project, in The Gambia, aims to assist girls and young women from four tribes, teaching them to read and write in the languages of these tribal groups.

### The Need

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 1.8 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 and use their primary aged children as farm hands, with more girls being denied access to schooling than boys.

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.



## Strategic Goal and Impact

Bible Society in The Gambia plans to partner with local churches to offer literacy classes for all girls, where they will be 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 2021, literacy teachers will be trained; new classes will be established with a particular focus on the Catholic Church and urban communities. The classes will teach literacy through scriptural engagement. Attendees will be provided with Scriptures of their own. They will also receive skills training at the conclusion of each class to help them generate income and become productive members of society.

## Impact

This project requires considerable patience and lots of prayer. There are significant barriers to overcome. The Gambian Bible Society seeks awareness of the literacy classes being offered from church leaders to the people

As awareness grows, it is hoped that more people will recognise the value of literacy for their girls and more girls and women will commit to the program. As the students attend classes, they will then read the Bible at Church, motivating others to attend classes, so they too can read God's word for themselves.

## Testimony

"They laughed at me when I started the class but today I can read and even teach those who were laughing at me." **Fabiana.**

***Fabiana was among the first group of people who was trained and Fabiana has become a strong literacy promoter after reading the Ten Commandments in Mandinka during a service.***

## 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.