

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN EMPOWERING THE MISING PEOPLE

Strategic Giving 2021

Mising tribespeople are known for their carpentry. They make, by hand, almost all the items required for their day-to-day life including baskets, bags, trays, boxes, fish traps of various kinds, coops and much more, using bamboo and cane. Unfortunately, with the lack of means for marketing, selling and operating businesses due to the remote region and lack of facilities where they are located, capitalizing on this is challenging. Insufficient infrastructure, poor connectivity in remote areas, and lack of education opportunities also bring conditions of poverty to the Mising, one of the largest tribal groups in the region. Women are proportionally at a disadvantage as well.

The project aims to empower and help transform the Mising people through financial and material aid and skills development. With more livelihood opportunities, farmers no longer incur debts by relying on money lenders or failed crops. Families can become more self-reliant. Women can preserve their family traditions by continuing to share their knowledge of weaving and by continuing to knit shawls and other cultural attire which also provides additional income. Young people also acquire skills to secure employment in public and private sectors or even begin learning about entrepreneurship.

by Alicia Jung, Canadian Baptist Ministries

Photos courtesy CBM

▼ *Modusmita weaves beautiful traditional designs*



FOR THE LAST SIX YEARS, Alempang Baptist Church has worked among the Mising people because of the conviction that God has placed on their hearts to walk alongside this community.

With the help of Canadian Baptist Ministries and the Canadian Baptist Women of Ontario and Quebec—exclusive supporters of this project—the local church is running a dynamic program that is empowering the remote Mising tribespeople who live in one of the most underdeveloped states in India.

In 2021 alone, 15 women in the Biswanath region received financial assistance for weaving and knitting materials to start producing clothing through the program. One hundred vulnerable farming families also received support in the form of seeds to continue farming without the burden of relying on money lenders. In the Gohpur region, nine youth received support to participate in a tailoring skills training program, beautician course and received admission into the tailoring collective itself.

Modusmita, age 26, is a field laborer who lives with her husband and two children. The family is located in a remote area, where access to water, electricity, education and other opportunities are non-existent. This area is prone to flooding for seven months of the year, making farming and raising animals a challenge. However, through the local church's program that provides financial and resource assistance along with vocational training opportunities, more and more people can learn creative and resourceful ways to earn a living. Weaving, tailoring, computer literacy and beautician training and materials are provided.

"Traditionally, weaving is part and parcel of our culture, but due to financial constraints, I was unable to do weaving. Since joining this program, I received raw materials to weave, which is how I can continue doing it amid the COVID-19 pandemic," shares Modusmita. "I would like to preserve our culture by continuing to do this business and to help my family." Not only is Modusmita shouldering the responsibility for her family, but she does so within the church, making a positive impact in the community with this new opportunity.

Twenty-year-old Taneswar is from a Hindu family, where only he and his siblings are Christians. Together they live in an old bamboo house that is impacted by the flooding in the area. For almost four months of the year, the family cannot find any work, and with no basic facilities for communication, development and schooling, there is little hope for improvement. However, in 2020, Taneswar was introduced to the computer training course through the local church program.

"I am so grateful for the church involving me in this project, as it allowed me to learn computer skills," says Taneswar. Today he is working part-time in a store because of his training, which is enough to earn a small living to contribute to his family's livelihood. "I would like to continue doing this job as it has helped me to earn some income, and later on, I would like to open a shop to continue this business so that I earn more money to sustain my family."

The experience of cooperation and coordination in the partnership between Alempang Baptist Church, Canadian Baptist Ministries and the Canadian Baptist Women of Ontario and Quebec has truly made a positive impact upon the Mising tribespeople, helping to uplift and empower the most vulnerable. Let us work together for the glory of God for many years to come. ■

▼ *Taneswar uses his new skills to work in a shop*

