UnitingWorld is the international aid and partnerships agency of the Uniting Church in Australia. Together we work for a world where lives are whole and hopeful, free from poverty and injustice. Because every person matters.

When Maryam’s parents told her they would no longer be able to afford to send her to school, withdrawing her instead to work as a domestic labourer for a nearby landlord to earn money for the family, she was devastated.

Her dreams of becoming a doctor were dashed – her marks were good, but with four other children to support, her parents simply couldn’t afford school fees, uniforms and books.

But today, they’re tending to a large pile of goat manure, improving it ready for sale to the local coffee farmer, who lets them live and work on his land.

The manure, lovingly produced by the family’s goats, will improve the coffee yield. The coffee, in turn, will be sold by the farmer and our local church partner, who’ll use the profits to invest back into the goat project. And Ni Luh will go to school thanks to the profits the family make from their participation in UnitingWorld’s partner project in livestock breeding.

Now complete. Your gift of goats (or goat poo!) has real legs. It feeds into training, support and the animals themselves – and it begins a cycle that can break the shackles of poverty. For good.

More than that, it’s a gift that gives dignity and hope to people who are capable of everything we dream of for our own families – they only need the opportunity.

One more girl educated in India almost certainly means better outcomes for a whole community. When girls are educated, they marry later, have fewer children and can earn incomes that mean their own families will almost certainly have completely different futures.

Imagine that: one gift shapes generations.

Off the beaten track in Bali’s mountain region, six-year-old Ni Luh is enthusiastically mucking in alongside her parents, feet snug in a pair of well-worn pink gum boots.

Among Indonesia’s poorest communities, her family struggle to afford basics like gas for their cookers, oil, rice and anything that varies their diets from the little they can grow.

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UnitingWorld’s partner, the Diocese of Amritsar, runs a hostel for girls that enables them to study nearby safely and affordably. With the church’s help, Maryam was able to return to school and wrote to us recently: “I am so grateful to all the people who are supporting us. I pray that God will fulfil all their heart’s desires and give them happiness. Thanks to you, children like us can get a proper education and aim to be successful in life.”

Want to imagine something even bigger to invest in this Christmas? Educate a girl.

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FOLLOW YOUR IMAGINATION

Buy gifts that change lives this Christmas
www.everythingincommon.com.au

Imagine that: one gift shapes generations.
A few months ago we wrote to you with stories from our diverse range of projects in India, prompting many of you to give generously to the work of our partners seeding the gospel and sharing hope with thousands. Jane and Dan, our staff overseeing the work, have recently returned inspired by time spent with men and women who are right on the frontline of the ministry. ‘Om Prakash (Amritsar Dioceses) is amazingly committed – he recently threatened his local government with a hunger strike and said he would lock all the schools his project works in if they didn’t provide teachers and books within 15 days,’ Jane says.

Due to the sudden onset of the Sulawesi Emergency, we are experiencing a serious shortfall in the funding for these projects. If you can still donate to our ministry in India, we would be extremely grateful. Every gift gives hope to our partners and the people they serve.

REFLECTING ON THE THEOLOGY OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE PACIFIC

UnitingWorld hosted its annual five-day workshop on Gender Equality Theology in early November.

Led by Pacific theologians Rev Dr Cliff Bird and Sierra Bird, ministers from partner churches across the Pacific met in Nadi, Fiji, to wrestle with biblical themes of equality and anti-violence. They discussed how principles from the Bible can be powerful forces for positive change in their communities, where violence against women continues to be a significant problem.

Participants expressed their appreciation for what they learned throughout the week and committed to taking the knowledge back to their home churches.

“The teaching tools have given me more clarification for deeper biblical analysis and identifying the root-causes of social issues,” said Rev Tomasi Tarabe, New Testament lecturer at the Davuilevu Theological College in Suva.

“They discussed how principles from the Bible can be powerful forces for positive change in their communities, where violence against women continues to be a significant problem.”

“The Minister of Education met the group’s demands – not least because Om also organised protest rallies and ensured the media made a noise too. Quality education for Dalit caste children, especially girls, is hard to find, but our partners are advocating hard and holding authorities to account.”

Your generous donations to our Hope Has Many Faces appeal is helping us support schooling for 300 children in a remote area, as well as provide 30 girls from very disadvantaged backgrounds with accommodation, education and nutrition.

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KNOW WHERE YOUR DONATION GOES

A few years ago, the story broke of a charity set up in Liberia by a young American woman who wanted to start a school to provide girls with an escape from the misery of the sex industry.

The organisation had raised thousands of dollars. Unfortunately, the school project was poorly supervised and a staff member was found to be sexually abusing students in his care. The story, sadly, is far more common than it should be. Why? It usually happens when people haven’t invested in the experience or resources they need to fully safeguard those they want to help. When you trust UnitingWorld with your donation, we use every cent to create genuinely life-giving opportunities for vulnerable people.

That work has many layers — fully funding projects; implementing rigorous child protection policies; appropriately paying local, qualified experts to design and oversee project effectiveness; going over our books with a fine-tooth comb to make sure each dollar is accounted for; and always seeking to improve our practices.

Your donation does all this. This is what it takes to responsibly partner in the complex work of changing lives — for good. You’re not just sharing in the immediate wins. You’re also designing, monitoring, investing and reporting back to make sure that the people with whom we work are always offered the best ideas, the best resources and the utmost respect. Thank you!

THE DETERMINED FACE OF HOPE

A few months ago we wrote to you with stories from our diverse range of projects in India, prompting many of you to give generously to the work of our partners seeding the gospel and sharing hope with thousands. Jane and Dan, our staff overseeing the work, have recently returned inspired by time spent with men and women who are right on the frontline of the ministry. ‘Om Prakash (Amritsar Dioceses) is amazingly committed – he recently threatened his local government with a hunger strike and said he would lock all the schools his project works in if they didn’t provide teachers and books within 15 days,’ Jane says.

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THE HUMAN COST OF DISASTER

Our partners of the Protestant Church in Bali have travelled to Sulawesi to work with communities devastated by September’s earthquake and tsunami.

More than 70,000 people were evacuated after the disaster — each has a face, a story. Children sleep at night without parents; parents without children. Our partners, too, are traumatised by the work of moving through these lies — gifted tales of bravery and resilience as they distribute mosquito nets, tents, tarps, water pumps and kits for clean water. Your donations of $65,000 are being used in two hard to reach areas of Palu and Sigi, where the team are assessing people at high risk, including women, children and those with disabilities. The priorities aren’t just physical but emotional — the team are helping local counsellors and church members with trauma response as well as prioritising health and shelter.

Thank you for so generously responding to Indonesia’s earthquake and tsunami.
If you’ve ever been worried about the state of the world and your place in it, you’re not alone. We live in a time of high anxiety; one in five Australians experiences some form of mental illness in any given year, and one in four reports feeling lonely, without friendships or community to support them.

In the Pacific and Asia, there’s no polite way to turn down a meal. Hospitality is everything and everywhere, lovingly and lavishly prepared—sometimes for days—and open to all. Time and expense are rarely part of the equation as men, women and children hunt and gather (often literally) and then throw wide their arms and doors to make sure everyone enjoys the feast.

In the lead up to Easter 2019, as we consider what it means to be followers of Christ, UnitingWorld invites you to draw courage and inspiration from our brothers and sisters in Timor Leste, and from a series of reflections on courage from Uniting Church state moderators.

As always, Lent Event will call us to end poverty and build hope together. From March to April, find courage to act in a fearful world: live simply and be inspired by those building God’s kingdom. As we hear from courageous people both here and in Timor Leste, be assured that God goes before us in the world.

Viewed this way, I’m reminded of the many acts of hospitality carried out by our partners in so many ways and places throughout the year. As they visit hard to reach areas with resources like goats, small business training, health education or workshops for women, they create relationships that are acts of true hospitality – spaces in which people are heard and create change for themselves.

As you contemplate Christmas this year, I encourage you to reflect on this kind of hospitality. As God sent Jesus into the world to be among us, may your hospitality reflect the presence of the Spirit of Love and the opportunity to seed real change. Thank you so much for the generosity each of you has extended to our partners this year; you’ve provided people with opportunities to bring hope and dignity for themselves and their families through countless gifts made in times of crisis and as long-term givers.

Wishing you the joy and love of Christmas and always,

Sureka

Dr Sureka Goringe, National Director, UnitingWorld