



Pabitra (right) with Eva Lee, International Programs Officer TLMA



The Leprosy Mission  
Australia



To a young person like Nagajothi, your kindness today means everything!

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## Your compassion, like Pabitra's, changes lives.

**Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.**

— Philippians 2:3-4

Paul may well have been speaking about Pabitra, not just the Philippians here. With 2 children and a husband currently working away from home Pabitra is a very busy woman. Besides managing the household, the household farm and animals, Pabitra is also a Female Community Health Volunteer (FCHV). This role sometimes means Pabitra is out day and night for several days in a row to help roll out government health activities.

FCHVs like Pabitra provide health information, education, conduct screenings, immunisations and complete all the newborn and children's checks as directed by the Ministry of Health. They also play a key role in leprosy screening and referral of people with skin patches to the health post.

Pabitra looks after 76 households in her area in Nepal. She follows up with each household, going to visit each family approximately 3-4 times a month to deliver all the necessary health activities, and links them into the health system for further treatment or support. Through the

IMPACT project Pabitra and other FCHVs provide key support in helping the project team identify people in most need of accessible toilets, water points or assistive devices.

Pabitra is very proud of her work. While the role only provides a very small stipend, she sees her role as a priority above all her other household chores and she is happy to be serving her community and serving her country. Pabitra gets the most satisfaction from her job when she sees that the households she supports have understood the information and training she's provided them and go on to make improvements in their daily habits.

**Give thanks and pray for Female Community Health Volunteers like Pabitra, who through their voluntary service, form the backbone of the health system in Nepal. Pray for Pabitra's work to bring lasting change to the 76 households she visits.**

Pray for the work Pabitra and others do which supports the work being done by the Ministry of Health and by The Leprosy Mission in Nepal through the Integrated Mobilisation of People for Active Community Transformation (IMPACT) project.

To show your compassion to people affected by leprosy in Nepal through the IMPACT project scan the QR code or follow the link

<https://www.leprosymission.org.au/projects/integrated-mobilisation-active-community-transformation>



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The emotional burden of a leprosy diagnosis weighs heavily on a young person like Nagajothi.

The stigma and financial pressure that her illness put on her family lead to poor mental health for Nagajothi who was just 14 when she was diagnosed. Painful swellings on her face and rashes on her hands were the first symptoms.

*"I remember the change in the behaviour of our relatives and neighbours and feeling very hopeless. I was very young and confused."*

*"I even have an uncle who won't allow us to attend things. We're not allowed to go, they separate themselves from us. But with this education, I will change the world, I'm telling you."*

The education that Nagajothi is so excited to talk about is at the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Vadathorasalur, India, about a 5-hour drive from home.

*"At first, I chose electrical training as it was a job in high demand in Tamil Nadu but as I continued studying, I started to like it more... I want to become an electrician, a self-employed electrician. But I'm planning to get a government job first."*

She adds, *"Once when I was visiting home during lockdown, I fixed the lights and a few electrical sockets, and it made me so happy. My mother was also pleasantly surprised. She thinks I did a better job than if someone else had done it. She's very proud of me."*

Nagajothi's mother, Bakkyo, who is also affected by leprosy, has noticed great changes in her daughter. *"Nagajothi has changed after studying at the VTC. She is much more confident and happier, and I now believe that she will get a good job... and build us a good home."* Bakkyo believes that Nagajothi's success will help their community to accept them again. Nagajothi wants to encourage other young people like her to get training, particularly young women and others with leprosy and show them what is possible.

Pray for Nagajothi to continue and finish her studies. Pray that she will find good employment and live out her desire to encourage other young women to follow in her footsteps.

Pray that Nagajothi's relatives and neighbours will learn more about leprosy and not stigmatise her.

Pray for the Vadathorasalur Vocational Training Centre as they educate young people affected by leprosy. Pray that students will graduate and become productive members of their communities.

Show love and care to students like Nagajothi through the Vocational Training Centre Project. Scan the QR code or follow the link.

<https://www.leprosymission.org.au/projects/vocational-training-centre-project>







Lunchtime at the Vadathorasalur Vocational Training Centre.



© Sabrina Dangol



Right, top to bottom: Studying in the dorms, engineering training, seamstery training, construction training.



# Your prayers give young people with leprosy a chance to build a positive future.

What an amazing opportunity awaits students at the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) at Vadathorasalur in Tamil Nadu state in India.

Students arrive at the VTC who have been affected by leprosy, disability, discrimination, or from underprivileged backgrounds. They receive counselling and encouragement to achieve despite the setbacks they may have had.

*"The teachers at the VTC first helped me to have a positive mindset and attitude. Then they provided me with proper training and education. This combination has helped me,"* remembers former student Ashok.

For some, this is an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty which can contribute to conditions in which diseases such as leprosy thrive. Such is the quality of the training, over 90% of graduates gain employment.

Pastor Godwin, who offers counselling to students calls the VTC 'a beautiful place, where lives have been transformed.'

Currently students can enrol in a one-year course in air-conditioning, refrigeration, or sewing technology, or a two-year course in motor mechanics or electrical. Nagajothi (front page), who is studying to be an electrician, wants to reach out to others, *"I want to help encourage other young people to get training, particularly young women and others with leprosy too – to show them that this is possible."*

Above and beyond their courses, students are educated on disability rights, positive engagement, and fair labour conditions. The VTC also trains businesses in the wider community on disability inclusion and fair labour conditions to help create more inclusive communities.

A recent initiative sees the VTC working towards financial independence through establishing

production units on site to bring income and opportunities for on-the-job training for students.

Pray for the students of the VTC as they look to the future with more confidence thanks to the opportunities provided to them. Pray for the staff as they work hard to encourage students and create a high-quality education with excellent results.

Pray for the ongoing sustainability and flourishing of the VTC. Pray for businesses to engage positively with the VTC and help more students find work and inclusion in the wider community.

Help a young person affected by leprosy achieve their true potential. Support the Vocational Training Centre at Vadathorasalur. Scan the QR code or follow the link.

<https://www.leprosymission.org.au/projects/vocational-training-centre-project>

