

OPEN HANDS NEWSLETTER

Christ-centered economic opportunities for the third-world.

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1 | MARCH 2013

"If there be among you a poor man . . . thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need."
Deuteronomy 15:7-8

New Savings Groups in Kenya and India

There are exciting developments taking place in Open Hands as we begin 2013. We are encouraged with our current programs in Haiti and in India. God has been blessing those programs. The believers and the churches are being strengthened through the Open Hands savings group programs.

We believe that the savings group model of savings-led microfinance is a powerful tool in helping people to move from the dependence of poverty, to being able to care for the needs of each other.

Open Hands has received requests from various missions to come and partner with them in the development of a savings group program. We are currently working toward the launch of two new programs in 2013.

In February we launched a program in Kenya in partnership with Amish Mennonite Aid. The Kenya initiative will offer the savings group program to participants in the Christian Believers Fellowship churches in the Nakuru and the Kisumu regions. We are hiring a Kenyan facilitator from each community and are training them to assist the groups with forming and functioning as a group.

We are pleased with the initial developments in Kenya. The people in the churches seem eager for the program to begin in their churches. This program will be on a small scale, functioning just in the 16 Christian Believers Fellowship Churches.

This summer we plan to launch a savings group program in the Hyderabad region of India. This program will be in partnership with Good Life Ministries, directed by Sam Gunti.

Our program in Vijayawada, India began in 2011 and now has over 4,000 participants. We anticipate that the program in Hyderabad will have similar results within several years. We have conducted a feasibility study and developed a business plan for the program. We are working toward beginning this program in June of 2013.



When I visited the program in India in December of 2012, it was a blessing to sit with the savings groups and hear stories of how God was using the savings groups to encourage participants. Many shared how being in a savings group helps them in their spiritual lives. They support each other in prayer, and belonging to the savings group strengthens their ties to one another as fellow believers. Many of them are excited because this is the first time they have ever saved any money. They were pleased with the potential that was developing because of their savings.

Many of the people in the India groups are women who live in the slums of Vijayawada. They work at manual labor, such as cleaning or street sweeping. Most of them are earning less than \$1.00 per day. Some of these women have been part of a savings group for 18 months. They have saved the equivalent of about \$75.00. They have never owned this much money at one time before in their lives. They are looking forward to using their money to start a very small business that can increase their income.

We have seen how the savings group program brings hope and change into areas where people are living in deep poverty. It is one way of giving people the skills and knowledge they need to begin to see change. And the positive thing is that it is done by

the people themselves. It doesn't create a dependency on outsiders to bring economic and spiritual/personal change.

Both of these programs require additional funds for Open Hands. The budget for the program in Kenya is \$16,000 for the 2013 – 2014 fiscal year. The budget for the program in Hyderabad, India is \$73,600 for the same period.

We are currently in need of your financial support for these new programs. If you would consider a donation in the next few months, it would help us as we move into these new areas.

Merle Burkholder, Open Hands Administrator

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Opportunity to support the work...

Open Hands supports conservative Anabaptist mission work by providing a Christ-based curriculum, financial teaching, and savings groups. While Open Hands does not provide money for loans, there are expenses for curriculum, paying the facilitators, and overseeing the program. If you endorse the work and vision of Open Hands, we invite you to partner with us. Your gift will help us expand the program and reach more people. Contributions are tax-deductible. Please make your check payable to *Open Hands*.

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