

February 2014



Dear friend,

Aren't you glad someone cared enough to send you to school, thus allowing you access to a world of information and opportunities? I sure am! My missionary parents, poor as they were, sacrificially gave my brothers and me two amazing treasures – faith in God and an education. I feel blessed and I am forever indebted to them. As I was thinking about the focus of our prayers this month, I came across some staggering facts and statistics. I still cringe to think that two-thirds of all the illiterates in the world are women. Why? Because in many parts of this world, girls remain the least valued, least fed, and least educated. They have little or no access to general information and knowledge, so they're unable to read a book or a newspaper – or even a street name!

It's been said that one educated girl is like a pebble tossed into water – its ripple effect impacts not only herself but also her family and ultimately the whole community. When women are educated, the nation gains! Educated girls are less likely to become child brides and have early pregnancies. Educated women earn higher wages and usually have smaller, healthier families. Educated mothers make sure to pass this valuable gift of education on to generations to come.

There are millions of Bible illiterate women all over the world. We must pray for them, as well. This concerns me greatly. You see, millions of women cannot read or study God's word on their own. For years I have dreamed of producing a radio program in which we read the word of God to these women in a way that will enable them to relate to it, understand it, and apply its truths in their daily lives. Doesn't the Bible say that "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17)?

We are broadcasting God's word through Project Hannah's signature program *Women of Hope* today in 65 languages! And because you have faithfully prayed with us, women entrenched behind barriers of illiteracy can hear the good news of God's grace. But we need to pray for more innovative opportunities to speed up the spreading of the Good News through all kinds of media platforms available for our use. I love to remember that Jesus said, "Our faith – even if it is the size of a mustard seed – has the power to move mountains!" I believe this to be absolute truth. So, my friend, let's act upon our beliefs and say to this mountain of illiteracy, "Mountain, get out of our way!" I am sure God will smile and sing for joy over us as we pray earnestly for these dear illiterate women throughout this month.

Yes! Our little faith can move mountains. Let us pray with passion and with expectant faith. Let's do it remembering that anything we do for "the least of these" dear women and girls, we do for Him.

Believing with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marli Spieker".

Marli Spieker
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Project Hannah

Project Hannah

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Reports from Project Hannah Ministries

Cambodia report:

In a village called Thrawnup in Kandal province we met with about 15 families, most of whom are extremely poor. They live in leaky grass huts and do not have enough food or clothing. There are about 50 children living there who do not go to school, because their parents are too poor to send them. Because the parents themselves are not educated, they do not see a need for education and therefore do not encourage their children to attend school. They do not listen to our programs because they don't have a radio. I talked with three families affected by HIV.

Nepal report from Shanti:

Thank God that in this month, I was able to visit Pipra, Bangai and Taulihawa. I have met our regular, new, and occasional listeners along with some women pastors and leaders. I have met the women of the Project Hannah prayer groups. They were very happy to see us in their villages and welcomed us. We talked with each other and shared our feelings and experiences about listening to the *Women of Hope* program. According to them, the program *Nari Asha (Women of Hope)* is a program that gives hope to women who have none. It's the program made by women for women, so they never miss listening to it. They told us that the program is wonderful and is in simple language that every woman could understand easily. They came to know more about their physical and their spiritual needs. They were very thankful for this wonderful program and for TWR Nepal's production of it.

Kyrgyzstan – news reports of forced marriages:

The *Der Spiegel*, issue number 38/2013: The stolen bride Farida and [her kidnapper] Tychybek hardly know each other, but he wants to marry her – against her will. His family members tried to drag the 20-year-old student into the family home to force her to marry the young man. But Farida fought back. Later she managed to escape and to return to her hometown. Most women have little luck. After having been abducted and raped, they consent to forced marriages, as the shame is too great. It is estimated that one out of three Kyrgyz women are married to their kidnappers. Bride kidnapping is not a tradition but a crime for which the maximum penalty increased in January to ten years. However, the practice continues.

The *International People* number 3/2013: On the promised day, she was carried by car. ... She received fancy clothes and had to write a letter to her parents saying that she was a volunteer bride although this by no means happened voluntarily. The women of the family were pressing her against the wall, holding on tight to her arms, vigorously talking at her while she was crying and struggling with all her strength. She will have to leave her childhood and adolescence behind, and from now on she will belong to a new family. She won't see her own family very often. The rest of her life she will be taking care of her mother-in-law, as she is the bride of the youngest son. She will have to carry out the major part of the housework to prove that she is a good bride. She will be pregnant soon.