



Thornleigh

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The Asian Aid Miracle

by Jill Wong

The Asian Aid Miracle - the story of the founding of the Asian Aid Organisation

Maise Fook writing:-

I guess for me the idea of Asian Aid began in the early sixties when I saw an ad in a magazine inviting people to sponsor a child in a developing country. I liked the idea but wondered whether it could be done through the church. I wrote to a friend in Hong Kong to find out whether the church had any orphanages there. She wrote back to tell me the only orphanages run by the church were in Egypt and Korea. So, I wrote to the orphanage in Korea and joined up as a sponsor. We received photos and regular reports and also were able to write to the two children we sponsored.

After about three years of supporting the children, we had the idea that we might try to adopt them. We started working on the idea and, a year later, in 1966, I visited the Seoul Adventist Hospital where the orphanage was and met the children for the first time. It was a very moving experience. Then the director showed me the poverty in the city and, when I asked her what we could do to help, she suggested we could send clothing over, so I came back with the idea of bundling up clothing to ship over for them. I found that to get shipping concessions we needed an organisation, so a small group of us formed the Asian Aid Organisation and it simply grew from there.

In 1967, we obtained permission to bring the children (Margaret and Jeffrey) to Australia and adopt them - and that created a lot of interest. So, the sponsoring idea developed from that. Asian Aid wasn't really planned, not by me anyway, but by God, because I never dreamed that it would be what it eventually grew to. Soon after that first visit, two other orphanages (run by individual Adventists in Korea) contacted us and we started sponsoring there too.

Though at first the work was confined to Korea, soon after we started, the situation in Vietnam became quite serious as a result of the war and various sponsors asked why we couldn't do something there.

So I wrote to the church there and we started sponsorship of children (in poor families rather than in orphanages at first). We had about 850 children sponsored in Vietnam when it fell in 1975. All our contacts were evacuated by the United States and it wasn't possible to continue with the work there, so we started looking for other areas needing help.

Some of those who had become sponsors of Vietnamese children had heard on the media of the very great need in Bangladesh and suggested that we try to find out if we could help there.

At that time, the Director of SAWS (later called ADRA) in Bangladesh, Leon Powrie, was on furlough in Australia, so I contacted him to see if it was possible. He said it certainly was and he first organised work in the refugee camps there - so it was a case of one door closing and another opening.

Then, he suggested we start work in the village schools, as well. Leon sent us photos over and we could see something of the scale of the problem. The work started with just a food distribution centre.

Less than a year later, we visited and the difference in the children was just incredible.

The work now has led to an industry there where the mothers are trained in sewing and basket making so they can earn money to become more independent. A similar scheme exists in the schools to equip the younger ones with marketable skills.

The rest of the story:-

Asian Aid began to work in Nepal in the late 1980s, establishing Zenith School and the Nepal Children's Home. Mobile health clinics and a program for poor women suffering from Uterine Prolapse were established more recently as part of Asian Aids work there.

In the 1990s, with the support of a very generous donor in the USA, Monosapara School in Bangladesh was rebuilt and another large academy, SAMS was also built in the North. Today, each of these campuses provide an education to over 700 boys and girls - these children have been given a gift many would never have experienced otherwise.

In 2002, after years of renting, a permanent home was built for the School for the Hearing Impaired in Kollegal, India. A new school for the Blind followed shortly after. With the generosity of ASI (an American Lay Business People Organisation), major donors and a very special partnership with Maranatha Volunteers International, the new Blind School was opened November 21, 2003, Bobbili, India. Today, 160 blind and partially sighted students receive an education there.

In 2005, a long-anticipated extension was added to the school for the Hearing Impaired and work commenced on a second floor for Elim School and Hostel which was opened in September 2006. This same year, Asian Aid embarked on an education project in Sri Lanka and today, Asian Aid sponsors a small group of needy children in that country.

In March of 2006, the new Immanuel School in Jeypore was opened. - made possible by Maranatha Volunteers and a band of dedicated US Donors. This school has capacity for 700 students and provides a much needed facility in Orissa, India.

From very humble beginnings sponsoring just 2 children, today the Asian Aid family sponsors over 7,000 children and plays an important role in providing clean-water for villages, basic health care, vocation training and tertiary education for nurses and teachers. We remain committed to showing and sharing God's love to those in need.

As we consider our past, the Asian Aid team is enormously grateful to each person who has contributed over the years. Some sponsor a child, some pray for our work, some volunteer their time, some sponsor projects and others partner directly with us overseas. Whatever your contribution, we say thank you! All that has been achieved has only been possible because of your willing sacrifice. We pray that Asian Aid will continue to be an organisation of ordinary people doing extraordinary things together for God!

Above all, we give thanks to our awesome God for His amazing love and goodness to Asian Aid and we place our trust in Him to guide and lead our future.

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