

Pakistan's social development: the Christians' role

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Guest Contribution

We are all aware of how much the Christian community has done for Pakistan. It has established schools such as ours – the St Joseph's Convent — all over the country. Hospitals, orphanages, trust funds, even entire villages were founded by the Christians as early as the late nineteenth century.

The Church of England established the Karachi Grammar School in 1847. Thomas French, the first bishop of Lahore, founded the Agra College in 1853. Three years later, The Convent of Jesus and Mary was set up in Sialkot. In 1861 the St. Patrick's High School and in 1862 the St. Joseph's Convent School were established. These were the first of many schools and universities set up by the Christians, who, for the last 160 years have been educating people all over Pakistan. Their students, have in turn, grown up to educate others and spread their teachings. These missionary schools have moulded lives, and that in turn have shaped our country's history and its future.

Women's empowerment in Pakistan is a goal that the Christian community has helped us work towards. Girls' schools have been established all over Pakistan, and in 1965 the Daughters of the Cross established a Home Economics School in Sialkot. In 1852, a medical mission was started to promote women's health and education.

Many other medical missions were launched, such as Dr Jack Anderson's mobile hospital in 1960. It was made up of trailers and make-shift dispensaries. He moved every three to five years to far-flung areas of Hyderabad and the interior Sindh, where medical facilities were rudimentary at best. The Holy Family Hospital was established in 1928, and later converted into a Nursing School to help spread medical education in Pakistan. The St Theresa Nursing Home was established. Belgian nurses visited Christian hospitals in Pakistan to help treat patients, and train doctors and nurses.

The Christians first established orphanages in Lahore in 1892 and '93. In 1897 they set up a school for orphans in Rawalpindi. Since then, they have set up countless orphanages all over Pakistan, and helped to improve lives. Towards the end of the 19th century, orphans in Rawalpindi were relocated to Yusufpur. In two years alone, 118 orphans were relocated, provided for and educated. In 1904, an entire village, called Francisabad was founded to house famine-stricken orphans.

The Christians have also developed housing and educational trusts, providence homes, and numerous charity organisations. Their welfare organisations include the Dar-ul-Sukun, a

home for children with mental and physical disabilities, Marie Adelaide's leprosy centre, and the Ida Rieu School for the blind, deaf and dumb, in Karachi

As a minority, the Christians make up only 1.6% of Pakistan's population, and yet, they have done so much for their country. At SJC, we've all witnessed first-hand how much time and effort the nuns dedicate to education and social welfare.

A witness at the All-Saints Church on the day of the blast demanded that the Christians be recognised as Pakistani, and as equal citizens to the Muslims. Though they may be a religious minority, the Christians are an integral part of Pakistan and their contributions depict their love for Pakistan, and their dedication to our country. Whether Christian or Muslim, we are all Pakistani. Our destinies are fused together by this land.

Over eighty people died in the blast on the 22 September. One of the victims was a twenty-year old medical student, Noel Williams. His friend, Meraj Aleem, said: "He was a passionate student and more so a youngster who wanted to work for the betterment of his country."

Perhaps, that is the saddest of all. The loss of potential, of the youth, and of Pakistanis who wanted to make our country a better place. We must now join together to allow people like Noel to live on through us, by making Pakistan a better place. We must strive, as the Christian community has done for almost two centuries, to spread education, awareness, health and love. Thank you.

Reference: <http://www.zubeidamustafa.com/pakistans-social-development-the-christians-role>