

# MISSION FIELD OF THE MONTH: CENTRAL ASIA



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Central Asia is an area characterized by high unemployment and major social problems. In some areas, many people live in extreme poverty. Women traditionally have a weak and vulnerable position and are affected particularly hard, especially in rural areas.

The culture indicates that women's main task and only real opportunity is to get married and have children, and there are very few opportunities for women in rural areas to find work outside the home. NLM has therefore chosen to support projects that help to improve the living conditions of women and children.

We support a project among women, which aims to inspire and engage local women to develop their craft products and thus get a lasting, predictable and fair income. The project arranges gatherings where teaching in design, business, sales and distribution is given.

## ASSISTANCE AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

Central Asia consists of the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, and the countries are home to many different ethnic groups. NLM has been working in the region since 1998. The last 25 years have seen major changes, and especially in recent years, some areas have seen signs of somewhat greater religious freedom. But the region is still largely closed to traditional missionary work.

At the same time, the countries in Central Asia need a lot of professional expertise, and it is today possible for Christian professionals to obtain a residence permit.

NLM therefore wants to work through precisely Christian professionals. We provide various types of assistance and work with local Christians. The people we send are either language students or employees of companies, organizations or universities, and they work within fields in which the country demands higher expertise.

NLM wants to reach the least reached, and we want to be at the forefront of missionary work. Missionary work in Central Asia is demanding, but it is necessary. Therefore, the work here is a priority focus area for us.

## **QUIET REVIVAL**

Several areas in Central Asia are experiencing a quiet revival in the midst of political unrest and strict control.

NLM works to strengthen and equip Christians in this part of the world. We are working especially towards a Muslim ethnic group that is among the minority groups in the area. They experience great problems, but there are people who accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour which creates a demand for education.

We support a network of local pastors who lead small house churches, and we contribute in various ways so that they and the other Christians can receive training and education. In this way, Christians can grow in the faith, their families can be strengthened, and new Christian leaders can emerge.

Persecution of Christians in Central Asia is often reported, and it is important that we as God's people stand with them. In the midst of hardship, we meet bold local Christians praising God for the spiritual thirst they see among the people.

## **THE BIBLE IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART**

Bible translation is a time-consuming but central part of bringing the gospel even further. Hence, this was one of the first things that NLM's representatives in Central Asia became involved in. One of our representatives has been involved since 1998 in a work for a Muslim group in the region, to have the Bible translated into their language.

Work on this Bible translation, done in collaboration with Wycliffe, is now in its final stages. We are delighted that the entire Bible is already available for this ethnic group in a digital edition, and we look forward to the printed edition also being completed.

Much of the translation work is done by local staff trained as translators. Foreign personnel are advisors and ensure the quality of the translation. Thanks to the internet, one of NLM's representatives today is able to contribute to the work from an office in Norway, while also having regular meetings with the rest of the team in a neighboring country.

## **SOCIAL WORK**

Central Asia has a young population and there is a great need for teachers. We work to teach and equip teachers and parents so they are well equipped to provide the best possible teaching and follow-up to children.

We have recently introduced the ICDP (International Child Development Programme) as part of this work, and offer courses to preschool teachers and parents with the goal of strengthening their interaction with children. The program is recognized by UNICEF and WHO, which have also used it in various countries around the world.

In addition, we have established a school center for children, where preschool children can receive quality education and children of school age can receive a good After School Programme. The hope is that the center will also be a gathering place for parents and guardians.

We also work to support local Christians who, using their abilities and resources, can establish and run sustainable businesses that can bless the local community. Many people in Central Asia are without a job and a fixed income. By helping more people to use their talents and gifts, more jobs can be created, so that people can strengthen their self-worth and experience both financial and social security.

## **PRAY FOR THE WORK**

Join in prayer for the work of Central Asia, and for all the people who live there!

If you want to know more specific information about the work in order to be able to pray for delegates and specific work, contact your local NLM regional office. If you attend a small group or Bible group of sorts, it is possible to receive visits from missionaries, preachers, or others able to provide information regarding the work in Central Asia. Thank you so much for your support and intercession!

## **PRAYER TOPICS**

- Pray for strength for our brothers and sisters in Central Asia. Pray that they will live close to God and walk in works prepared by God beforehand.
- Pray especially for the leaders of the Christian network of house churches, and pray for wisdom and humility.
- Pray for our sisters in Central Asia, pray that they may be strengthened in the faith and that they may see God's care in their daily lives. Pray that the various projects will be a blessing to them, and pray for a good collaboration.
- Pray for the last question in the printing of the Bible to an unreached people group in Central Asia. Pray that God will open the doors for distribution when the Bible is finished printing.
- Pray that God will send more workers to Central Asia.
- Pray for the start-up of the «Use Your Talents»-project, pray that it may spark the creation of new jobs and become of great significance for many.
- Pray for the representatives. pray that they may be witnesses in everyday life and show the love of God.