Life
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LifeGA is investing in women, investing in the future

In 2021, it was clear to Life Global Australia's Founding Directors that the best way to enact LifeGA's mission to change lives, was to change the lives of women. Around the world, the effectiveness of making women the focus of any social improvement strategy was well established. Fifteen years earlier in 2006, when the Nobel Peace Prize acknowledged the work of the Grameen Bank, the Nobel Foundation said the bank's experience was that lending to women "ensured the best security for the bank and the greatest beneficial effect for the borrowers' families." According to the bank's founder, Muhammad Yunus, "Women want to build up something for the future with their money." When Project *Life* set up its Women's Empowerment Centre, they knew that focusing on women would bring security and stability not only to families, but to whole communities.

LifeGA's decision to support the Women's Empowerment Programme has resonated with many donors, including businesswoman, Ms Bina Gorasia.

"I come from a culture in which women often lack opportunities," Ms Gorasia said. ***"The Women's Empowerment Programme enables them to transform their lives."***

One such life transformed is that of Reshma Khan.

Reshma is from an extremely poor family. Her husband's work as a driver earns very little, so Reshma worked as a housemaid as well as caring for their two children. She was exhausted and despairing when she first heard of the Women's Empowerment Programme.

"I received training in beauty parlour practice. ***Project Life allowed me to dream of starting a beauty parlour and making my home financially strong."***

Reshma is now a successful businesswoman operating Angel Beauty Parlour from her home, and giving classes herself.

"Now I live with dignity. I can provide better education for my children."

Reshma is one of 12,000 women who have completed the Women's Empowerment Programme. Project *Life* relies on social workers to identify women between the ages of 18 and 45 who are living below the poverty line (BPL). BPL status is issued if the family earns less than INR6000 per month, or INR72000 per year. These women are invited to complete a 12-week vocational training course.

"Now I am earning INR240000 per annum," Reshma said. ***"Before the training, I had no employment opportunities, but training helped me develop my skills and secure a livelihood."***

"Our aim is to make women self-sufficient," according to Project Life's Joint Executive Trustee and CEO, Ms. Meetal Koticha Shah. As well as vocational training, all participants receive self-defence training to improve their personal safety; gender equality training to educate them about their rights and enhance self-confidence; and banking, budgeting and finance training so they can independently operate a bank account, balance their finances and prepare the family budget.

"We are proud of the exceptional success rate of this programme", Ms Shah said. 'Of the 12000 women who have graduated from the course, 85% are still earning money using the skills they learned." Project *Life* helps ensure their success after training by providing free, trade-specific equipment to help women start earning. *"We also provide market linkage to connect these women with traders. Further, our counsellors are always helpful whenever necessary."*

LifeGA's Founding Director and Chairperson, Dr Dipti McGowan, is mindful of the strength of trainees in the Women's Empowerment Programme. Participants are usually from impoverished areas, or are widows struggling to support their families.

"Many of the women are travelling further than they have ever gone before and into a city which they have never seen before," Dr McGowan said. *"That would take great courage."*

Programme graduate, Usha Prajapati, travelled 12 kilometres to the training centre each day from the slum area of Ahmedabad in Gujarat state. Though it was difficult to make the trip daily for 12 weeks, as she is the sole parent of two children, Usha knew she was securing a livelihood.

"Now I am earning INR150000 per annum through stitching work," Usha said.

"My life has completely transformed. I am a proud breadwinner for my family, successfully managing my children's education and living with newfound self-confidence."

LifeGA is now focused on achieving the target of empowering 20,000 women like Reshma and Usha.

"LifeGA's contribution will help Project Life achieve their goal of training and empowering more than 20,000 women in the near future, and ultimately touching the lives of 100,000 women in years to come," Dr McGowan said.

"Women's empowerment is not merely about helping women; it is about building a more robust, stable and powerful society."

(www.lifeglobal.org.au)

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Our Vision

To support, sustain and enrich people's lives.

Our Mission

To work to prevent and relieve poverty through education, training and health for public benefit. We partner with well-established charities that share our vision.

Our Partner

Project 'Life' is dedicated to creating long-term impact by empowering lives through diverse programs.

LifeGA: Investing in Women

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