

Helping Kids through a Prison Ministry

Prasad lives in Andhra Pradesh, India, where he is the mission director for the New Life Regular Baptist Society. He and others minister in a women's prison, to the women and their children (age eight and younger). The reasons children live with their mothers vary: it could be due to their mothers' poverty or because conditions would be worse in other living situations (e.g., abuse).

The government provides for the women and their children; but the food, shelter, and education are inadequate. For example, the government supplies only textbooks, not any other books; kids eat the same prison food as their mothers, but no nutritional snacks are provided; and the government education does not meet standards and provides no moral education.

Additionally, the prisons are at about 117 percent capacity. This overcrowding can result in poor hygiene, poor healthcare, and violence. Due to underfunding for prisons, many prisoners have to sleep on the floor. And with other unsanitary conditions, disease is a constant threat. But there is little hope, for women have limited access to healthcare or legal representation. Meanwhile, their children are often treated like prisoners.

These circumstances can be dire for children. In addition to the lack of proper food and care and the limited educational opportunities, the experience of living in a confined and often stressful environment can have a lasting psychological impact on children, affecting their mental health and emotional well-being. Limited opportunities for recreational and play activities can hamper their normal development as children. Further, they may face social isolation, as they lack interaction with children outside the prison and may get a bad reputation due to their circumstances. Growing up in such an environment can impact children's future opportunities, potentially leading to a cycle of poverty and criminal involvement.

Yet there is a bright spot in all these dark and depressing circumstances! The government has given permission for a special education service and Sunday School service, although only two outsiders are allowed to enter the prison at a time.

Every week, Brother Prasad's ministry partners conduct a three-hour Sunday School service. Prasad says, "We are getting good results from our Sunday School ministry, . . . transforming their lives in a good way and [motivating] them to know our Lord's love." Many kids have been saved through the Sunday services. After Sunday School, each child receives a box of nutritional food.



During the week, the Christians minister through "educational coaching," as Prasad explains, giving "proper education and guidance to the children."

Then, every year at Christmas, they distribute clothing, blankets, and school needs. But in the past two years, due to lack of funds, they could only afford clothing.

The needs are great and include blankets for 256 children at \$17 each (\$4,352); books, bags, and stationery, plus food, clothing, shoes, sweaters, and geometry boxes for all 256 kids; complete Bibles in the Telugu language at \$7 each (\$1,792); snack boxes (which include a plate and food) at \$12 each (\$3,072).

Additionally, Prasad and the ministry coordinators need a used vehicle as permanent transportation, which will allow them to get a permanent pass to the prison. They will no longer have to spend time being checked at the gate, which takes time away from their ministry.



Continue reading to meet six of the children ministered to by Prasad and his team.