



DOING GOOD THAT IS GOOD

June 2020: FARMS Response to COVID-19

Revolving Loans to Christians Promoting Self-Support - Galatians 6:10

Greetings from FARMS International,

Reports have been coming in from FARMS programs around the world. These reports have revealed that many areas are experiencing lockdown conditions and restrictions on travel and large group meetings, to an even greater degree than we are here in the United States. The COVID-19 crisis truly is a global concern. For many people around the world, the restrictions are just as much a threat to life as the virus itself.

With such overwhelming immediate need, it is tempting to abandon our development approach focused on long-term solutions to instead focus on how we can help relieve such desperate and immediate needs. However, as we step back and consider the number of people that have been helped through FARMS programs, and the work that those people are now doing, in turn, to help those around them – we are reminded again of the reasons why we approach ministry the way that we do.

Through the foundation of good work laid in years past, FARMS has equipped Gospel-centered people to respond to the urgent needs in their areas at such a time as this. Some broad examples of FARMS' impact include:

Support for Small Business and Agriculture. Interest-free FARMS loans provide capital to start or expand small businesses and agricultural ventures. Some of these businesses and farms provide a means of response to a crisis such as COVID-19, such as growing food and sharing it with those in need.

Empowering Christian Families and Individuals. FARMS programs not only show love and support for our Christian brothers and sisters around the world, but many former loan recipients are now able to care for themselves when they would have otherwise been unable.

Local Evangelism and Relief. As people have received help through our programs, they have then paid it forward by sharing the love of Christ, in both word and action, with unbelievers during this time of momentous opportunity.

I am encouraged by the included stories featuring 1.) Pastor Albin in Bangladesh, who considers FARMS a partner that has allowed him to gain more independence, as well as 2.) our program in Sri Lanka. Even though we do not focus on relief as an organization, we have played a part in empowering these people to provide relief to those around them.



A New Bible Class Meeting in Bangladesh

FARMS is prayerfully monitoring the situation and is in touch with the local committees that oversee each program. We are preparing to help the programs, as restrictions are lifted, based on their particular needs. We seek to do so in a manner consistent with our call to long-term development, in partnership with the local committees, for the benefit of the global church. Thank you for your partnership in *Doing Good that is Good*.

With love in Christ,

Scott Clifton
Executive Director

Albin's Story



Pastor Albin and Family

As a young man, Albin started with virtually nothing. His prospects began to look up when he got a decent-paying job at an NGO in Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital city. However, he left that job, experiencing a significant cut to his income, as he pursued God's call to the rural location where he lives now. He developed his .66 acre plot of land with a loan from FARMS in 2010. He started with 1500 laying chickens that became unprofitable when the bird flu hit. Then he switched to cattle that he purchased with a FARMS loan in 2014. He built his cattle herd up to fourteen and then sold down to five to completely repay all outstanding debts in 2019. All five of those cattle became pregnant, one has now given birth, and the four remaining are due over the course of this next year. Albin and his wife are so grateful for all God has done in their lives that they have decided to give the first 50 liters of milk away to those in need as an offering to God!

In addition to the cattle, he and his wife raise goats, sheep, geese, ducks, chickens and fish. They also cultivate fruit trees and a vegetable garden. They have hired a man named Saul to help with their farm; he is talented and dependable, but only has a third grade education. Although Saul has a poor education, he has been able to provide education for his son who is currently in the 10th grade. In addition, Albin is the director of a ministry team including himself, three other ministry workers, as well as school teachers. They oversee churches, Good News Clubs/Bible Classes, and Free Friendship Children Schools. All together, the ministry reaches individuals from 980 different families.

The following note is from Albin:

I am Albin Biswas, servant of the Lord in Friendship Bible Church of Bangladesh Ministries. At first, thanks to my Jesus and thanks to my dear Brothers and Sisters / Prayer Partners, and thanks to Global Access Partnerships/LIVE GLOBAL and FARMS International. The milk I give to poor persons comes from a cow I purchased with a FARMS personal loan. A COVID-19 disaster relief operation is in progress so that at present, we can give relief to the poor and hungry of our area. Friendship Bible Church of Bangladesh Ministries team arranges and manages the local operation of purchasing and distributing the food: rice, flour, lentils, vegetable oil, eggs, onions, salt, milk and soap. We purchase these goods in the local market.

Our ministry's account does not have enough money to continue the project as we want to. We have money from GAP in a Dhaka bank (central bank) but because of the lockdown, we are having difficulty getting the money to our local bank. Pray that we can overcome this problem. I trust that this money will very soon be in our local bank so we can continue our relief work. We decided to begin giving the relief food to the church members & ministries workers with money we had in the bank. Please pray that we can give to needy students' families of the Good News Clubs / Bible Classes and Free Friendship Children's' School students. We hope in the next few days with your help, we can expand the relief project.

Your Partner in Bangladesh
Albin Biswas

Pictures and information are courtesy of Dr. Robert Goddard, Jr. and Pastor Albin Biswas. If you wish to give to the relief efforts of Pastor Albin then please designate ALBIN - COVID RELIEF.



Relief Supplies Prepared for Distribution



Pastor Albin's Cattle

FARMS Lanka

FARMS International began a program in Sri Lanka in 1973. FARMS trained a committee and funded the program until 2005, at which point the program continued operating independently! Although FARMS Lanka has been operating independently for 15 years, we have stayed in touch. We recently received this update from Clarence Mendis, General Manager. (Update has been paraphrased for readability.)

The Sri Lankan government has taken steps to protect against the spread of COVID-19. They have imposed a police curfew, strict measures of social distancing, and measures for hygienic practices. Sri Lanka was not ready for such a threat as well as other countries.

We are working with Disaster Management Officials, community leaders, churches, and CBOs (Community Based Organizations). In the beginning there was an acute scarcity for face masks, gloves, sanitizers, etc. At the request of the officials, we arranged supplies as an immediate measure and purchased from private dealers.

They have since distributed dry ration packs as well, including dhal (lentils), rice, milk powder, onions, biscuits, canned fish, etc. Their primary focus is to help believers, especially those who are poor and in great need. That said, they have also been able to provide distributions to their unbelieving neighbors – thereby building a bridge to Christ through loving words and actions.

The Staff of Farms Lanka gathers every morning before commencing operations. Reading the Bible, remembering all prayer requests, with a time of prayer which is one of the greatest and powerful methods which strengthen us while working on disaster situations. We thank God for His guidance, protection, providence, health and healing. It is a time to pray and seek God's guidance, protection, providence and healing for each other in each country.

FARMS International is passionate about local ownership, and we have been thankful to see the value of that principle shine in light of the hardships surrounding COVID-19.

If you wish to give to the relief efforts of FARMS Lanka, please designate LANKA - COVID RELIEF.



Preparing Distributions for Delivery



Members of FARMS Lanka Praying Over Distribution Efforts

Request for Testimonials

FARMS is currently developing some new materials for use in sharing about the ministry. We desire that these materials would reach people who are passionate about strengthening the global church and wish to partner with FARMS International as an effective way to accomplish that goal. We would love to hear from you! Many of you support FARMS through prayer and finances and you identify with the ministry on some level. Would you consider taking a little time to let us know why that is? Your words may be just the encouragement that someone needs! Please send responses via email to info@farmsinternational.com or mail with the included remittance envelope.

**Note: Unless otherwise specified, you consent to let us use your name and response, in its entirety or in part, for the purpose of promoting FARMS via publication, social media, or any other medium.*



FARMS International, Inc.
P.O. Box 270
Knife River, MN 55609

Return Service Requested

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
DULUTH, MN
PERMIT NO 40

Doing Good that is Good!

Memorial Gifts

In Memory:

George Bisbee

Raymond C. Bosserman

**William Dirks & Melvin Carl
Erickson**

Homer & Mary Martin

Given By:

Joyce Bisbee

Ramona Bosserman

John and Marcy Stromgren

Jay and Barb Martin

Honor Gifts

In Honor:

Larry Mix

Jesse Dillon

Jeff and Peggy Boshart

Christopher Eby

Given By:

Evan Mix

Matt and Kim Dillon

Ron and Leah Bailey

Earl and Barb Eby