



SISTER LUCY KURIEN

Recipient of the Award for Development and Welfare of Women and Children - 2021

Born: June 1, 1956

Called to Serve

Sister Lucy Kurien was born in 1956 at Kolayad in Kannur District of Kerala, India. After years of formal education, at the age of 14 she moved to Mumbai where she was profoundly distressed by the appalling poverty and squalor in the city. Having carried a strong inner desire for justice since childhood, she felt a deep calling to make a difference to the life of the poor and famished around her. In 1980, Sr. Kurien joined Sisters of the Cross, a religious order. It was a difficult decision that meant giving up the bliss of independent and free life. After 4 years of training, she was professed to the order.

Taking Her Work to the Streets

Nine years later, Sr. Lucy left the convent's cloistered walls and in 1989 joined HOPE (Human Organization for Pioneering in Education) which helped marginalized women gain modest employment and was founded by one of her own colleagues at the Sisters of the Cross. A traumatic incident resulting in the death of a pregnant woman and her unborn child at the hands of her drunken husband prompted Sr. Lucy to realize that she could no longer be a silent spectator to the horrific violence and abuse against women. In 1997, Maher which means "Mother's Home" was founded to provide safe haven for battered and destitute women.

The Birth of Maher

Sister Lucy started Maher activities in one small home near the village Vadhu Budruk near Bhima Koregaon on Ahmednagar highway. Her tireless efforts and the work of the dedicated staff led to the expansion of Maher activities to nearby areas. These include the villages in Shirur, Haveli and Khed talukas as also the city of Ratnagiri, Miraj & Satarain Maharashtra. Beyond Maharashtra, Maher has established homes in Kerala, Jharkhand, Kolkata, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. In 2011, unable to ignore the plight of abandoned men on the streets, Maher opened its first home for destitute, aged and mentally challenged men. Today Maher reaches the life of the poorest of the poor through as many as 24 different outreach projects including 624 village self-help groups and 58 interfaith, caste-free homes that currently shelter 984 children and 142 men and over 572 destitute women in the Indian states of Maharashtra, Kerala, Kolkata, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Jharkhand. Since its founding, Maher has provided care and shelter to more than 5000 children and 5900 women.

Some of the Projects of Maher

VATSALYADHAM:	Home for Mentally ill Women
MAMTADHAM:	Home for Battered and Destitute Women
KISHORDHAM:	Home for Orphans & Children from Broken Homes
KARUNALAYA:	Home for the Mentally Disturbed & Homeless Men
SUKHSANDHYA:	Home for Destitute Aged Women
PRAGATI:	Rural Outreach Programmes

PARISHRAM:	Centre for Vocational Training and Production
GAMATSHALA:	Day Care for Children of Migrant Workers
SWAVLAMBAN:	Self Help Groups
DNYANGANGA:	Libraries for Villages
USHALAYA:	Kindergartens in Villages
VIDYALAYA:	Coaching Classes for Poor Village Children
PREMALAYA:	Crèche cum Day Care Centre
AADHAR:	Job Placement for Village Women and Youth
VIDYADHAN:	Outstation Children
ADIWASI KALYAN KEDRA:	Welfare Activities for Tribal People
KALASAGAR:	Open School for Drop-Outs

Swavlamban – Earning Self Respect through SHGs

Maher thought of bringing women and men in group and give them information about education, health, superstitions unity etc. as well as Self Help Group. Thus Maher started the Swavlamban project – Self Help Groups (SHGs) in the villages. The project consists of generating and sustaining SHGs in the village of Maharashtra and Jharkhand. At present Maher is having 652 SHGs and are reaching out to 10,608 beneficiaries. More than 402 women started their own business and many of them are able to keep animals like cows, goats, chicken/hens etc.

Living Interfaith Principles

A devoted Catholic Christian, Sr. Lucy has an unshakable faith in confluence of religions of the world in attaining human well-being. She established Maher as an interfaith organization which seeks the help and blessing of all religions and faiths in its work for the weak and poor around. In 2017, during the 20th birth anniversary of Maher, Sr. Lucy founded the Interfaith Association for Service to Humanity and Nature (IASHN). Currently, the association has members in 12 countries including India.

A special attention to Environment

Sr. Lucy has special love for the environment. She works hard to protect it and started several activities. Wherever Sr. Lucy goes she makes it a point to make people sensitive to this need. Her heart calls for planting trees and tending them is her special hobby.

What also Brings Sr. Lucy and the Maher Staff Joy

Currently, more than 92 Maher youth are enrolled in college and 106 have earned undergraduate and graduate degrees. Maher youth have led peace camps in the U.S., India, and Africa. 70% of Maher women have been rehabilitated. Residents who are not able to leave Maher contribute to the community's well-being at whatever level they can.

Sister Lucy's Vision Today

Sister Lucy's dreams are far from over. She is committed to co-creating a better India by establishing Maher homes and outreach programs in every Indian state and to collaborating with leaders who feel called to create spaces "where society's vulnerable can rise to new life." Being a true Gandhian follower Sr. Lucy believes "Be the change you want to see in the world".

Awards & Recognitions:

Sr. Lucy has received 234 awards national, International and recognition for her work, including

2016: Nari Shakti Puraskar 2015 for women's empowerment

2016: Mother Teresa Award

2018: Mother Teresa Memorial Award for Social Justice

2011: Global Women's Summit Leadership Award, USA

2018: 82th in 100 the World's Most Inspiring People by OOOM

2019: 35th in 100 the World's Most Inspiring People by OOOM

2020: 12th in 100 the World's Most Inspiring People by OOOM

Maher's work has been chronicled in many publications titled Women Healing Women, Dignity from Despair, Beyond an Encounter in Art, Austria – India, Life is Love (Malayalam), Mazya Mahera (Marathi), Nainihall (Hindi)–Maher. Some of which have been written by Maher students. The organizations work has also been featured in numerous video presentations and Sr. Lucy's work at Maher was the subject of the Austrian film Sister Heart.

Contact details:

Sister Lucy Kurien

Founder Director, Maher

Vadhu Budruk, Koregaon Bhima,

Taluka Shirur, District Pune

Maharashtra - 412216, India

M: +919011086131; +919850601091

E: maher@maherashram.org

W: www.maherashram.org

