



PAKISTAN

Pakistan lies between Afghanistan and India. It is a federal republic which gained independence from England in 1947 from the United Kingdom.

Most of the country's population of almost 151 million are Muslims. Christians, Hindus and others make up 3 per cent.

The country suffers a great deal from internal political conflicts. It survives off a great deal of foreign assistance.

There is substantial underemployment in Pakistan. There is a great deal of illiteracy, poor health and poverty—35 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line.



Marists

The Marist Brothers' presence in Pakistan commenced in 1966 including two Australians in the original group. Other Australians have since worked there, especially in the schools. Currently, Brother Wal Smith of Melbourne is working in training young Pakistani Marists. This is primarily an Islamic country so it is a frontier presence for Christians.

While this part of the Marist world has continued Australian connections, it is the responsibility of the Sri Lankan Marists. The Brothers, including two young Pakistanis, are responsible for:

- St. Mary's High School, Peshawar (near Afghanistan border and mainly for Muslim boys)
- St. John's Hostel, Peshawar (for Catholic boys)
- Catholic High School, Sargodha (70% Catholic)
- St. Joseph's Technical School, Faisalabad (for school dropouts who learn a trade in a small school).

These projects help to give children in this area a chance that they wouldn't otherwise have. Students are able to have opportunities to finish high school, or to become equipped with the skills to enter the workforce. Without these opportunities, life is much harder for these people.

Australians have provided various levels of assistance to these projects. The high school in Peshawar is for middle income Muslims and a few Christians and its income enables the other projects to be developed. Currently there are nine Pakistani young men who are following early stages of training as Marists. Australians today support their education in the hope that the educational needs of the poorer sections of Pakistani Christians in society can continue to be met by locals.