



Equipping women, children and families  
in India to discover a brighter future.

Friends of CRS update | Summer/Autumn 2022

## A TRIP TO REMEMBER



In Derby, we were taken by Revd Anita Matthews to meet Rt Revd Libby Lane, the Bishop of Derby. We spent the evening enjoying a meal with 19 of the Derby teachers who are linked with the Diocese of Calcutta.

Bishop Paritosh presented the teachers with items prepared by the Nari Dana women. We hope that many of the teachers will be able to visit Kolkata next year.

We also spent time at the University of Derby. There is an exchange programme between the university and students from CNI schools in Kolkata, which we discussed at length. It is proposed that a group of students will visit Kolkata next year, following the Derby teachers' trip.

Next, we travelled to Cambridge and arrived at Little St Mary's Church (LSM).

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**Above:** From left to right: Rig David, Anita Matthews, Charles Ringrow, Pradeep Kumar Nanda, Bishop Paritosh Canning and Raghav Naik with Tim Rosier (University of Derby lecturer in Youth and Community).

### **Rig David, Director of CRS**

In early September, I was pleased to visit London, Cambridge, Oxford and Derby alongside Dr. Paritosh Canning (Bishop of Calcutta and Chairman of CRS).

The purpose of the ten-day trip was to strengthen the links between the Church of North

India (CNI) and Derbyshire, Cambridge and Oxford, raise awareness of the work being done in the Diocese of Calcutta, increase valuable support of CRS, and link the clergy exchange programmes.

We began our trip in London where we visited Westminster Abbey and met with the Associate Dean.

# A TRIP TO REMEMBER (CONT.)

We were welcomed by the vicar, Fr Robert Mackley, and our hosts, Clive Brown, Neil Swan and Kristen Rutter.

On Sunday morning, we all attended High Mass at LSM. Bishop Paritosh preached at the service and spoke movingly about what life in poverty in the slums is like, emphasising the social ills that it brings: alcoholism, abuse of women and children, breakdown of families and general degradation. CRS exists to give people the opportunity to break out of that vicious cycle and to give them some hope for the future, and that is most rewarding.

After the service, we had an opportunity to meet many of the congregation, who spoke in

appreciation of the work of CRS. Bishop Paritosh presented an altar cloth made by the women of Nari Dana as a token of our appreciation.

On Monday afternoon, we took a train from Cambridge to Ely where we were greeted by the Dean, Rt Revd Mark Bonney, who gave us an in depth tour of the cathedral.

In Oxford, we arrived at Ripon College and were greeted by Karen Laister, who works for BRF (Bible Reading Fellowship) and has previously visited CRS. Together, we visited Keble College and met the Chaplain, Fr Max Kramer and retired professor Tony Phelan. Over lunch, we discussed possible links with the college.

We also met with Daniella Cromwell, Manager of Fairtrade at St Michaels, and some of the directors, and discussed a possible link with Nari Dana. We showed some samples of the items made by the women and the enthusiasm shown was very encouraging. This could be an exciting outlet in the future.

These are but a few of the highlights of our trip – there are many more I could go into. Each of us arrived back profoundly changed. It was a trip to remember which certainly ushered in a sense of unity, witness and service. I'd like to thank Revd Anita, Clive and Karen for their meticulous planning of the trip, and to all those who made us feel most welcome during our stay.



# NUTRITION AND HEALTH UPDATE



We are delighted that, between July and September, the nutrition programme provided healthy food for 570 children across twelve CRS projects, and the funding received continues to make a significant difference. Attendance has noticeably increased across the education centres. Health clinics have been set up alongside the nutrition programme so that a professional team can monitor the health of the children, in particular their weight and height, and by giving them a general health check-up.

**Above:** Two children get a health check-up through their school clinic.



The Bosekati health project has so far provided more than 500 people from disadvantaged communities with health check-ups and necessary medication. COVID-19 awareness sessions have been provided there, as well as at Brace Bridge, Gobinda Banerjee Lane and Kulberia, equipping more than 100 people with the tools to protect themselves and others against the virus.

As part of the health programme, women at Kulberia, Geonkhali and Nari Dana have received training on making low-cost sanitary pads.



**Middle left:** A COVID-19 awareness session at Kulberia.  
**Middle right:** A dental appointment at Bosekati.  
**Bottom:** Women learn how to make low-cost sanitary pads.

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT UPDATE

This summer, 314 women and girls signed up to take part in the sewing and beautician course. 100 of the existing students also took their final evaluation, with a Government instructor reviewing their work. Some will now go on to join the Nari Dana programme.



At Pally Mangal, Brace Bridge and Kestopur, a new initiative was launched at the start of July called Embroidery: A New Future. 80 women and girls have been enrolled so far.

Meanwhile, the Nari Dana women have been focusing on making uttariya, ecclesiastical stoles, handkerchiefs, cushion covers, napkins, table mats, altar cloths and kurti.



**Top:** Making stole and uttariya at Nari Dana.

**Bottom:** A sewing class in session at Basanti Devi Colony.

## CRS RECEIVES OFFICIAL AUTHORISATION FROM GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

CRS has been recognised by the national skill corporation of the Government of India as an authorised training centre, after much hard work and dedication by the team in Kolkata. This means all women's empowerment programmes will be recognised and each of the women and girls being trained

will receive a certificate from the Government, benefitting their livelihoods and future prospects.

A fantastic step forward for CRS and all the women and girls they serve.



# CHILDREN AND EDUCATION UPDATE

At Brace Bridge, the students have received school uniforms for the first time. They've started to come to school dressed in their uniform and the parents have expressed their appreciation.



Meanwhile, several of the education centres have seen their students take their first term evaluation.

At Hastings, Brace Bridge and Kulberia, parents received their children's results during a parent-teacher meeting where they discussed their progress. The children also took part in a couple of celebrations over the summer, including the 75th anniversary of India Independence Day (15th August) and Teacher's Day (5th September).



**Top:** Students at Brace Bridge in their school uniforms.

**Middle:** A parent-teacher meeting.

**Bottom:** Children at Bibibagan celebrate Independence Day.



## ONE CITY, THREE LIVES, ONE WORLD

As you know from the last newsletter, we've been working on a film alongside a professional filmmaker in Kolkata, to be used as an educational resource in

schools across the UK. We now have a title for the film: One City, Three Lives, One World. Unfortunately the official rollout of the film has been delayed due to unforeseen circumstances. The good news is the resource is currently being trialled by a

few schools to make sure it does the job we want it to, and after some final tweaks and alterations it will be ready.

We're confident this will be a useful resource for schools and CRS supporters alike and will be worth the wait!

# THE PEOPLE YOU HELP

## Gabbi Basra Bursary Fund

Bishal is a beneficiary of the Gabbi Basra Bursary Fund, an initiative set up to enable bright students like him to continue their education. A former student of the CRS education centre in Hastings, Bishal is a particularly bright young man with an aptitude for drawing. He's now studying at a Government school thanks to the bursary fund.

Bishal's mother is a single parent who works in daily labour to support Bishal and his younger brother. She is very grateful for the sponsorship initiative as it has helped her financially to ensure her son's education is no longer a distant dream but a reality. Thank you to all CRS supporters who have given towards the Gabbi Basra Bursary Fund and the wider activities of CRS – it's because of people like you that Bishal and others are able to continue their education.

## Brace Bridge women's empowerment programme

Nurisha is from the Brace Bridge area in Kolkata. She writes, 'Brace Bridge is a railway station and I live on the other side of the station. I am married and have two children.

'Life is not easy as my husband works in daily labour, which means no work and no money at home. I too work as a domestic helper.



**Above:** Bishal on his way to school with his mother.

**Below:** Nurisha using her sewing machine.

'One day, a lady came to my house and explained that she was from CRS and she was doing home visits to encourage women to join the tailoring training which was being held in my location. At first I was not keen to join, but then she explained that she was the teacher and if I could master the art, then I could earn a livelihood. Eventually I joined the training in 2020. In 2021, I appeared for the final sewing evaluation and now I stitch for myself and my neighbourhood. I use the sewing machines at the training centre and my trainer is always ready to help me when needed.

'I am so happy that I joined the sewing training and now can earn some money to sustain myself and my children. I am grateful to all who support this initiative and to Cathedral Relief Service for providing us this opportunity and also for giving us the liberty to use the sewing machines for our work.'



# LARSEN & TOUBRO VISIT NARI DANA

Over the summer, representatives from Larsen & Toubro visited Nari Dana and were treated to a tour. Mr Sanjeev Sharma, Larsen & Toubro's General Manager, travelled from the company's Mumbai headquarters for the visit. He was joined by Mr Prosenjit Roy, Kolkata Branch Manager, and Mr Govind Shaw, Kolkata HR Head.



One of India's biggest construction companies, Larsen & Toubro have provided support for Nari Dana in various ways over the past few years, including arranging transport and food for the women during 2020 to enable them to continue the activities at times when Government lockdown restrictions allowed.

The women received a real boost from the visit.



**Above:** Mr Sanjeev Sharma, Mr Prosenjit Roy and Mr Govind Shaw from Larsen & Toubro are shown around Nari Dana.

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## FINANCIAL UPDATE

The total income received by the Friends of CRS in the last financial year (April 2021 to March 2022) was £56,129, of which £50,370 came from donations. The amount transferred to CRS in Kolkata during the year was £43,066.

Income this year has been considerably less than over the past two years and so, unless funding increases, the

Friends will have less to send. In June, we were able to send £17,820, but we have only £16,000 cash balances at present, of which £4,185 is earmarked for the Gabbi Basra Bursary Fund. The weak state of the pound sterling also reduces the amount that the Friends are able to give. A particular need, at present, is to keep the nutrition project funded. Providing children at

schools with sufficient nutrition is essential as many households do not have the resources to feed their families adequately. CRS had cash resources to keep this going to the end of October. The Friends have a further £1,000 earmarked for the project (part of the £16,000 mentioned earlier) but further funding is urgently needed to keep the programme going.

# MEET THE TEAM IN KOLKATA

Get to know some of the staff team enabling CRS programmes in Kolkata.



Jagdev has been driving the mobile clinic for the CRS health programme for 35 years! As part of the core personnel, he has served CRS diligently, ensuring communities receive suitable health care and support.



Ms. Manjushree is a professional consultant for CRS, specialising in women's empowerment. She has dedicated 36 years of service to training and upskilling the women enrolled in the programme.

## WAYS TO SUPPORT CRS

To donate towards general CRS funds, please visit [justgiving.com/calcutta-ccrs](https://www.justgiving.com/calcutta-ccrs)

If you wish to give regularly by standing order, or to make a bank transfer, please email [secretary@friendsofcrs.co.uk](mailto:secretary@friendsofcrs.co.uk)

Cheques made payable to 'Friends of Calcutta Cathedral Relief Service' can be sent to:

Friends of CRS c/o Reverend Anita Matthews  
St Peter's in the City  
St Peter's Street  
Derby DE1 1SN

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