



Friends Update

July 2017

Welcome to the latest update from the UK Friends of CRS! Although it has been a year since the last newsletter, this time has not been without exciting developments and dramatic incidents, as you will read in the articles in this bumper issue.

We have important news to share on the financial situation of CRS, with a problem in receiving foreign funds resolved, new funds received from local sponsors in Kolkata, a successful harvest appeal in Derby and a generous bequest, but support still needed for the ongoing work.

There are exciting updates on two initiatives: Nari Dana, the social enterprise project supporting women to make products and earn a living, and the link between schools in Derby and Kolkata. You can also find out about the latest visit to the UK of the CRS Executive Director, Rig David, and a new-look website.

How your support makes a difference

Sonali's story

"I am a student at Sukantanagar Sishu Sikha Niketan, a school supported by CRS. My father works as a daily labourer, my mother as a domestic help, and my brother as an electrician.

I joined this school when I was six years old in the pre-primary section, now I am in class IV. My best subject is Bengali, and I love painting and drawing. I was also President of the Sishu Jagat club.

With the assistance of my teachers, I had the opportunity to open my very own bank account where I can save my own money, which I want to use for my higher education. When I grow big, I want to become a teacher."

Rupa's story

"I was able to study up to Class XII then I took training in tailoring offered by CRS at the Basanti Devi Colony centre.

After that I decided to do the beautician training course too. Now I am 25 years old and work in a beauty parlour.

My mother works as a domestic help and my father is a daily labourer so my income really helps to support the family.

I have two sisters who study in Class XI and VII. My dream is to help them to complete their studies so that they can make their future better."

A financial update

By Clive Brown, Trustee, UK Friends of CRS

In financial terms, CRS has recently had a difficult and worrying time. Fortunately, there is now good news to report.

All organisations must have a certificate under the Foreign Contribution Regulations Act to be able to receive foreign donations. In late 2016 the Indian Government withdrew this certification from CRS and thousands of other charitable organisations.

With its overseas bank account frozen, CRS was unable to receive funds, not only from the UK Friends but also from supporters in Canada, Australia, Hong Kong and elsewhere.

CRS is heavily dependent on foreign funds, so this was a tense time. Fortunately, the organisation was able to keep going in two ways. First, money was drawn from a reserve fund (the Corpus), built up over the years from donations from St Paul's Cathedral to provide for emergencies. Secondly, CRS sought financial support from domestic donors, particularly local companies (see next page).

After many telephone calls to officials and several visits to Ministry of Home Affairs offices in Delhi, CRS Executive Director, Rig David, was able to tell us in May that the certificate had been renewed, and that it was possible to send money again.

By this stage the remaining reserves could only have paid salaries for two more months so this was a great relief.

Below is a summary of income and expenditure for CRS for the last financial year (01/04/16 to 31/03/17) converted to pounds sterling. The income figures are depressed because of the inability to transfer funds from abroad for 5 months, but even if that had not been the case, there would have been a substantial deficit.

The significant figure is the overall outgoings of over £77,000. While some savings can be made, some costs will have to increase, particularly as loyal CRS staff are paid at well below market rates and their wages need to be raised to fair levels.

The good news is that there are accumulated funds ready to be transferred. The UK Friends have approximately £23,000 ready, Derby Diocese has raised over £16,000 in the Bishop's Harvest Appeal, and over £7,000 from Derbyshire schools.

So we can breathe again, for the time being at least! But please keep the donations coming. The need among Kolkata's "poorest of the poor" is huge, urgent and overwhelming. Your support is both essential and very much appreciated.

Summary of CRS Income and Expenditure for year ended 31st March 2017

Income	£ equivalent
UK Friends	10,183.59
Other Overseas (Australia, Canada, Hong Kong)	15,727.87
Local Donations including Corporates	14,231.93
Other (interest etc.)	4,023.35
Total Income for the Year	44,166.74
Outgoings	
Direct Costs of Projects	65,338.17
Other Staff Costs	3,075.53
Overheads and Administration	8,721.70
Total Outgoings for the Year	77,135.40

Corporations bolster local fundraising

By Rig David, CRS Executive Director

We have always been dependent on overseas funding so the freezing of our foreign bank account for many months was a very serious concern.

The only answer to this situation was to look locally for funds. We were successful in applying to several corporations for support through the Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, the leading oil and gas company in India, have supported the ongoing health programme, most significantly by a substantial donation which allowed the purchase of a new 4x4 vehicle to be used as a mobile medical van.

This allows CRS health teams to visit different locations in both the city and rural areas, and also carry medical supplies to replenish clinics.



New Mobile Medical Van supported by Hindustan Petroleum

Larsen and Toubro Limited, a major conglomerate, has given support in cash and kind to support the women's empowerment programme, particularly the locations in South 24 Parganas district, and the new Nari Dana initiative.



Rig David from CRS (centre) presents representatives of Larsen and Tourbo with a Certificate of Appreciation for their contributions

Meanwhile, we have recently entered a new partnership with Neelambar Construction Pvt. Limited, a construction company, who have made a donation towards the education programme.

We are also currently finalizing the details of a substantial grant for the women and children's programmes from Coal India, the national coal company.

We hope that the generous support of these companies will continue and that we can also find new sources of corporate support, as local businesses recognise their civic responsibilities to those around.



Harvest Appeal provides a “Ray of Hope”

By Alastair Redfern, Bishop of Derby

There has been a long-standing partnership between Derby Diocese and the Church of North India. I have enjoyed several trips in recent years to Kolkata where I have seen the work of CRS first hand.



We were delighted by the total of £16,250 raised. It will support CRS’s ongoing work with women and children, as well as fund education and health programmes in six new locations.

The skill and experience of CRS encourages people to pray and to give with real confidence that the Gospel can be enacted, lives transformed and a better kingdom future be secured.

I chose CRS as the beneficiary of the diocesan Harvest Appeal back in 2011 and was delighted to choose the organisation again in 2016. This latest appeal focused fundraising on the “Ray of Hope” project.

Each project becomes a light set on a hill, not just for witness in Kolkata, but as a sign to us too. We are blessed to be called to be a part of the Ray of Hope project.

CRS and the UK Friends would like to thank the parishes, schools and individuals in the Derby Diocese for raising such a wonderful sum of money which will make a huge difference to thousands of lives in India.

Generous bequest remembers happy days in India

By Clive Brown, Trustee, UK Friends of CRS

We are very pleased to report a substantial bequest left to the UK Friends of CRS under the will of Mrs Patricia (Pat) Payne who died on 15 July 2015.

Pat was a teacher. She married John Payne in 1955, a banker, initially with Lloyds Eastern, then National and Grindlays.

They spent 17 years in Pakistan and India, with postings including Lahore, Karachi, Delhi, Amritsar and Calcutta. In Calcutta, Pat worked as a teacher at the Cathedral School. They both loved India.

They returned to the UK in 1972, although John carried on with inspection tours for several years.



Pat and John Payne attending a wedding in India

The bequest is being treated by the Trustees as a capital sum to be invested in the long term. The money has been invested through Rathbones Investment Management, and should produce a regular income of around £4,000 per annum.

Nari Dana project enters exciting new phase

By Masha Cleminson, CRS supporter, Cambridge



After 18 months of gestation and development, the Nari Dana project has entered an exciting new phase. This initiative builds on CRS's women's empowerment programme which offers skills courses in tailoring and embroidery.

Some of the successful graduates of this training have been selected to work for Nari Dana, which has been set up as a social enterprise. The women make goods for sale. They are paid a fair wage and have the pride that comes with independent earning to support their families.

All of this came about through a collaboration between Veronica Karlsson-Doresamy, UK-based designer and product manager, and the UK Friends of CRS. Veronica runs an online business, [Tabitha Living](#), selling products produced by women in Asia set free from poverty, trafficking, forced labour or prostitution. Nari Dana will be one of the suppliers of elegant home accessories for sale on the website.

Nari Dana has received financial support from the UK Friends of CRS as well as Anglican Overseas Aid Australia, the German Consulate in Kolkata and the multinational corporation, Larsen & Toubro.

Nari Dana now has its own production centre with 11 new high-efficiency industrial Juki sewing machines on which the women are receiving further training and learning Veronica's designs.

The opportunity to work in situ on professional equipment is significant to maintain the quality of production. Also, as one employee, Bijoli Bala, explains, "It is nice working together here at Nari Dana, as it is boring stitching alone at home."

Over the past two years the team, including production manager Rituparna Ghosh, the staff in the CRS office in Kolkata, and some thirty women from underprivileged backgrounds, have been working hard to set up the business and bring the quality of production up to a high enough standard for the international market. Meanwhile sales on the local market have already taken off, with items being sold year-round from the cathedral office in Kolkata and at fairs and exhibitions.

Nari Dana is not only giving impoverished women a livelihood, but also a network providing professional development, mutual support, and, ultimately, empowerment. Bijoli continued, "I hope that in future more women will be involved in Nari Dana and we will progress as a team".



Some of the products for sale on the local market (clockwise from top left): tablemat set, kurta shirt, napkin set, cushion cover

Derby Education Links visit

By Anita Matthews, Trustee, UK Friends of CRS

A team of 19 people from Derbyshire visited Kolkata in January 2017 with the aim of developing links between schools in Derbyshire and Kolkata.

Eight CRS Schools took part in the programme (GB Lane, BD Colony, Awami, Taj, Topsia, Sukantanagar, Hastings and Topsia).

The Derbyshire teachers spent 3 days (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) spread around CRS schools teaching alongside local teachers.

On Tuesday and Thursday everyone joined together for training days exploring participative learning methods.

The teachers were able to try out new approaches and activities the following days in school. The level of engagement in the training days far surpassed our hopes and expectations.

Among the visitors were two lecturers from Derby University School of Education who spent time visiting each of the schools and assessing how teachers could be given additional support.

A number of steps have been agreed to develop this project in the future. Derby University hopes to fund an English Language programme in Kolkata for the participating teachers.

They are also exploring offering a 'sandwich' aspect to their BEd training, where final year students can go and teach for a term in CRS schools.

The Department of Social Care at Derby University is equally keen to send placement students who might contribute to CRS healthcare projects.

There will be another group visit in January 2018 to build on school links and continue the CPD training programme, with a particular emphasis on teaching phonics, something the CRS teachers found particularly useful.

Twinkle, an education Resources supplier in the UK, has agreed to make appropriate resources in Bengali and English to support the training.

The group has also raised enough funding to bring a group of 6 CRS teachers on a return visit to the UK.



Participants in the Derby-Kolkata Education Link programme

First impressions

By Jennie Gill, participant in Derby exchange visit



Jennie, an infant teacher at South Darley Primary School near Matlock in Derbyshire, was assigned to Hastings school, the most recent addition to the CRS Education programme. Here is a diary extract from her first day at Hastings school.

I don't know how to begin to describe Hastings School and its surroundings. There is a large, raised ring road, very busy with several lanes of traffic and all the usual noise and chaos. Across the middle of this road there are two flyovers.

Underneath every concrete archway that holds up the road are piles of rubble. This rubble has been used to mark out living areas with poles at the corners and a small number of possessions inside each one. Some of them have a second, smaller space next to them with a blanket or plastic sheet around them to about shoulder height. These are the toilets.

Most of the men among the 250 people living here are alcoholics and drug addicts and are not capable of working. Many of the women are prostitutes. But all of them agree that going to school and getting an education is important and they send the thirty or so youngest children to school for two hours every day.

School takes place in one of the living spaces with a blanket hiding the washing line and the crockery in a basket on the wall.

Two plastic sheets are put out on the floor and children's art work stuck on the back of old calendars is hung around the poles at the edge. There is a blackboard and a small box of resources, mostly paper.

The teacher, Santa Gupta, is trained in art and she teaches the children to draw. This isn't an education that is preparing the children for a different life from the one they are currently living but it keeps them off the road for a couple of hours each day.



Jennie in the "classroom" at Hastings school

The children start to arrive and are each made to say 'good morning' as they come in- and that exhausts their English conversation.

Within a few minutes I find that this class of children is made up of the same characters as any other. There is the boy at the front who is obviously capable and has knowledge already that he can add to our discussion. There are the older girls who want to please and are checking out my jewellery and nail polish. There are the ones at the back who are fiddling with some coins that are confiscated during the morning.

There are also two tiny girls who can't be older than three. One of them disappears half way through the morning and comes back a few minutes later wearing a beautiful frilly green dress and a Santa hat.

The other little girl wraps her arm around my leg and leans against me as I teach. I put my arm around her and I can feel her chest crackling under my hand.

A whirlwind visit with wonderful people

By Rig David, Executive Director of CRS

I was privileged to visit the UK again in June 2017 as part of the celebrations of the 40-year link between the Church of North India and Derby Diocese. As well as strengthening the relationship with the Derby Diocese, especially its schools, I visited a number of CRS supporters and new contacts.

I started in Cambridge with Clive Brown, Trustee of the UK Friends, during which time I attended Sung Evensong at Jesus College, and met the President and the Master and told them about the work of CRS.

During a day trip to London I met with Veronica Karlsson-Doresamy who has been a major force behind the Nari Dana project. We discussed how to improve the quality of goods being produced. She also gave me a batch of new sample designs for me to take back to the production centre in Kolkata.

In Leicestershire, I spent time with Adrian Whalley, Honorary Secretary of the UK Friends. This included speaking at the church of St Mary-in-Charnwood in the village on Nanpantan, particularly about the Nari Dana project. Many of the congregation purchased products made by the women in Kolkata which was a very heartening experience.

In Derbyshire I visited a number of schools whose teachers had participated in the exchange programme in January and enjoyed time interacting with children in classrooms, answering their curious questions and observing teaching methods. I was also delighted to hear a class sing “Kawah”, a Hindi song that they had learned.

At Derby University, I attended some lectures in the Education Department that has been part of our exchange programme. The Masters students gave me useful insights into comparative and transformational education. I was also able to tell the story of CRS supporting the poor and underprivileged in India. Many students were interested to support the cause.



Rig at Carsington & Hopton Primary School, Derbyshire

It was also a pleasure to meet Bishop of Derby, Alastair Redfern. His support for CRS through the Harvest Appeal has been a blessing for our work. Our discussion was very blessed and productive with future plans.

Back in London, I met with Raymond and Eileen Brooks, long-time supporters of CRS, and attended a service at St Margaret’s Church, Lee. I spoke to the congregation about the work of CRS, particularly with women and children, and explained how their generous donations over many years had made a difference. I also spent some time with the young people who had some interesting questions about Kolkata and life in the slums.

I met with Raj Patel, the Asia Regional Manager for the Church Mission Society, based in Oxford. I learned about the current work of CMS in India and we explored possibilities of working together.

It was a whirlwind visit and I wish that I could have stayed longer. I am grateful for all the people who made it possible and handled the arrangements from day to day. I continue to thank God for this link with the UK and the wonderful support that CRS receives from so many friends and supporters.

New-look website and follow us on social media

By Jenny Lunn, Trustee, UK Friends of CRS

Due to factors out of control, we completely lost our website for several months in late 2016 and had to start again from scratch.

Thanks to the technical expertise of a friend of CRS in America, Rebecca Pendergast, we have built a new site.

It can be found at the same address (www.friendsofcrs.co.uk) but has a better look and layout than the old site.

This is still a work in progress as we update the content, add information about new projects, and add photos and videos.

But you will find plenty of information about CRS programmes and special initiatives, the urban and rural locations where CRS works, supporters around the world, and how to donate.



The new look Home page

If you use social media, please “like” our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/friendsofcrs) and follow our Twitter feed ([@crsukfriends](https://twitter.com/crsukfriends)) for the latest news.



**Thank you for your ongoing support for the work of CRS.
Every donation, however large or small, makes a difference
to the lives of poor and marginalized people
in the slums of Kolkata and villages of West Bengal.**