



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

Friends of CRS update | Spring/Summer 2023

Urgent nutrition project appeal

The global cost of living crisis has seen millions of families struggling to put food on the table. In Kolkata and across India, this is a devastating and widespread issue.

CRS delivers a nutritional meal for children in several CRS project locations, many of whom are not able to get the basic nutrition they need at home. The meals they receive through CRS are essential, giving them the energy to learn and the nutrients to grow.

The cost of providing meals for 500 children over the next year is £7,500, and CRS urgently requires support from local and international partners to maintain this vital initiative. Please will you give today and help ensure children get the nutrition they need to not only survive, but grow and thrive?

Please see the last page of this newsletter for ways to donate. Thank you.



Above: A gift from you can help feed a child in one of the most disadvantaged parts of Kolkata – like Muslima, who you can read more about on page 5.

Linking Derby and Kolkata

Tim Rosier, Senior Lecturer in Social & Community Studies, University of Derby

A group of seven students on programmes within the Social and Community Studies discipline area at the University of Derby (UoD) recently went to Kolkata to work with the Cathedral Relief Service as part of a new international placement opportunity.

I set up the new partnership between CRS and UoD and it links in with the long-standing relationship between the Dioceses of Derby and Kolkata, thereby further cementing the international friendship between the two cities.

A team of CRS and Diocese of Kolkata staff visited Derby in September 2022 as part of the twinning relationship, which provided the opportunity to discuss preparations for the new placement partnership in more detail.

Students gained an overview of the work of CRS and the core workstreams of primary education, health, social care and women's empowerment by undertaking visits to various centres. They were then based at one of four centres for a longer period of time to identify opportunities to build rapport with the community and apply their knowledge and skills linked to their particular programmes of study.

Elizabeth Sarpong, a second year student on the BA (Hons) Youth Work and Community Development programme, built relationships with a number of 16 to 19 year old young women in the Sukantanagar centre and developed informal learning activities around different cultural food recipes.

Sherice Dainty, Kate Ashley and Lauren Liggins, second year students on the BA (Hons) Health and Social Care programme, worked at the Gobinda Banerjee Lane and Brace Bridge centres, engaging with activities such as nutrition education in the school, visiting the health clinic directly opposite the Brace Bridge centre, and building relationships with the women on the empowerment programme. Charlie Nicholson and Grace Adlington, second year students on the BA (Hons)

Applied Social Work programme, worked in the Hastings centre, with women at risk of prostitution, domestic violence and trafficking.

In addition to the work in the four centres, the students also visited Antara residential mental health facility, Arunima HIV Hospice and the Bantra St Thomas' Welfare Society tuberculosis clinic.

A key highlight for all the students was visiting the Oxford Mission School and spending time with the boys in the hostel. The students returned later in the trip to facilitate a sports and games evening for the hostel boys as part of their placement project work and have since started to look for ways to raise funds to purchase new outdoor play and exercise equipment.

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Above: Alongside Senior Lecturer, Tim Rosier, students from the University of Derby visit the Hastings project location, central Kolkata.

Linking Derby and Kolkata (cont.)

Alongside the frontline engagement with CRS projects, the students and I undertook a number of ambassadorial visits to certain Diocesan schools and meetings with Bishop Paritosh Canning. St John's Girl's School facilitated an engagement session between UoD and St John's students around the subject of Health and Social Care professions and to promote the university as an option for those who may want to study abroad.



Due to the success of the placement trip, plans are well under way for a similar trip next year. This will further build on the opportunity for students to apply their knowledge and skills from the Allied Health and Social Care professions and bring new ideas and expertise to the ongoing work of CRS.



CRS launches projects in huge red-light district

CRS has launched education, health and nutrition projects in the Sonagachi district, located in North Kolkata. Sonagachi is one of the largest red-light districts in Asia, housing several hundred brothels and more than 16,000 commercial sex workers. Although sex work and prostitution is legal in India, life for sex workers is fraught with discrimination, social exclusion and mental and physical health risks.

According to UNAIDS, the risk of contracting HIV is around 30 times higher among women who are sex workers. Children of commercial sex workers are also vulnerable to discrimination and social exclusion, leading to mental ill-health and a lack of self-belief that can stay with them into adulthood.

It is vital that the health and wellbeing of commercial sex

workers and their children is protected, and CRS hopes to provide valuable support through the new projects. The projects include a monthly health camp providing free medicine, distribution of condoms, education around HIV, AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases, educational support for around 30 children in the Sonagachi district and nearby, and weekly drawing classes.

A tribute to Asit Da

We are saddened to announce the death of Asit Dutta, better known to all at CRS as Asit Da, which means 'elder brother', earlier in the year.

Asit Da served CRS for 42 years, with a particular focus on improving the health of disadvantaged communities. He was involved in setting up health projects for the children, women and wider

communities where health facilities were previously minimal or non-existent. Most recently, he helped establish the Bosekati health clinic at St Luke's Church, which has already provided over 500 people with life-changing health check-ups and medication.

Rig David, Director and Secretary of CRS, said: 'Asit Da

was extremely organised and methodical in his work. He was always ready to help anyone in need of medical assistance. He always wore a smile and tried to do his best lovingly, even in the most difficult situations. He was an extremely strong-minded person who came back to continue his work at CRS a week before he left us for his heavenly abode'.



Above: Asit Da performs a health check-up at the Bosekati clinic, which he helped to establish.

Welcoming two new Trustees

We are delighted to welcome two new Trustees to the Friends of CRS team.

Karen Laister is Head of Marketing, Communications and Strategic Relationships at BRF, a Christian charity and the home of Anna Chaplaincy,

Living Faith, Messy Church and Parenting for Faith. Karen has been a loyal supporter of CRS for a number of years, and spent some time working in a CRS school in Kolkata.

Ruth Mallard is another loyal supporter who has visited

Kolkata four times to date. She and her daughter, Joy, have recently returned from a visit.

This brings the number of Trustees to eleven. If you're interested in becoming a Trustee, please email secretary@friendsofcrs.co.uk.

The people you help



Muslima

Muslima is currently studying at the Hastings education centre. She was recently mainstreamed to a Government school but still attends the centre to learn Bengali, English and Maths. Muslima's father is a public bus conductor and her mother is a housewife who took part in tailoring training provided by CRS, graduating in 2022. Muslima is described as an intelligent girl who loves painting. Your generosity provides support for hundreds of children like Muslima.

Gabbi Basra Bursary Fund

We're pleased to say that the Gabbi Basra Bursary Fund, set up in memory of CRS supporter Gabbi, has enabled twelve CRS students to access further education so far.

Bishop Canning School of Management and Administration

The four students enrolled in the Hotel Management Course have completed their training, with their final exam taking place in March. They will go on to train in the hospitality industry through internships.

Top: Muslima, a student at the Hastings education centre.

Bottom: Students on the Hotel Management Course at the Bishop Canning School of Management and Administration.





Above: Visitors from the University of Derby with members of the CRS team in Kolkata earlier this year.

Friends of CRS income in significant decline

Most charities have been suffering a reduction in income in the current financial climate, and the Friends of CRS has been no exception. In the last financial year (April 2022 to March 2023) we were only able to send £33,519 to CRS. This compares with transfers to CRS of £42,369 in 2021/22, and £49,988 the year before that, so our support

shows a constant decline at present.

We hope that you can help us to reverse the trend this year. Support is vital, in particular to ensure that the nutrition fund is properly funded, and to help CRS expand the vital work they are doing, particularly in new project areas, such as Sonagachi.

Despite the shortfall from the Friends, the total income which CRS received during 2022/23 was the equivalent of £86,600, with £46,856 coming from other overseas sources. Total expenditure during the year was £89,011 of which £15,635 (approximately 17%) was on administration. This is a good indicator that your donations are being well used.

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

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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