

India 2008 report

Three pastors, ten healthcare professionals and twelve supporters (including four children aged 10-12 years) made up the 25-strong UK/USA 2008 India team.

The medical team worked well together to see all the Repalle children in just four days. It was really encouraging to see the sustained improvement in the health of the children, with fewer showing serious health issues than in previous years. The dental team also reported that their repeated message on the importance of good dental care seems to be having an impact. Although a number of extractions were necessary, there were fewer problems amongst the children who have been screened on previous visits.



Stewart Shaw, our optician, was able to review a number of children and adults whom he had seen two years ago. Once again, he was able to hand out a significant number of ready-made reading glasses, and returned home with 40 prescriptions for pairs to be made up in the UK and then shipped out to India. The addition of this service has brought enormous benefit to many pastors as well as to the children in IREF's care.

Additional temporary accommodation has been built to house some of the younger girls and ease much of the overcrowding pressures. A larger accommodation block is currently under construction, bigger than either of the present girls' buildings. It will be finished later this year and will significantly ease the overcrowding problems for the girls. Overcrowding within the boys' building is not such an issue, as there are fewer boys at the school.

Our first week coincided with the Repalle Crusades, held over four evenings Wednesday-Saturday. Various local and political pressures resulted in initial uncertainty as IREF were told

that they couldn't have the site they had booked many months earlier. A fairground had been set up in the front section of the ground! Much prayer and sensitive talking, right up to the opening day of the meetings, eventually led to the ground being made available. God's faithfulness to his people was evident as many thousands attended and hundreds made decisions for Christ, having heard God's Word being preached through three messages each night in meetings lasting 4-5 hours!

Sixty people were baptised in the River Krishna during our visit. Many of them were given a new biblical name to replace their old Hindu name, a powerful sign of the great change that has come about in their lives. Please pray for these new Christians, as many face persecution from friends and family members.

We dedicated four new church buildings during our time in India, including the one for which funds had been raised by some of our team members (see photo below). IREF now has over 500 churches in the region.



With the development of new roads and bridges, villages on the northern side of the Krishna Delta are now much more accessible. Journey times take two to three hours instead of around 24 hours previously. This opens up new areas for IREF to evangelise; already they have established a few churches in the area. However, it is becoming much more difficult to buy land for erecting church buildings, as Hindu landowners do not want to sell to Christians.

Youth Conference Meetings, 2008

For many years, IREF has educated young people as part of its overall mission. But we particularly value every opportunity that we are given to present the Gospel to them. One such opportunity is the annual Youth Conference, held in Repalle each January. The theme for this

year's Conference was taken from Psalm 119.9: *How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your Word.* About 6,000 young people attended the Conference and listened with rapt attention to the messages brought by the guest speakers. These included Emmanuel Rebba, Dee Rebba, Rev David Moorhead, Rev Dave McMahon, Ratna Prasad, William Raju and Francis Rebba.

Many of the young people shared their testimonies, of how they had come to faith in Jesus Christ; and 62 young people were baptized.



At the conclusion of the Conference, the 6,000 young people led a procession through the streets of Repalle, praising the Lord and taking every opportunity to preach the Gospel at street corners and in other locations throughout the town. The presence of God's Holy Spirit was clearly at work throughout the meetings, as so many young persons committed their lives to Jesus Christ.

Venkateswararao Sava's story

Here is the testimony of a former IREF college student, who committed his life to Jesus Christ at the 2001 Youth Conference.

"I am Venkateswararao Sava. I was led to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ through IREF. I have come to know the Lord Jesus, only because I had the opportunity to be in IREF's Gospel Fields Campus in Repalle for five years. The foundation for my spiritual life was laid in 1999, my first year at IREF. I completed the two-year Intermediate course and the three-year B.Com degree at the Degree College, where I attended the daily devotions, and the Gospel and Youth Conferences. Every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, there were prayer meetings at the Church. I attended them with the utmost sincerity and my constant search for the Lord has borne fruit.



Jesus revealed Himself to me through Ephesians 3.4-5. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

which was not made known to men in other generations, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

I realised I was a sinner. I regretted my past life and accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour and Lord. I offered myself to God, and I was baptized at the 2001 Youth Conference. Ever since then, I have been reading my Bible regularly and getting to understand it. Prayer is the strength of my life.

Later, by God's grace, I found employment as an accountant at Nagarjuna Cements, Ltd, in Hyderabad. I praise the Lord for the blessings he has showered on me; and I thank IREF, which has enabled me to build my spiritual home on the rock-foundation of Jesus. I trust that my witness will lead several others to Christ. Please pray for me."

IREF Gospel Campaign in Kuwait and Bahrain

Kuwait and Bahrain are lands closed to the gospel, as are most Muslim countries. Islam is the official religion and no Christian evangelism is legally permitted. However, there are several groups of expatriate Christian employees and workers from South Asian countries living in these countries. God has provided open doors to preach the Gospel amongst them and also amongst interested Muslims.

Emmanuel Rebba was invited to Kuwait last October to conduct Gospel meetings. He also received an invitation to do the same in Bahrain last November. The meetings were well attended, and the life-changing Gospel messages delivered touched many listeners' hearts. They were invited to pray a prayer to invite Jesus into their lives. One Muslim woman who heard the message accepted Jesus as her personal Saviour and Lord. It takes great courage and conviction for a former Muslim to accept Christ, so please pray for this woman, who will face severe pressures from her family and social groups to renounce her conversion.

Thank you for your on-going support for the work of IREF, which is clearly bearing lasting fruit for the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of our God!

David Hunt [Chairman, IREF(UK)]