

One of the best teams ever!

On behalf of all the members of the India 2006 team, let me say a huge ‘Thank you’ to you all for supporting us so faithfully in your prayers. By common consent, this was one of the best teams ever! It was characterised by an excellent team spirit across the four nationalities represented (American, Indian, Scottish and English!).

There was a wonderful sense of mutual support amongst the Pastors in particular. We always prayed for each other before any of us preached or taught, and we sat in on one another’s teaching sessions in an expression of solidarity.

It was an enormous privilege to teach so many people at a single sitting – over 2,000 conference delegates plus as many students and high school children.



On my return, I reflected on what eager learners the Indians are. They have a long and noble history of learning, which is deeply

embedded within their culture. It shows in the diligence with which the school children and students apply themselves to their studies, and also manifests itself in the hunger that Christians display to feed on God’s Word.

Every day, the children rise at 5.45am and complete at least an hour’s homework before breakfast, as well as attending to all their domestic duties (washing their clothes, cleaning the compound, etc.). Then they will do at least another hour’s homework after their evening meal. No wonder they achieve such high academic standards. It never ceases to amaze me how children from a mud hut in some remote village can go on to complete a Master’s Degree at the Repalle College!



It was gratifying to see how easily Ian Macaulay (a first-timer) took to working with a translator. Thank you for your prayers in this regard. Both his Bible teaching from Philippians and his evangelistic

preaching were greatly appreciated. We also both enjoyed several teaching sessions with the evangelists (about 100 of them) during the second week. I was able to speak four times and Ian at least twice.



The evening evangelistic rallies in Repalle were awesome! An estimated 25,000-30,000 people crammed into the Government’s Junior College grounds in the centre of the town. Tractor-trailers full of people came from miles around. In addition,



the meetings were broadcast on the local cable TV network to an estimated 700,000 people. We believe that thousands of lives will have been touched for eternity through the powerful messages that were preached, the testimonies that were shared, and the excellent music of the College choir, which this year contained boys and well as girls.



Please continue to pray for the many IREF evangelists who will be seeking to follow up those who responded to Christ in the coming days.



Body as well as soul

Whilst the pastors on the team were teaching at the Bible Conference, the medical team did an excellent work in screening all the Repalle children in record quick time, another great answer to your prayers. For the first time ever, we had an optician on the medical team. It was tremendously moving to see evangelists have their eyes tested, and then (where appropriate) receive a pair of reading glasses so that they could clearly read their Bibles once again. The big



smiles that spread across their faces were sights I'll never forget! I will also never forget the boy at the

Nizampatnam Tribal colony who couldn't even make out the top letter of the eye chart. But having been fitted up with an appropriate array of lenses, once again a huge beaming smile appeared on his face, as he was able to see clearly for the first time in his life.

Stewart Shaw, our optician writes:

It was a pleasure to work with the team in India and I enjoyed the fellowship too. I feel the team accomplished what it went out to do, both clinically and spiritually. I was surprised by the size of the operation in India. Its scale was much greater than I had anticipated and I felt it was run very well considering the numbers involved. Discipline was very good in the children. The people in general were very friendly and always smiling. The children especially were genuinely delighted to see us and appreciated any form of attention, be it a handshake, a smile, or especially a photo!

The work in the outlying areas was also a great encouragement. As more and more villages get new church buildings, they will provide a focus for local activities.

India was a mixture of picturesque and poverty, along with the maddest driving I have ever seen!

My two lasting impressions were of people having nothing, yet having everything – content with what they have. I was also inspired by the people praying under the stage as the evangelistic meetings went on, a challenge to us all.

New Developments

Although this was my fifth visit to India, I encountered a number of new experiences, including a very exciting boat ride in the Bay of Bengal, and getting accidentally left behind in the village of Ullipalem! It was good to meet up with several of

the children at the Ullipalem CDC who are being sponsored from the UK. We were entertained to a wonderful service there, which included two drama sketches, two child dedications, several solos, and lots of singing. We then sat down to a sumptuous meal! The CDC is going extremely well. The teaching staff are delighted with the progress that has been made in such a short space of time. **Emmanuel Rebba** writes:

The work of this CDC is such a witness of Christ's love to the entire village. Families here consist largely of farm workers earning substandard wages and living in huts with mud floors and thatched roofs. IREF provides what the parents cannot: an education with the necessary textbooks, school uniforms, proper nutrition, and fun after-school games and activities. Most importantly, the children learn to pray and read the Bible when they attend Sunday school each week. Let me say a big 'Thank you' to all of you who support a child at the CDC.

We were privileged to visit a number of tsunami housing projects that IREF is supervising in conjunction with the Dutch-based charity, Word and Deed.



After hearing so many stories of tsunami relief money having been given to other agencies and not being used wisely (or in some cases, not at all), it was gratifying to see these excellent building projects for ourselves, firsthand. IREF is an organisation that works with great integrity.

Future Targets

- Please pray that we will find a further 15 sponsors to enable the Ullipalem CDC to be fully supported through sponsorship. Pray that we will then be able to start sponsoring children at Akkivaripalem, IREF's first CDC.
- I would like us to target the Nizampatnam Tribal Colony School as a further project. We have long links with the project from the UK, having sponsored the village's first evangelist and raised the money for the first thatched church, which was used for the school in its earliest days. It would be good to see every child in the school sponsored. At present, several still need a sponsor. Please make the need known and ask me for literature if you need it.

Stop press: Two members of the team following ours were refused permission to enter India, despite having valid visas. Pray that the door for our future visits of teams will remain open.

David Hunt [Chairman, IREF(UK)]