

## **A new school year**

As another school year draws to a close in the UK, a new one is beginning in India. Their 2012-2013 school year began in the first week of June. Many children are forced to work in fields to help provide income for their families, so they often don't return to IREF to further their educational opportunities. Please pray that the value of education will be appreciated, and that many will come to a living faith in Jesus Christ through the witness to the Gospel that IREF provides for all its pupils and students.

## **Young lives are being changed!**

*"My name is Lakshmi Prasanna Reddy. My parents had a very unsettled, dysfunctional marriage. It eventually led to my mother committing suicide. My father has never been in a position to take good care of us, as he earns his meagre income by cleaning trucks. He has always relied heavily on drinking to make it through each day.*



*Before I came to IREF, I was living with my uncle and aunt. But my brother and I became a financial burden on their family. Two nurses at the local clinic of our village heard of our situation and encouraged me to consider going to Repalle to be taken care of by IREF. Both of the nurses had studied at IREF and shared their experiences with me. I knew it was the best place for me to be. I didn't want to leave my dad behind, but now I can't imagine where I would be if I had not come to IREF three years ago. My brother chose not to come to Repalle, but went on to become a field labourer.*

*I now have a future because of the education I have received through IREF. Before coming here, I had never heard the name of Jesus! Where would my life be had I not heard His Name? I have learned so much by being here at IREF. I read my Bible every day. I know how important it is to be nice to other people, and to pray with my friends and classmates. IREF has given me so much and helped me in my time of need. I hope that one day I will be able to do the same for others."*

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*"I thought at 10th grade I could get out of here," explained Sai Harish, who has been at IREF since 4th grade. "But God had other plans. I never thought I would go to college, but I thought I might as well*

*take the 10th grade vocation test and see what happened. I took it and passed! I had heard about God's love ever since I came here, but I had never experienced it," he said, amid tears. "But I finally understood it. I experienced it!"*



## **Vacation Bible School**

The 2011-2012 IREF school year, which ended in April, was exceptional for the high number of students who gave their lives to Christ. This is a cause for great celebration. But we are aware that many of these students come from a Hindu background. Most of the students return to a home where the name of Christ is forbidden. As they begin their new walk with the Lord, the ever-present fear of returning home becomes a reality. The students have been given a new life in Christ, which has set them free from the bondage of Hinduism. The fear of rejection and persecution by their families is real; but their hope that they will be able to share the Gospel with their families is even greater!

So, before the 2011-12 school year ended, IREF staff conducted a week-long Vacation Bible School with the children. They participated in devotions, singing, memorising Bible verses, and prayer. The prayer and goal of IREF is to plant the seed of the Gospel into these young lives so that they will return to their villages and expand the Kingdom of Christ.

Please keep all of the IREF staff and students in your prayers while they are on vacation. Pray that they will carry the light of Christ into their spiritually dark homes and villages. Pray for our young students as they are often times faced with persecution and rejection by their family members for accepting Christ as their personal Saviour.

## **June Believers' Meetings**

IREF held its annual Believer's Retreat from 20-24<sup>th</sup> June. This retreat is held every year to encourage and cultivate the Word among those who became new believers during the January and February Youth Conference and Gospel Meetings. It is also a time for IREF's evangelists and Bible Ladies to be spiritually recharged!

IREF's evangelists, Bible Ladies, and staff members prayed and fasted for the Believer's Retreat every week, during the months March-May, leading up to the retreat. The Believer's Retreat began as a small

seed idea 20 years ago, to bring all the new believers back to IREF after the January Youth Conference and Gospel meetings, and also to invite many people from the village meetings that IREF's pastors hold in their local areas. It's amazing to see how God has continued to be faithful in bringing more and more people to himself.

Please pray for the new believers as they continue their walk with Christ. Many are often persecuted by family members or even thrown out of their homes/villages for their new faith.



### Summer Gospel Meetings

In the months of March and April, IREF evangelists conducted open-air meetings in various rural villages, as a follow up to the main Gospel Meetings held in February. *“These summer meetings serve as a catalyst each year for people to keep their walk with the Lord moving forward at a good pace, and for new believers to be strengthened and nourished. The Gospel Meetings are vital to their growth as the fight to maintain freedom from Hinduism is always a struggle.”* The meetings are IREF's chance to expand the kingdom of Christ and meet villagers in their own areas.

About two months before the meetings, IREF staff and students began praying. It was an answer to prayer that many people accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. The villages of Bapatla and Challapalli were the biggest of the meetings with audiences of over 10,000 gathered in each town to hear the Gospel - so much so that the local pastors said it was the first time a multitude of such a size completely filled that piece of ground! Although there was some local opposition, the Holy Spirit moved in a mighty way as evil spirits were cast out and hundreds came forward with tears of repentance seeking the Lord's mercy and forgiveness.

As the many people came forward in response to the Gospel message, they began to hunger for a new life with Christ. Most of the converts have grown up in a Hindu household, so reverting back to old ways (old beliefs and Hindu traditions) is easy. Hinduism is not just a religion; it is a way of life, especially in rural India. That is why it is always risky for anyone to

believe in anything other than Hinduism. Anything outside of Hinduism is deemed to be a threat as well as an insult to Hinduism. Because Hindu traditions, culture, and identity run through the fabric of Indian society, Christianity is seen as ‘polluting’ India's values, sense of community, identity, and integrity. This is why in a Hindu-based society the odds are stacked against one who chooses to follow another way of life.

So, it is critical for new believers not only to hear the Word of God, but also to feel His power. As each new believer hungers for more spiritual freedom, pray that they will not get pulled back into an oppressive way of life without Christ. Please also pray for IREF's Evangelists and Bible Ladies as they persistently pray and minister to the new believers.

### Thank you for your help!

Our friends in India extend their thanks for financial assistance given to provide much-needed relief for the fire victims of Rajamundhry earlier this year. IREF provided many families with rice, groceries, cooking utensils, clothing, and financial assistance for temporary housing and work supplies.



The fire started and spread when firecrackers fell on a thatched roof of a village home. The people of the village attempted to put out the raging fires but could not enter their alleyways due to the fierce strength of the flames. The fire left over 2,000 fishermen and their families homeless.

Houses were reduced to ashes within minutes. The fishermen not only lost their homes, but also all of their equipment to continue their livelihoods. By the grace of God, no one was hurt in the fire.

IREF has been involved in emergency relief in rural villages throughout southeast India for many years. Emmanuel Rebba writes: *People on the other side of the world will forever be grateful for your quick response. IREF pastors and staff members helped provide emergency assistance to those in desperate need because of your prayers and support. Hundreds of families now have hope!*

**David Hunt** [Chairman, IREF(UK)]