

# Friends of Vellore<sup>UK</sup>



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REGULATOR



Promoting health and welfare of the poor and marginalised

## Healthy Smiles, Healthy Futures

At the Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs (RUHSA), something remarkable is happening. The RUHSA Dental Project is providing life-changing treatment to some of the most vulnerable women in rural India. Since its launch, over 1,100 pregnant women have received essential dental screenings, with 80% requiring treatment for gum disease and tooth decay. Without intervention, these conditions could lead to serious complications, even risking the lives of mothers and their unborn children.

Our Charity Manager, Ruth Tuckwell, and Chairman, Thomas Pulimood, have just returned from RUHSA, where they saw firsthand the difference this project is making. Each month, the team screens 130 expectant mothers, provides vital dental care and empowers women through dental education. Among them was a mother-to-be suffering from a severe abscess. Without treatment, the infection could have become life-threatening, putting both mother and baby at risk. This project ensured she received the urgent care she needed, possibly saving two lives.

You may remember that in our last newsletter, we appealed for your support. To all those who responded, thank you. Because of you, RUHSA now has a new dental chair, an x-ray facility, and an autoclave for sterilisation.



Staff with the new dental chair



Dental health education

The clinic operates five days a week and provides treatment not just for expectant mothers but for all RUHSA patients. Three health camps are run every month, along with education sessions to dispel harmful myths and improve oral hygiene awareness.

Here are just a few of the lives your support has impacted:

*Santhi arrived at RUHSA with a persistent ulcer in her cheek. The team discovered a deep infection and safely removed the problem tooth, preventing further complications.*

*Shruthi, three months pregnant, received urgent fillings and guidance on protecting her teeth and her baby's health.*

*Jasmin, in her third trimester, was struggling with gum disease. After thorough cleaning*

*and care, she left pain-free and confident.*

But the demand for care continues to grow. Further support will help provide:

- Leaflets and posters (£90) to educate women on the importance of dental care during pregnancy and dispel harmful misconceptions. Many believe tooth loss is inevitable when expecting a baby.
- Sterilisation equipment (£453) to ensure safe treatment and prevent infections.
- The employment of a dedicated dentist, providing continuity of care and allowing the clinic to meet increasing demand.

Your support is changing lives. Every pound donated is an investment in the health and dignity of these women and their families. To donate to this or any of our other projects see page 15. Thank you!



Oral health examination

## Dear Friends of CMC Vellore,



Ruth Tuckwell distributing quilts at  
Seetharampet Elderly Centre

Thank you for your generous  
donations and prayers for the  
work of Christian Medical College  
Vellore (CMC) and its associated  
mission hospitals.

We are so grateful for each one of you and  
thank God for your partnership in this work.  
We would love to see you at our Annual  
Supporters' Meeting on Sunday 5 October  
(further details on page 4).

It was a privilege to visit CMC in January with  
Thomas, our Chair of Trustees. Thomas is  
passionate about finding the most effective  
ways we can support CMC Vellore and the  
mission hospitals across India in ways that  
will make a significant impact. We enjoyed  
catching up with project leads and seeing  
their enthusiasm and dedication to serve the  
poor and marginalised. These visits are always  
a highlight as we see firsthand the difference  
made by the funds we have sent.

We begin this issue with an update on our  
initiative to provide essential dental care for  
pregnant women. You will also find updates  
on many of our other projects, along with  
the latest news from CMC. We hope you  
enjoy reading this newsletter and feel  
inspired by the personal stories that highlight  
the incredible impact of your generosity on  
lives in Tamil Nadu and beyond.

**Ruth Tuckwell**

Charity Manager, Friends of Vellore UK



## Person to Person: You bridge the gap

Last year, Friends of Vellore UK gave  
£50,000 in support of the Person-to-  
Person programme at Christian Medical  
College Vellore (CMC). We hope to be  
able to send a similar sum this year.

The Person-to-Person (PTP) scheme  
funds treatment for patients unable to  
pay their medical bills. It is organised  
and implemented within CMC Vellore.  
Staff identify patients in their clinical  
department who cannot afford to pay  
their bills and who could be helped by  
the scheme. CMC bears the cost of  
administering the programme, so every  
penny given goes directly to help  
poor patients.



Sindhu and her baby

The PTP fund enables donors to pay for the  
cost of an individual patient's treatment. For  
every £1 you give, CMC gives £4. It is a very  
cost-effective and personal way of supporting  
someone who might not otherwise be able to  
afford essential medical treatment. CMC  
Vellore sends a monthly report to all the  
donors with a patient story and a summary of  
those who benefitted. Below is Sindhu's story:

Sindhu\* and her husband from  
Tiruvannamalai longed for a child for six  
years. After losing their first baby shortly  
after birth, their sorrow was immense. When  
Sindhu conceived twins, the couple was filled  
with cautious hope. Sindhu left her sales job,  
and her husband, who works as a stone  
mason, shared every household chore to  
support her.

In her sixth month, Sindhu faced a  
terrifying setback. She suddenly had severe  
pain and bleeding. Rushing to the  
government hospital, she underwent an  
emergency procedure. Yet, complications

arose, and they were told their twins  
wouldn't survive. Clinging to hope, they  
hurried to CMC Vellore.

Tragically, their first twin passed away  
shortly after birth. The second twin weighed  
only a mere 865 grams and was admitted to  
the neonatal ICU. For three months, the tiny  
premature baby fought against infections and  
a hole in the heart. However, by Christmas  
time, Sindhu was cradling her healthy son at  
home.

Thanks to generous donors like yourself,  
Sindhu and her baby were able to receive  
lifesaving treatment without worrying about  
the costs. Despite her loss, Sindhu calls her  
son their miracle - a true gift of life and hope.  
Generous friends like you, doctors and  
nurses, have been her angels in disguise.

Sindhu is very grateful for the financial  
support she was given. Your generous  
contributions make it possible for CMC to  
help patients like Sindhu. Thank you!

*\*Name changed and details shared with consent*



# Review of 2024

In 2024 Friends of Vellore UK received £263,397 in donations including gift aid. We received an additional £108,451 income from investments. We sent a total of £341,311 in grants; £278,210 to CMC Vellore and £63,101 to Indian mission hospitals working in partnership with CMC.

The charity's total income in 2024 was £371,847 with expenditure of £389,928. The running costs amounted to £48,617 and were covered by our income on investments, allowing every penny of your donations to go directly to funding charitable projects.

## During 2024 Friends of Vellore UK supported the following projects at CMC Vellore:

- The Person-to-Person Scheme (£50,000)
- Projects at CMC's Low Cost Effective Care Unit
  - The patient support fund (£25,500)
  - A cervical screening programme (£12,099)
  - A new palliative care service (£12,099)
- The Palliative Home Care Team, including funds to purchase a new vehicle (£29,171)
- Treatment costs for 10 children whose families are unable to pay (£10,000)
- Projects supporting CMC's work in the tribal area of the Jawadhi Hills
  - Funding for 11 Community Health Workers (£12,009)
  - Funding for 2 eye care workers (£2,554)
  - 7 student scholarships for healthcare training (£3,272)



New toys at the children's play centre

- Fund for children's summer camps (£1,224)
- Funds for the new maternity centre (£30)
- Projects at the Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs
  - Dental care for pregnant women (£14,510)
  - Elderly welfare centres (£8,769)
  - A new audiology clinic (£6,099)
  - Children's play centre (£3,462)
  - Adolescent life skills education (£3,232)
  - Promoting healthy living (£2,950)
  - Sustainable farming (£1,754)
  - Vocational training (£962)
- Funds to build a new training college (£10,193)
- Education and Training
  - Senior Training Fellowship support for 4 doctors and a nurse (£25,601)
  - Funds for CMC medical student scholarships (£13,100)
  - CMC student scholarships for 6 nurses, 1 paramedic and 3 allied health students (£5,093)
  - The Community Lay Leaders Health Training Course (£480)
- Various alumni batch funds and projects (£23,563)
- CMC's Emergency Fund (£484)

## The charity also sent £63,101 in grants to six smaller Indian mission hospitals working in partnership with CMC:

- Makunda Christian Hospital (£21,969) for blood bank equipment
- Chinchpada Christian Hospital (£16,904) for the expansion of their ICU and patient care costs

- Christian Hospital Bissamcuttack (£14,848) for ICU equipment and patient care costs
- Baptist Christian Hospital Tezpur (£5,040) for palliative care
- Kotagiri Medical Fellowship Hospital (£3,340) for cataract surgeries, glasses and patient care
- Jalna Mission Hospital (£1,000) for medical equipment

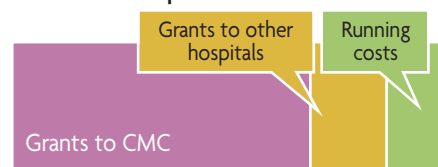
We are so grateful to everyone who donated and enabled our support of these projects. Thank you!

FOV UK 2024	Amount	%
<b>Income</b>		
Donations	£263,397	71%
Investments	£108,451	29%
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£371,848</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Grants to CMC Vellore	£278,210	71%
Grants to other hospitals	£63,101	16%
Charity running costs	£48,617	13%
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£389,928</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Income 2024



### Expenditure 2024



## Promoting health and welfare of the poor and marginalised

### Vision

Friends of Vellore UK supports projects at Christian Medical College Vellore, and other mission hospitals working in partnership with CMC. The charity seeks to follow Christ's example in showing compassion towards those who are vulnerable and marginalised. We want to ensure that everyone can receive appropriate healthcare regardless of their ability to pay or their faith.



### Mission

We strive to fulfil our vision through the following activities:

- Raising funds to support healthcare, education and development projects at CMC that benefit the poorest and most excluded patients and communities
- Encouraging CMC in its partnership with smaller mission hospitals across India
- Promoting the work of CMC and sharing news and information for prayer

# Subsidising Treatment for Children

On 9 March, Josh Tuckwell ran the Cambridge half-marathon once again, this time to raise money to cover treatment costs for children.

Every year, hundreds of families bring their children to Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore for treatment and care. Many families struggle to meet medical and related expenses to travel to Vellore from all over India. Friends of Vellore UK aim to send £10,000 per year to cover the cost of treatment or surgery for 10 children whose families are unable to pay.

Josh completed his run in 1 hour 42 minutes and raised £805 for the Paediatric Support Fund. Below is Renu's story:



## A Testament to Resilience and Hope

In the heart of a remote village in Tamil Nadu, South India, resides a courageous 16-year-old girl named Renu.



At only 13 years old, Renu's life was upended by a diagnosis of Papillary Carcinoma of the thyroid, an aggressive form of thyroid cancer. Coming from a family with limited financial means, the news was particularly devastating, adding an additional layer of hardship to their struggles. She underwent a total thyroidectomy at a government hospital, which successfully removed the cancer but resulted in the paralysis of both vocal cords - a rare and severe complication. This paralysis led to a narrowing of the airway, causing significant breathing difficulties.

Seeking further treatment, Renu arrived at CMC Vellore, where she underwent radio-iodine therapy to eliminate residual cancer cells. However, her breathing problems escalated, limiting her ability to walk even short distances without gasping for air. CMC's Paediatric Airway Clinic diagnosed her with bilateral vocal cord paralysis. Despite multiple surgeries aimed at preserving her voice, complications ensued, including infections that

thwarted these efforts. Her condition deteriorated into acute respiratory distress, necessitating an emergency tracheostomy to save her life.

Demonstrating remarkable determination, Renu later underwent a left posterior cordotomy, a laser-assisted procedure that proved successful. Gradually, she was weaned off the tracheostomy tube and eventually decannulated. Today, Renu breathes with ease, and her cancer remains in remission. However, the financial burden of her extensive medical treatments has been overwhelming for her family, who have exhausted their resources in supporting her recovery.

The Friends of Vellore UK Paediatric Subsidy Fund played a pivotal role in alleviating this financial strain, enabling Renu to focus on her healing and education without the constant worry of medical expenses. Her story is not just one of survival but also a testament to the profound impact of compassionate support in the face of life's formidable challenges.

## Annual Supporters' Meeting: Sunday 5 October

Our annual meeting for all supporters of Friends of Vellore UK is on Sunday 5 October 2025.

This is an opportunity for you to hear more about our projects at CMC Vellore and its associated mission hospitals, as well as providing an opportunity to meet other supporters and CMC Alumni.

This meeting will be held in Coventry to coincide with the end of the CMC UK Alumni reunion. We are at the same venue as last year:

the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Coventry, CV2 2ST (just off Junction 2 of the M6).

### The timetable for the morning is as follows:

- 9:30am Sunday Chapel Service
- 11:00am Tea/Coffee
- 11:30am FOV Annual Supporters Meeting
- 1:00pm Indian Lunch

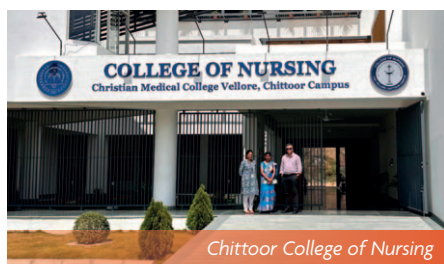
Those attending on the day are welcome to join us for the service or to arrive in the coffee break in time for the meeting itself. We would love to see many of you there. If you are able to attend, please go to: <https://friendsofvellore.org/asmbookingform/> so we have an idea of numbers or contact the office.



# News from CMC Vellore

2025 marks a significant milestone for Christian Medical College Vellore, celebrating 125 years of unwavering dedication to education, healthcare and research. Founded by Dr Ida Scudder, the institution began with a humble one-bed clinic and has grown into a leading 3,675-bed medical facility spread across seven campuses. This remarkable journey is a testament to CMC's commitment to excellence and its profound impact on the community. Dr Ida's legacy of selfless service, particularly to underprivileged women and children in South India, continues through CMC's numerous outreach programmes.

As CMC moves forward, the institution remains focused on advancing education and healthcare standards. This year, several significant development projects are underway, including the new 350-bed Paediatric Super Speciality Centre as well as the Chittoor Medical College and the upcoming Pharmacy College. Both the paediatric block and the medical college are supported by external funding.



Chittoor College of Nursing

The College of Nursing at CMC Vellore's Chittoor Campus, which was established in 2019, has been operating in a rental building until now. The first batch of nurses graduated in October 2024, and the new College of Nursing building, located within the Chittoor campus, was dedicated on 26 October 2024.

In January, CMC proudly inaugurated the Palar Water Pump House, a project that has involved extensive work to secure necessary regulatory approvals. This development ensures a reliable water supply, addressing a long-standing concern.

At the Bagayam campus, work is underway on a new mental health private ward, which

is set to be completed by September.

On 7 December 2024, the Turning of the Sod Ceremony took place for the Dr C K Job Tribal Health and Development Centre in Veerapanoor, located in the Jawadhi Hills.



Jawadhi Hills turning of the sod ceremony

The event was attended by representatives from CMC's Community Health and Development Department, the local community, the Vellore CMC Foundation, and the Scudder Association. This new health centre, which includes the maternity unit FOV UK raised £50,000 towards, marks a new chapter in healthcare for the tribal region.

Dr Mary Verghese, a pioneering figure in the field of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PMR) in India, founded CMC's Rehabilitation Institute. Her groundbreaking work, along with that of Dr Suranjan Bhattacharji (who initiated the Spinal Cord Injury Mela in 1994 and the Brain Injury Mela in 2004) has left a lasting impact on rehabilitation services in India. This year, the PMR family celebrates the centennial of Dr Mary Verghese, with the occasion marked by innovative enhancements to the Rehab Mela.



Artwork depicting Dr Ida Scudder and CMC today

These annual Melas provide individuals with brain and spinal cord injuries, along with their caregivers, a unique opportunity to form connections, share experiences, access medical care, and showcase their talents. The Melas stand as a lasting tribute to Dr Mary's legacy and the PMR family's ongoing commitment to holistic rehabilitation and empowerment.



Attendees at a Rehab Mela



Sports activities at a Rehab Mela

Please pray that CMC staff will continue to serve as faithful stewards of Christ's work, marked by humility and compassion. Pray that the institution's leaders will remain steadfast in their calling and purpose, stepping forward in faith, dedication and service.

## A Gift that Endures

Once your loved ones are taken care of, leaving a gift to Friends of Vellore UK in your Will can make a lasting difference. Your support helps sustain the vital work of CMC Vellore, where we continue to address the healthcare needs of underserved communities. While India's wealth continues to grow, the challenges faced by the poor still outpace this progress. Your contribution can ensure that this essential work endures for years to come.

Consider leaving a gift in your Will to help us make a lasting impact. For more information, visit [www.friendsofvellore.org/get-involved/legacies](http://www.friendsofvellore.org/get-involved/legacies)





Lakshmi was interviewed about her experience at the home of her community volunteer

## A Life Changed by Early Detection

One woman's story highlights the power of early intervention and community outreach in the bustling streets of Vellore, where daily life often overshadows health concerns. Lakshmi (identity masked to respect her privacy) was screened for cervical cancer as part of the community-based project run by CMC Vellore's Low Cost Effective Care Unit (LCECU) and funded by Friends of Vellore UK.

Lakshmi, a dedicated homemaker, had long endured health anxieties, never imagining that a simple door-to-door campaign would bring her peace of mind. What followed was a journey of courage, care, and newfound awareness that not only transformed her life but also inspired hope within her community.

At 42, Lakshmi manages her home and family, which includes her husband, a construction contractor, and two sons—one working, the other in college. Other than recurring urinary infections for which she visited the LCECU, Lakshmi had no major health issues. However, she did suffer from painful menstrual cycles, with severe abdominal and back pain that required frequent use of painkillers. She was afraid these issues were warning signs of a more serious condition.

Lakshmi first heard about the cervical cancer screening programme through a visit from the project team, who went door-to-door in her community to explain the importance of screening. A local volunteer emphasised the value of screening for women her age. Though she had only a basic awareness of cervical cancer, Lakshmi trusted the team's advice and saw the visit as a valuable opportunity. She decided to participate, feeling that if the team considered it important enough to come to her door, it must be worthwhile. This was her first cervical cancer test.

The team facilitated her first visit to the clinic, where an initial screening using Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid (VIA) revealed abnormal lesions on her cervix. She was advised to undergo a colposcopy at LCECU.

Lakshmi recalls, "Everyone else at the community screening was sent home. I alone was asked to come to the hospital, which made me afraid. But they came to my home, cleared my doubts, and assured me that I could come without fear."



Staff at the colposcopy clinic

A few days later, the team arranged transportation for Lakshmi and other women with abnormal VIA results to the LCECU. There, a team of gynaecology specialists performed the colposcopy, took a biopsy, and performed thermal ablation to remove the abnormal cells. Although Lakshmi experienced some discomfort afterward, the compassionate care of the female staff, especially the nurse, provided emotional and physical support. She was given pain medication and transportation was also provided, eliminating any travel difficulties and making the experience as smooth as possible. After resting for a few days, she was able to return to her household duties.

Despite initial fears about the hospital visit, Lakshmi felt reassured by the team's guidance. They came to her home, addressed her

concerns, explained the procedure, and provided the necessary support, easing her anxieties. The programme's provision of transportation and coverage of treatment costs ensured that the screening process had minimal impact on her daily life.

During a follow-up visit, the team explained to Lakshmi that her condition, (identified as CIN grade 1), could have progressed to cancer if left untreated. Although initially shocked, she felt comforted by the clear, step-by-step explanations provided by the healthcare professionals. They reassured her that the abnormal cells had been successfully removed and emphasised the importance of early treatment. Lakshmi appreciated the team's openness in addressing her questions and concerns, which strengthened her trust in the programme.

Though Lakshmi had some pain and needed rest after the procedure, her family's support was invaluable. They understood the importance of early intervention and encouraged her to follow through with the recommended treatment. Now, Lakshmi no longer experiences menstrual pain and doesn't require painkillers. She feels relief not only from the physical discomfort but also from the health anxieties that had plagued her for so long.

Lakshmi reflects on how the programme has profoundly impacted her life, believing the screening prevented a future cancer diagnosis. After enduring painful menstrual cycles and the uncertainty they caused, she now feels peace and reassurance. She encourages other women, especially those in





Cervical cancer screening education

her community who may not recognise the importance of screening, to participate. She tells her neighbours, "At first, I was afraid, then

I did the test and now it has benefitted me. So, you should also make use of it," urging them to overcome their fears and take advantage of this vital service.

Lakshmi is deeply grateful to those who fund and support this programme. She believes its impact has been life-changing, particularly for women like her who were previously unaware of cervical cancer. She appreciates the team's dedication to visiting communities and directly addressing women's health needs, which sets it apart from other healthcare services.

Lakshmi hopes the programme will continue to expand, reaching more women and educating those still hesitant, creating lasting

change and preventing future suffering in her community.

This project is now entering its third year and encompasses palliative care provision as well as cervical cancer screening for those living in the most deprived areas of Vellore town. Previously neither of these much-needed healthcare services have been available to this population.

Our ongoing funding covers the staff team salaries, the cost of which in 2025 will be around £28,000. The team consists of a doctor, nurse, clinical psychologist, occupational therapist, project coordinator and a driver. The staff split their time evenly between the palliative care side of the project and the cervical cancer screening.

## Jeevan: Overcoming Life-Threatening Odds

Jeevan, a lively 9-month-old infant from Vellore, is the son of a daily-wage construction worker, the sole breadwinner of the family. His sudden illness, marked by vomiting, loose stools, and reduced urine output, left his family in anguish as his condition worsened over two days.

They initially sought help at a nearby hospital, where he was administered IV fluids and antibiotics. However, as his condition deteriorated, they rushed him to CMC Vellore for advanced care.

The Paediatric Nephrology team at CMC diagnosed Jeevan with acute gastroenteritis accompanied by severe dehydration. Alarming, his kidneys had ceased functioning for 24 hours, and he developed abdominal swelling due to fluid accumulation. An ultrasound revealed severe hydronephrosis, and further imaging identified stones in both ureters, obstructing urine flow.

In response, an emergency bilateral percutaneous nephrostomy was performed to relieve his kidneys. The procedure was successful; urine flow resumed, swelling subsided, and his renal function improved. Nevertheless, Jeevan required a second surgery, a bilateral ureteroscopy with DJ stenting and right nephroscopy, to fully address the underlying issues.

Facing mounting medical bills, Jeevan's father, having exhausted his limited resources, contemplated taking his son home without completing the necessary treatment. The team at CMC, understanding the gravity of the situation, assured him of support. Through the generosity of Friends of Vellore UK, the family received financial aid amounting to £910, covering the majority of the £1,092 medical expenses.

The surgeries were successful, and Jeevan made a full recovery. His parents left the hospital with their healthy son and hearts full of gratitude for the kindness and generosity that saved his life. Jeevan's story underscores the critical importance of timely medical intervention and the profound impact of financial support in overcoming life-threatening health challenges.

*Like Renu on page 4, Jeevan's treatment costs were covered by Friends of Vellore UK's Paediatric Subsidy Fund. (Renu and Jeevan's names have been changed and consent granted to share their stories.)*



Jeevan



# Mission Hospitals Update

CMC Vellore's Missions Network consists of 168 hospitals serving India's rural areas. Its Missions Department supports these hospitals by raising awareness, sharing resources, and offering training. Staff conduct visits to assess hospital needs and provide expertise.

The web portal CMCV Connect links mission hospitals to CMC and each other, offering resources and enabling requests for staffing needs.



A lady has her vision checked at a KMF eye camp

One major challenge is staffing, as mission hospitals are often in remote areas. To address this, CMC sensitises students and staff to mission work. Faculty promotions now require a two-week mission posting, and postgraduate students attend orientation workshops to prepare for their placements.

To enhance collaboration, every CMC hospital department now has a mission coordinator to facilitate postings, research and resource sharing. A new software system matches hospitals and doctors for optimal placements. **Please pray for more workers to answer the call to serve in mission hospitals.**

We work closely with CMC's Missions Department providing grants to various hospitals in their network. In 2024 Friends of Vellore UK sent £2,500 to Kotagiri Medical Fellowship Hospital (KMF) for cataract surgeries, eye camps and glasses. With £250 funding one eye camp and £1000 covering ten cataract surgeries, our grant supported two eye camps and 20 surgeries.

A team from KMF conducts free eye camps once a month in the surrounding villages. Screening for cataracts and refractive errors, hearing testing, distribution of glasses, medications and free cataract surgery are some of the services provided.

In 2019 we sent £30,257 to enable KMF to purchase new lab equipment. Dr Tony Abraham, KMF's Medical Superintendent writes:

*The gift of the machines in the laboratory at KMF Hospital has been providing vital support services to the clinical work of the hospital. It has also been providing a source of income which helps support many of the concessions in treatment costs for the poor. I am happy to report that all the machines are still functional, and we have added a few more machines to the laboratory over the years.*

*The hospital work and the community outreach in the villages continues to grow and diversify. Eye and dental camps, medical camps, palliative and home-based care have been transformative for the people of the Nilgiris. Research has been a new initiative, and we hope to continue the process of quality assessment towards accreditation this*

*year. While our mission pertains to the patients in the hospital and community, there is also a continued emphasis on development of our staff, both in terms of skills and morale through training programmes and group activities.*

*One heartening aspect of the work here in Kotagiri has been the involvement of the Nilgiris community in coming together to support a good cause. Some have contributed financially; others support or connect us to resources and people. KMF exists to serve the community in the Nilgiris, and we hope to press on despite challenges – we need your continued support so that together we can make a difference in this region.*

*'Praise the LORD O my soul and forget not all his benefits.' Psalm 103:2*

Last year Friends of Vellore UK also sent a grant of £15,884 to Chinchpada Christian Hospital (CCH) for the expansion of their Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Our grant covered the cost of the oxygen pipeline and the air handling unit for the isolation unit of the ICU. It also enabled the electrical cabling and the air conditioning system.

Dr Deepak Singh, Medical Superintendent at CCH writes:

*We have recently completed the ICU and it is functional. The services are being well utilized with many poor patients receiving good care in a very amenable space for critical care. We had a patient with severe generalized tetanus who has just come off the ventilator after 18 days. We would like to thank FOV UK for the generous support we received.*

Testing in the KMF laboratory



Chinchpada's new isolation unit



KMF's laboratory



# Working in Partnership

Friends of Vellore UK has seen the benefits of funding joint projects with our partner organisations across the globe, allowing our funding to go even further. Along with our partners in Australia and the USA, we enabled CMC's ophthalmology department to purchase a mobile ophthalmic unit. Our 2022 Safer Birth appeal for a new health centre in the Jawadhi Hills was a joint effort with the USA's Vellore CMC Foundation.

In partnership with FOV Australia, we continue to fund Community Health Workers in the Jawadhi Hills. Each organisation funds 11 workers, creating a team of 22. Home to around 80,000 people, the hilly terrain in the Jawadhi Hills makes access to healthcare difficult.

The Community Health Workers bridge the gap between the tribal community and the CMC medical team. With some villages only accessibly by dirt tracks, they are key to improving healthcare. The role not only helps their communities but also offers training and employment to local young people.

CMC's outreach programme in the Jawadhi Hills aims to:

- Increase the proportion of women receiving antenatal care
- Increase vaccination coverage for children under five
- Monitor patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and mental illness

The programme's success relies on the dedication of these young tribal women, who receive an honorarium of Rs. 8,000 per month (£80). Since the programme's inception in 2014, the number of tribal women delivering at CMC's community health hospital and accessing antenatal care has increased more than fourfold. These health workers serve as vital links for Jawadhi patients seeking medical care at CMC, while also acting as CMC's eyes and ears in the hills, providing crucial



Some of the Community Health Workers

information on disease outbreaks and community concerns.

Immunisation rates remain low, and home deliveries are still common. Unfortunately, maternal deaths continue to occur in both remote and well-connected areas. In the past year, CMC has faced outbreaks of measles, mumps, chickenpox and a severe cholera outbreak that claimed 18 lives.

CMC has been working for several years to secure the land where their health centre is located. The registration was completed last year, and CMC is now seeking government permissions to begin construction. They hope to start building work in the coming months. Once complete, the 24-hour facility will enable women to give birth under medical supervision in the Jawadhi Hills, rather than making the 2-hour journey to Vellore.

Thomas and Ruth met some of the health workers during their visit in January. Vellitha,

who covers 8 villages with a total population of 2800, keeps detailed records to enable the medical team to provide effective care and monitor the health of the community. Using songs and street theatre, the health workers educate their communities on health matters such as the importance of vaccination.

Vellitha explained that this role enables her to serve her community whilst earning an income for her family. She is grateful for the secure income, which means her family no longer has to migrate for work.



Saradha visiting a patient discharged from CMC

## Running for Sight: Abraham George's Virtual London Marathon

On 27 April, Abraham George (CMC batch of 1973) will take on the Virtual London Marathon, running in London's Hyde Park.

Through this challenge, he hopes to raise £5,000 for Friends of Vellore UK, supporting two dedicated ophthalmology field workers, Arun and Manimaran, who are bringing essential eye care to the remote Jawadhi Hills.

Both from the tribal community they serve, Arun and Manimaran play a crucial role in identifying vision problems, referring patients to eye camps, and assisting with school



Abraham with his wife and granddaughter

screenings. However, their salaries are currently unfunded. Abraham's fundraising will secure their work for two more years, ensuring they can continue to prevent avoidable blindness and improve access to eye care. Please consider supporting his efforts and making a lasting impact on this vital initiative: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/abe-george>



Arun at work



A palliative home care visit



Mr Ramaiah receives a home visit



Mrs Kuppammal with family and nursing staff

## Reaching the Most Vulnerable through Palliative Support

Friends of Vellore UK continues to fund CMC Vellore's palliative home care programme and funded a new vehicle last year.

The team travel up to 50km from Vellore, visiting patients and their families who are unable to travel to hospital. Around 130 patients annually receive pain relief and medication, while families are guided in how best to support the patient. Many are extremely poor and face stigma due to their illness. These visits are a hugely appreciated as they improve symptom control and quality of life.

In 2024, Friends of Vellore sent £4,341 to cover the running costs of the vehicle, medication and essential supplies such as mattresses, incontinence pads and mosquito nets.

Mr Ramaiah\* is a middle-aged man in his late 50s from a village 50 km from Vellore. He was diagnosed with myelodysplastic syndrome, a type of blood cancer, in May 2020. Although he received treatment for a short period, his condition deteriorated, and financial constraints made it impossible to continue. Since then, he has been bedridden, with his wife, Mrs Leelavathy\*, taking care of him.

Tragically, in February 2024, Mrs Leelavathy was diagnosed with tongue cancer. When she sought help from the palliative care team for symptom management, a comprehensive assessment revealed the challenges faced by her entire family. Upon learning about Ramaiah's condition, the team visited him at home.

The couple has three children – a daughter and two sons. Their daughter is married and lives nearby, while their younger son, after failing his 12th standard exam, gave up his studies to stay home and care for his father. The elder son works at a juice shop and is the family's sole breadwinner. The burden of

illness and financial hardship weighed heavily on them, with Ramaiah not only requiring assistance for daily activities but also experiencing deep psychological distress, worrying about his family's future.

Recognising their struggles, the palliative care team stepped in to provide holistic support. They offered medication for symptom relief, nursing care, and psychological support, while also equipping the younger son with the skills to care for his father at home. Given the family's financial difficulties, the team arranged for subsidised medications and monthly grocery supplies. Encouraged by their support, the younger son has decided to retake his 12th standard exams.

The palliative care team continues to make regular home visits, ensuring that the family receives ongoing support. Grateful for the compassionate care they have received, Mrs Leelavathy says:

*"Visiting your department was a blessing for our family. You cared not only for me but also for my family, helping us through difficult times. You are a Godsend!"*

In January 2024, CMC opened a new palliative care hospice, addressing the stark reality that only 3% of Indians have access to such care. This facility reflects CMC's commitment to extending its healing ministry to those who are terminally ill, ensuring they receive compassionate support in their final days. Friends of Vellore UK contributed funds for patient meals, a TV, and new crockery.

Below is Kuppammal's story:

Mrs Kuppammal\*, in her early 70s, comes from a small village just 4 km from Vellore. She was diagnosed with tongue cancer in

June 2024, but due to her age and fragile health, she was not fit for treatment. Since then, she has been under the care of the palliative care team.

She lived with her husband, a retired ceramic company employee in his 80s. Their three sons and daughter, along with their families, live close by. Wanting her to be as comfortable as possible, the family initially cared for her at home. However, as her condition worsened, she faced increasing difficulties with eating and oral hygiene due to the cancer, while growing fatigue made her dependent on others for daily activities. Caring for her at home became challenging for the family.

A fiercely independent woman all her life, Kuppammal struggled to cope with the limitations imposed by her illness. The palliative care team provided holistic support, addressing her physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. After discussions with her and her family, they decided that the Ida B. Scudder Hospice would be the best place for her continued care.

She has now been in the hospice for over two months, receiving compassionate care, symptom management, and emotional and spiritual support. Surrounded by a dedicated team and regular visits from her family, Kuppammal feels a deep sense of peace and contentment despite her suffering.

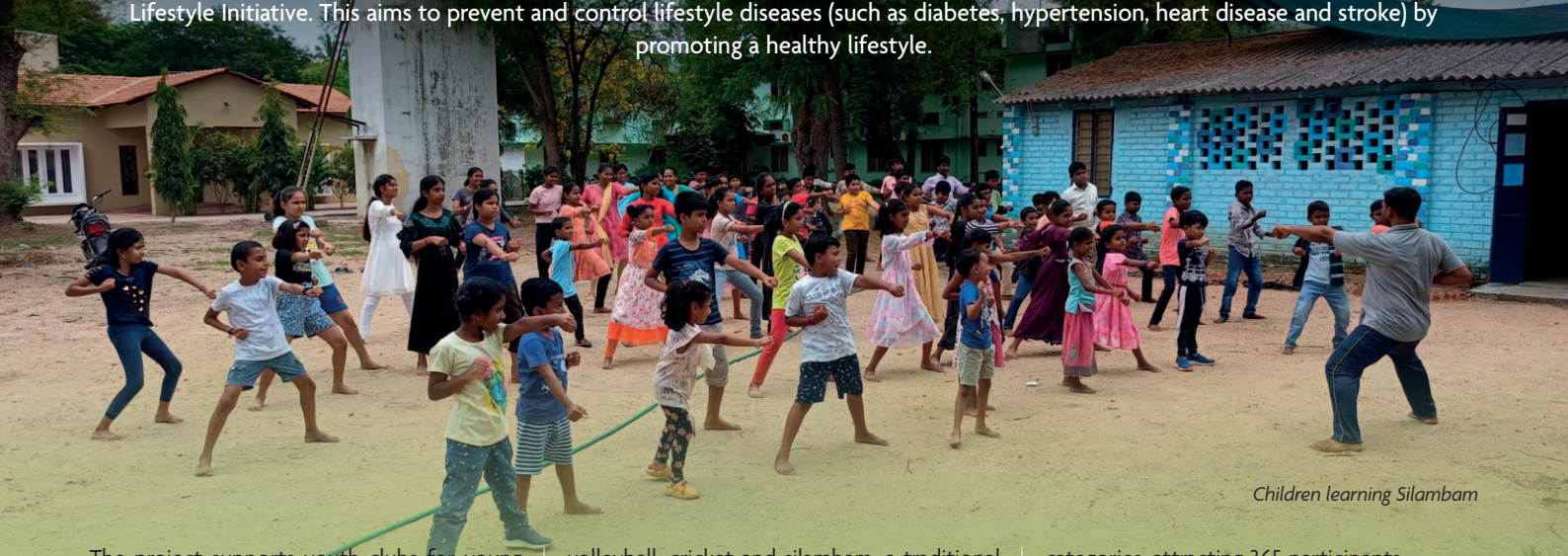
*"We feel confident that she will be taken care of here at the hospice. That's why we decided to keep her here. We visit her every day and can see that the care she receives is better than what we could offer her at home."* Kuppammal's son.

*\*Names changed and consent granted*



# Promoting Healthy Living

Friends of Vellore UK supports several initiatives at CMC's Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs (RUHSA), including RUHSA's Healthy Lifestyle Initiative. This aims to prevent and control lifestyle diseases (such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and stroke) by promoting a healthy lifestyle.



Children learning Silambam

The project supports youth clubs for young people aged 18-35, encouraging physical activity through sports such as volleyball, kabaddi, and running. Some clubs have purchased exercise equipment, enabling young people to maintain an active lifestyle. These clubs, run by dedicated volunteers like Keerthi, have become more than just a space for physical activity – they foster social cohesion and personal growth.

At one youth club, members have developed an interest in politics and gained confidence to engage in discussions that affect their communities. The club also owns a plot of land where young people practice organic farming, cultivating millet using sustainable methods taught by RUHSA. Additionally, RUHSA provides demonstrations on how to prepare nutritious meals, promoting better dietary habits.

The Latheri youth club focuses on sports training, particularly for girls. With around 70 young members (45 boys and 25 girls), the club meets three times a week on church-owned land. Training is provided in kabaddi,

volleyball, cricket and silambam, a traditional martial art similar to kickboxing. Club members regularly participate in competitions, winning numerous trophies.

Leaders like Dilip offer specialised training for young people aspiring to join the army or police, where sports scholarships provide a pathway to career opportunities. Notably, three girls from the volleyball team have secured placements in the police force through sports quotas. Another leader, a state-level volleyball player, helps secure sponsorships for young athletes. Many children train barefoot, but those who reach district-level competitions often receive sponsorships for proper footwear.

Every year, RUHSA organises a community run to encourage an active lifestyle and raise awareness about health issues. The most recent event took place in February, with the theme 'Say No to Substance Use.' As part of the initiative, RUHSA conducted education sessions for 200 students at a local college, addressing the dangers of substance abuse. The run featured 2 km, 5 km, and 10 km

categories, attracting 365 participants.

RUHSA has also established Healthy Lifestyle Centres to provide health screening and education in rural areas. A recently opened centre, located in a village of 600 people, operates from 3-6 pm on weekdays to accommodate working individuals. The centre offers basic health checks, including height, weight, blood pressure and blood sugar measurements.

Keerthana, a dedicated volunteer and trained General Duty Assistant, has been working at the centre for three months. She enjoys her role, as it allows her to help people in her community. The centre also features a screen displaying educational videos on topics such as diabetes, hypertension, cervical cancer and childhood asthma.

A rotating team of healthcare professionals – including doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and dietitians—visits the centre regularly. Additionally, nursing students conduct village-based research to understand community needs and later return with tailored health-education performances.



KVK run



Keerthana volunteers at Tirumani Wellness centre



# Empowering Young People

Friends of Vellore UK is partnering with RUHSA to educate and empower young people through life skills training and career guidance.

Adolescence is a crucial stage of life, marked by significant changes and important decisions. In rural India, these topics are often not openly discussed at home or in schools, leaving many young people to navigate challenges alone. Many young people struggle and resort to substance misuse or even suicide.

This project seeks to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to make informed, healthy lifestyle choices. By enhancing their understanding of reproductive health and substance misuse, promoting mental well-being, and fostering resilience, the programme helps them navigate life's challenges with confidence.

## Comprehensive Education and Support

Education sessions are conducted both in schools and within the community, covering key areas essential for young people's well-being, including:

- **General health** – Nutrition, exercise, and personal hygiene
- **Life skills development** – Goal setting, stress management, and effective communication
- **Digital safety** – Responsible phone and social media usage
- **Substance misuse prevention** – Raising awareness and promoting healthy choices



An education session on menstrual health



Career counselling

## Counselling and Career Guidance

In addition to educational sessions, CMC Vellore provides essential support through counselling and career guidance. Young people and their families have access to psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and nutritionists for tailored support.

Career guidance sessions help students explore potential career paths, complete application forms, and apply for grants. Those interested in healthcare careers receive coaching and assistance in applying for CMC Vellore's nursing and allied health courses.

Through this initiative, young people gain the knowledge, confidence and support they need to make positive life choices, shaping a healthier and brighter future for themselves and their communities.



# Bridging the gap for Dalvin

Dalvin\* is a 29-year-old man from Vellore. He lives with his parents, wife and two-year-old child.

Dalvin has a hearing problem, and his wife cannot hear or speak. He worked in housekeeping at a college until he fell ill.

His elderly parents undertake daily wage jobs to support the family.

Four months ago, Dalvin had severe stomach-ache every time he ate something. The pain subsided only after he vomited. Over three months, he lost 15 kg. Dalvin's worried family brought him to CMC Vellore. The gastroenterology medical team diagnosed him with a stomach blockage (gastric outlet obstruction) and an abnormal narrowing (deformed pylori duodenal complex).

Dalvin needed surgery to create a new connection between his stomach and small intestine. This was done under CMC's Department of Surgery. During the procedure, they discovered a large growth blocking his stomach. A biopsy sample sent to check for cancerous cells turned out to be negative.

After surgery, Dalvin was monitored in the

general ward. He was started on a normal diet, to which he responded well, and he was later discharged with a diet plan.



Dalvin

Along with the PTP fund, the surgery was covered by the department funds and CMC's charitable funds. Dalvin and his family are grateful for the care and the financial support they received.

CMC's dream is to never have to turn away anyone in need. Concessions and free treatment are made available according to need, amounting to around 15% of CMC's budget. CMC operates several charity schemes including the Person-to-Person fund and the Emergency fund, as well as providing low-cost accommodation and free meal schemes. But these schemes always need more funds if CMC is to continue to be able to help all those that need it.

*\*Name changed and details shared with consent*



# Valerie Ann Bothamley

## 21 November 1938 – 26 December 2024

Ms Valerie Ann Bothamley, a dedicated missionary nurse from the UK, served at CMC Vellore for 56 years. Following a period of ill health, during which she was wonderfully cared for by her CMC family, she went to her heavenly home on 26 December 2024, aged 86. Her life was a testament to her unwavering faith and commitment to serving others in the spirit of Christ.

Aged nine, Ann accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Saviour. She was awarded a bible at a Sunday school quiz inscribed with Matthew 28:19, 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel.' From then on, she felt called to mission work.

After completing her nursing studies in the UK, Ann met with the Baptist Missionary Society to explore serving overseas. She said, *God planted it in my heart that I was going to India. I knew, too, that it was going to be for life. I was asked at the candidate board, "Is this going to be short-term, or for life?" I said, "No, for life."*

Ann arrived in Vellore in 1968, after a gruelling journey from London. In those early days she suffered from dysentery, sunstroke and great loneliness. However, her faith and belief in God's calling sustained her. Encouragement and friendship came through her co-worker Marlene Thompson and her CMC family.

As Departmental Sister in CMC's private wards (M Block) from 1968 to 1998, Ann was known for her discipline, attention to detail, and unwavering commitment to patient care. She set high standards, ensuring the comfort and dignity of everyone she served.

Alongside Marlene, Ann co-founded Balanilayam, a home for children of mission hospital staff. Fondly known as Auntie Ann, she became a mother figure to countless children, nurturing them with love and support.



Ann in 1967 a few months before leaving for India

Shekinah Jacob, one of these children shares: "Like Jesus, Auntie Ann made time for people and found practical and often sacrificial ways to show that she cared. When I was ten years old, I had a nightmare. I told Auntie Ann all about it. The next day, she had painted out a verse in her beautiful calligraphy writing, that I have kept until this day and is imprinted in my heart:

*'You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.' Isaiah 26:3*

Over the years, I have seen that Auntie Ann's mind was stayed, focussed on God her saviour; she put her trust in Him. He kept her in perfect peace all of her days and now she is with Him forever; she is with her Prince of Peace."

Ann also taught Sunday school at St John's Church, leading the girls' Bible class. Her home

was always open, filled with warmth, music, and freshly baked treats. A lover of nature, she enjoyed long walks and cherished the beauty of creation.

Even in retirement, she continued serving as a pastoral care counsellor, particularly for leukaemia patients in CMC's Haematology Department. She was instrumental in establishing a dedicated play area for children undergoing therapy, creating a joyful healing space.

Ann's dream was to build Bridge House at CMC Vellore's Ranipet Campus to provide affordable, safe accommodation for long-term patients, particularly those undergoing bone marrow transplants. She worked tirelessly to fundraise for this project, giving sacrificially herself. Bridge House will ease the burden of families during extended treatments, allowing patients to focus on recovery and healing.

Ann's life of service continues to inspire all who were privileged to know her. CMC thank God for her immeasurable contributions to the community, knowing that her impact will be remembered for generations.

Friends of Vellore are happy to pass on donations in memory of Ann for the Bridge House project.

*Special thanks to Dr Vikram Mathews, CMC's Director, Shekinah Jacob, and BMS World Mission for their contributions to this obituary.*



Ann at CMC Vellore in 2016



Ann Bothamley on the ward



# ‘The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve’ Matthew 20:28

The motto of the Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore where I was born, brought up, studied and served, is ‘Not to be ministered unto, but to minister.’

This phrase, derived from the words of Jesus and found in Matthew’s gospel, emphasises the Institution’s commitment to service. It reflects the core mission of CMC Vellore to serve others, particularly in the field of healthcare, and to transform the health status of India through education, service and research.

CMC Vellore embodies its motto, ‘Not to be ministered unto, but to minister,’ in several impactful ways:

**Patient Care:** CMC Vellore provides high-quality medical care to millions of patients, including those who cannot afford treatment. Surplus funds from paying patients are reinvested to subsidise and offer free care to the underprivileged.

**Education and Training:** The institution trains healthcare professionals who go on to serve in various parts of India and the world. This extends CMC’s impact beyond its immediate reach, as these trained professionals carry forward the ethos of service.

**Community Outreach:** CMC Vellore runs numerous outreach programmes to bring healthcare services to remote and underserved communities. These programmes ensure that even those in the most

marginalised areas receive medical attention.

**Research and Innovation:** The institution engages in cutting-edge research to improve healthcare outcomes. External resources are used to fund research and develop new programmes, which in turn benefit the broader community.

**Non-Governmental Funding:** CMC Vellore operates without external funding from the government, relying instead on donations and grants to support its mission. This independence allows it to focus on its core values and mission.

**Leadership modelled on Jesus Christ:** It would be impossible to imagine the words of Jesus, ‘Not to be served but to serve’ without observing his life in those who love and serve him.

Ida Sophia Scudder was a pioneering American medical missionary in India, known for her dedication to improving healthcare for women. Born in 1870, she initially resisted a missionary life but was moved to action after witnessing the deaths of three women in childbirth due to the lack of female medical care.

Her motto, ‘We treat, God heals,’ reflects her belief in Jesus, that while medical

professionals provide treatment, ultimate healing comes from God. This motto guided her work as she founded the Christian Medical College & Hospital in Vellore, which became one of the premier medical institutions in India. Ida Scudder’s legacy continues to inspire many in the field of medical missions and healthcare even today.

By integrating these practices into its daily operations, CMC Vellore lives out its commitment to serve others, reflecting the spirit of its motto in every aspect of its work.

*The Very Revd Dr Isaac Poobalan, is Provost of St Andrew’s Cathedral, Aberdeen, Chaplain at the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen and Trustee of Friends of Vellore UK.*





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Email ..... *(saves postage on donation acknowledgements)*

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I have made an internet bank transfer of £ ..... *(Sort Code: 40-02-13, Account No: 41865986)*

*If you wish to set up a standing order, please complete the form below.*

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Optional: Please use my gift to support .....

*Name the area of work you wish to help, eg PTP, STF Fund, Mission Hospitals, LCECU, Palliative Care, RUHSA*

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£ ..... (figures) ..... (words)

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# Friends of Vellore<sup>UK</sup>



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