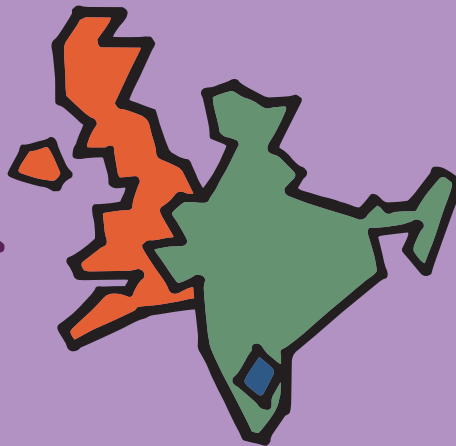


Friends of Vellore^{UK}



Registered with



FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR

Promoting health and welfare of the poor and marginalised

Health and Hope in the Jawadhi Hills

Reaching remote tribal communities in India is never easy, but thanks to the dedication of local healthcare workers and the support of Friends of Vellore UK, lives in the Jawadhi Hills are being transformed.

Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore's Department of Community Medicine provides health services across rural, urban and tribal areas. While the base hospital is accessible to those in the plains, tribal populations face long journeys over poor roads to reach care. The Jawadhi Hills stretch across three districts of northern Tamil Nadu and are home to around 80,000 people. CMC Vellore's community programme serves more than 64,000 people living in about 400 villages and hamlets.

One of the people making this possible is Radhika, a Community Health Worker (CHW) responsible for 13 villages and around 3,000 people. She carries out village censuses, maps each community, monitors maternal and child health, and helps arrange referrals to the hospital when patients need specialist care.

For Radhika, the role is empowering; it allows her to travel, meet people from different villages, and make a tangible difference in her community.

Radhika is one of 22 locally trained Community Health Workers who act as vital bridges between the tribal communities and the healthcare system. Each worker serves between six and fifteen villages, providing maternal and child health care, disease surveillance, health education and referrals to clinics or CMC Vellore when higher-level care is needed.



Radhika with Dr Anu Rose

They also maintain vital records, support vaccination drives and encourage communities to participate in health initiatives.

Visits to model villages such as Narthamarathur, home to the Malayali tribal community, highlight the impact of this approach. The village has embraced improvements including household toilets, a community bank and a concrete threshing floor used for meetings. Women and young people are actively represented in all village discussions.

Education and youth engagement are also priorities. Narthamarathur operates a night school six evenings a week, combining academic

study, play, and community service. Sports and fitness initiatives encourage healthy habits and help combat substance abuse among young people.

Through these dedicated CHWs, the communities of the Jawadhi Hills are gaining more than healthcare: they are gaining knowledge, confidence and opportunity. Support from Friends of Vellore UK, which funds 11 of these vital workers, helps ensure that even the most remote villages have access to healthcare, education and the chance for a healthier future.

You can read more about Radhika on page 2.

Dear Friends of Vellore,

Thank you for your generous donations and faithful prayers supporting the work of Christian Medical College Vellore and its associated mission hospitals. Your partnership makes it possible for this work of compassion and care to continue, and we are deeply grateful to each of you.

In January I had the opportunity to visit CMC Vellore again. This time I was joined by two visitors: Nicola Shearman, a podiatrist interested in learning more about CMC's diabetic foot care services, and Chris Kennedy, vicar of a church that supports our work. It was a privilege to see first-hand the remarkable care being provided and how deeply these services are valued by local communities. Chris shares some reflections from the visit on page 14.

One particularly memorable day was spent in the Jawadhi Hills, where I met Radhika, one of the community health workers serving the villages there. Her dedication, and the trust she has built within the community, offered a powerful glimpse into how healthcare can reach those living in remote and underserved places. We begin this issue by sharing the impact of this project. You will also find



We received a warm welcome in the Jawadhi Hills

updates from many of our other initiatives at CMC Vellore, along with reports from grants we have been able to send to smaller mission hospitals. (All personal stories are shared with consent and patient names have been changed.)

We would love to see you at our **Annual Supporters' Meeting on Sunday 4 October** – further details can be found on page 9.

Enclosed with this issue is a copy of our

recently revised legacy leaflet. Please consider leaving a gift in your Will to help ensure that this work can continue for future generations.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and are encouraged by the stories within it, which show the remarkable difference your generosity is making in Tamil Nadu and beyond.

Ruth Tuckwell

Charity Manager, Friends of Vellore UK

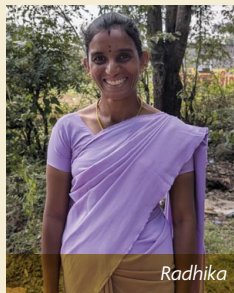
Spotlight on Radhika

Radhika is a Community Health Worker in the Jawadhi Hills, serving 13 villages and around 3,000 people. Twice a month, she visits every village, tracks maternal and child health, manages immunisations, and ensures referrals to CMC Vellore are coordinated.

Originally from a neighbouring village, Radhika married into Narthamarathur and now lives there with her husband and two young children, who are cared for during the day by their grandmothers.

"Before this role, I had to stay in one village. Now I travel, meet people from different communities, and help them access care," she says.

Radhika's meticulous records, dedication to newborn care and engagement with families ensure that vital health



Radhika

services reach even the most remote households. Supported by her husband and CMC Vellore's team, she embodies the transformative impact of locally trained health workers.

"My role gives me a sense of purpose. I feel I am making a real difference in the lives of my community."

Friends of Vellore UK funds 11 CHWs like Radhika, enabling healthcare, education and social development to flourish in the Jawadhi Hills.



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



Person to Person: You bridge the gap

Last year, thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Friends of Vellore UK contributed a record £70,000 to the Person-to-Person (PTP) programme at Christian Medical College Vellore. We hope to match this remarkable level of support again this year.

The PTP scheme helps patients who cannot afford their medical treatment. CMC staff identify individuals in their clinical departments who need care but lack the means to pay, and the programme provides the support they need. Importantly, CMC covers all administrative costs, so every penny you give goes directly to patient care.

Your gift goes further with CMC adding £4 for every £1 you donate. It is a highly cost-effective and personal way to make a real difference in

the life of someone who might otherwise go without essential treatment. Each month, donors receive a report featuring patient stories and a summary of those who have benefitted from the fund.

Sanjay's story

Sanjay was a migrant labourer in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, when his family back in Bihar received a shocking call: he had been admitted to hospital. His worried father borrowed money from neighbours and rushed to his side. They visited three hospitals, but none could diagnose his condition and Sanjay grew weaker. Eventually, they were told there was no hope and were advised to take him home.

Neighbours from their village said, "Go to CMC Vellore, it's a place where people recover." With an ambulance costing less than the journey back to Bihar, they brought Sanjay to CMC. By then, he was experiencing recurrent seizures and life-threatening complications.

The General Medicine team examined him, ruled out snakebite and meningitis, and diagnosed tetanus. Tetanus is preventable, much less commonly seen these days due to vaccination, but is a serious condition that requires urgent treatment. Thanks to immediate ICU care, Sanjay's life was saved. He continued his recovery in the general ward.

His father weeps as he says, "I thought I had lost my youngest son, but bringing him to CMC saved his life." Sanjay's treatment was subsidised through CMC's charitable funds, and he is now back on his feet.

Your generosity makes stories like Sanjay's possible. Thank you for bridging the gap and giving hope to those in desperate need.



Sanjay with his father



David Sleeman (right)



George Abraham (right), Far right - George with his two daughters



Cambridge Half Marathon

In March, five Friends of Vellore supporters ran the TTP Cambridge Half Marathon through the streets and university grounds of Cambridge. Steve Midgley, Angela Nowak, David Sleeman, George Abraham and Helen Boulton each committed to raising a minimum of £300 for CMC Vellore, and between them raised an incredible £2,500.

We are so grateful to all five for taking on this challenge and for the effort they put into both their training and their fundraising. The money raised will make a real difference to the work of CMC Vellore and the communities it serves across South India, supporting healthcare for some of the poorest and most marginalised people in the country.

Running a half marathon is a significant undertaking, and it means a great deal that these five supporters chose to do it for Friends of Vellore. We hope their example will inspire others to consider taking on a challenge event in aid of CMC Vellore in the future.

The TTP Cambridge Half Marathon is a flat,

fast and well-attended event, and a wonderful way to raise funds for a good cause. We hope to have charity places available again for the 2027 race. If you would like to run for Friends of Vellore, please look out for details on our website. In the meantime, the runners' fundraising pages remain open via our JustGiving page at bit.ly/4s1VWzy

Review of 2025

2025 was an encouraging year for Friends of Vellore UK, both financially and in the strengthening of our partnerships with Christian Medical College Vellore and other mission hospitals across India.

During the year we received £310,322 in donations, including Gift Aid. This is the largest amount raised since 2021, when giving was boosted by our COVID-19 appeal. In addition to donations, the charity received £115,228 in income from investments, helping to strengthen our ability to support projects in the years ahead. Total income for the year was £425,550.

Thanks to this generosity, we were able to allocate £397,058 in grants during 2025. Of this, £287,566 supported projects at CMC Vellore, while £107,992 was distributed to 12 Indian mission hospitals working in partnership with CMC. We also awarded three elective grants of £500

each to individuals from the UK undertaking placements at CMC.

Our total expenditure for the year was £444,035, including £46,977 in running costs. These administrative costs were fully covered by investment income, meaning every pound donated by supporters went directly to charitable work.

Alongside this, we continued to develop collaborative initiatives with UK specialists in fields including ophthalmology, dentistry and lung transplantation, helping to strengthen professional partnerships and support innovation at CMC.

2025 Grants to CMC Vellore	Amount (£)
Patient Treatment Funds	111,380
Person-to-Person Scheme	70,000
Low Cost Effective Care Unit patient support fund	26,380
Emergency Fund	10,000
Golden Hour Fund	5,000
Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs	34,756
New audiology clinic	11,925
Elderly welfare centres	8,751
Children's play centre	3,291
Adolescent life skills education	1,952
Occupational health & safety for low-income workers	5,972
Promoting women's mental health	2,041
Vocational training	824
Child Health Projects	33,790
New Paediatric Specialty Block at Ranipet Campus	20,000
Treatment costs for 10 children	10,296
Paediatric Ophthalmology Fund	3,494
Jawadhi Hills Tribal Area Support	18,605
11 Community Health Workers	9,991
2 Eye Care Workers	2,444
Mobile laser eye programme	3,494
Support for 6 students in healthcare training	2,576
New maternity unit	100
Other Healthcare Initiatives	72,978
Cervical cancer screening & palliative care (LCECU)	25,449
Art/music therapy at CMC's Rehabilitation Institute	31,211
Medical outreach in Cardiology, Geriatrics and Oncology	10,036
Palliative Home Care Team	6,282
Training & Scholarships	10,156
Senior Training Fellowship (1 doctor)	3,000
Medical student scholarship (1 student)	517
Nursing student scholarships (8 students)	3,410
Allied health student scholarships (6 students)	2,909
Community Lay Leaders Health Training Course	320
Donor-Directed Funds	5,901
Various Alumni Batch Funds & projects	4,352
Other donor-directed grants	1,549
Grand Total	287,566

2025 Mission Hospital Grants	Purpose	Amount (£)
Baptist Christian Hospital Tezpur	Wheelchair-adapted minibus, renal dialysis machines, palliative care	17,171
Herbertpur Christian Hospital	Palliative care vehicle	11,207
Lady Willingdon Hospital Manali	C Arm X-ray unit	10,962
Evangelical Mission Hospital Tilda	ICU ventilator, operating theatre renovation	10,585
Nav Jivan Hospital, Satbarwa	Obstetric and ophthalmic equipment	10,041
Dr H Gordon Roberts Hospital	Ophthalmic operating theatre equipment	9,605
Women's Hospital Ambajipeta	Diagnostic and critical care equipment	9,458
Christian Hospital Mungeli	Diagnostic & therapy equipment, nursing school resources	8,795
Fairbank James Friendship Memorial Hospital	Rehabilitation equipment	8,666
Karigiri Hospital	Laboratory equipment	7,800
Christian Hospital Bissamcuttack	Mitra Tribal School	2,500
Chinchpada Christian Hospital	Patient care costs	1,200

FOV UK 2025	Amount	%
Income		
• Donations	£310,322	73%
• Investments	£115,228	27%
Total Income	£425,550	100%
Expenditure		
• Grants to CMC Vellore	£287,566	65%
• Grants to other hospitals	£107,992	24%
• Elective Grants	£1,500	0.3%
• Charity running costs	£46,977	11%
Total Expenditure	£444,035	100%



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



Ruth with the LCECU team and vehicle

Reaching the most vulnerable

Friends of Vellore UK is supporting a three-year project bringing palliative care and cervical cancer screening to some of the most deprived communities in Vellore town. Previously neither of these much-needed healthcare services have been available to this population.

The programme is delivered by a multi-disciplinary team from the Low Cost Effective Care Unit (LCECU) at Christian Medical College Vellore. The team includes a doctor, nurse, clinical psychologist, occupational therapist, project coordinator and driver. Working closely with local community volunteers and health workers, they build bridges between vulnerable communities and hospital services, identifying people in need and encouraging access to care.

Delivering palliative care in the community

The team uses a screening system to identify patients experiencing serious health-related suffering who may benefit from palliative care. To date, 5,485 patients with chronic illness have been screened. Patients needing ongoing support are then assessed to determine how frequently follow-up visits are required.

Care is delivered within patients' own homes wherever possible. Avoiding unnecessary hospital visits reduces travel costs, physical strain and loss of income, all factors that can worsen suffering for already vulnerable families. Where specialist input is required, patients are referred to the base hospital or to CMC's Rehabilitation Institute. The outreach team typically conducts 10–12 home visits each day, spending 30–45 minutes with each patient. Support is holistic, addressing symptom control, mobility, psychological wellbeing, social needs and access to government benefits.

Alongside palliative care, the project also provides cervical cancer screening. Pre-cancerous lesions are treated locally using thermal ablation, while more complex cases are



Members of the team with a patient

referred for specialist care. The programme's success has drawn local attention, with the District Collector inviting the team to train government nurses and health volunteers.

Lives touched by care

During Ruth's visit to Vellore in January, she spent an afternoon accompanying the outreach team on their palliative care rounds. It was a valuable opportunity to see first-hand how this project operates and the difference it is already making to patients and families living in crowded urban settlements. During the afternoon, she visited several patients living in crowded urban settlements.

One woman with cervical cancer had previously been bedridden after fracturing her femur in a fall. With rehabilitation support, she can now stand independently and move around her home again, restoring dignity and independence for both her and her family.

Another patient, abandoned by his wife and children after a stroke, struggled with immobility and depression. Through repeated visits and rehabilitation admissions arranged by

the team, his mobility has improved, and efforts are now underway to help him regain employment.

A former fruit seller who lost the use of his arm following a stroke was surviving without any government assistance. LCECU social workers are helping him apply for disability benefits and pension support, practical interventions that will help his family's financial stability.

Ruth also met a woman living with rheumatoid arthritis and severe diabetic complications that led to a partial foot amputation. The team provided surgical footwear and a walking aid, enabling her to walk independently again. Following training from the nurse, she is now confidently caring for her wound in preparation for further treatment. The team is also supporting her in managing her diabetes.

Compassion in action

Across every visit, one thing was striking: the trust and affection communities have for the LCECU team. Patients and families were clearly pleased to see them, and the relationships built over time appeared central to both clinical outcomes and emotional wellbeing.

This project demonstrates how relatively modest resources, including a skilled multidisciplinary team, structured assessment tools and reliable transport, can deliver compassionate and highly effective care to those who would otherwise be forgotten.

Through your support, Friends of Vellore UK is helping ensure that some of the most vulnerable people in Vellore receive not only treatment, but hope, dignity and human connection.

News from CMC Vellore

Christian Medical College Vellore continues to grow in scale, innovation and impact, with significant developments across its campuses.

Growth across campuses

CMC now serves patients across seven campuses with 3,701 beds. Major projects recently completed include a renovated operating theatre complex with 15 operating rooms on the Town Campus, a new 42-bed medium-cost private ward at the Mental Health Centre in Bagayam, and the new College of Pharmacy building, funded by a grant of around ₹15 crore by the Federal Bank Hormis Memorial Foundation. The Diploma in Pharmacy programme is scheduled to begin soon.

Alongside these large projects, nearly 100 smaller upgrades including ward renovations, improvements to the Q & P block, and even a new futsal court, reflect ongoing investment in both infrastructure and staff wellbeing.

Service and patient care

Demand for care continues to rise. Outpatient numbers have increased by 35% over the past four years, while procedures have risen by 20% between 2022 and 2025. In Haematology alone, 374 stem cell transplants were performed in a single year.

CMC is also expanding specialist services. An Advanced Neurology Centre is being established, and the Vellore Destitute Healthcare Project (a partnership with the police, the Low Cost Effective Care Unit, and palliative care services) is reaching some of the most vulnerable in society.



Architect's impression of the new Paediatric Block

Encouragingly, CMC's medical staff attrition rate has fallen to its lowest ever level at 1.77%. Initiatives such as the 'Patient First' programme, a strengthened appraisal process, manpower optimisation and the development of a central HR office are helping sustain this positive culture.

Innovation for the future

In February 2026, CMC launched the Centre for Excellence in Neurotechnology at its Ranipet Campus in collaboration with the Vattikuti Foundation. The centre houses an advanced MR-guided Focused Ultrasound (MRgFUS) system, enabling non-invasive treatment for essential tremor and Parkinson's-related tremors without incisions. This marks a major step forward in expanding access to advanced neurological care in India.

Expanding regional impact

At the Chittoor Campus, currently operating with 100 beds, a new teaching hospital is under construction, with statutory approvals secured. In partnership with the Azim Premji Foundation, a ₹600 crore project is underway, with ₹400 crore committed by the Foundation. Completion is expected by March 2028. The rural clinic continues to serve 16 villages, carrying forward the legacy of Ida Scudder.

At the Ranipet Campus, construction of the new Paediatric and service blocks is progressing well, with completion targeted for October 2026. Trauma services there are expanding rapidly, with six theatres operating 24/7, establishing the campus as a centre of excellence for trauma care.

National recognition

CMC Vellore has once again been recognised among India's leading hospitals in 'The Week Hansa Research Survey'. It was ranked #2 Best Multi-speciality Hospital in India and #1 among Private Multi-speciality Hospitals nationwide, as well as #1 in South India.

Leadership transition

As his term concluded, Dr Vikram Mathews expressed gratitude for the privilege of serving as Director. Dr Biju George, Haematologist (Batch of 1986), took up leadership on 21 March 2026.

Across campuses and initiatives, CMC Vellore remains committed to excellence in care, education, research, and compassionate service, seeking always to meet growing needs while staying true to its founding vision.



Inauguration of the new College of Pharmacy

Param: A story of endurance and hope



Param with his family and the team at CCH

Nestled in the heart of Nandurbar, one of India's poorest districts, Chinchpada Christian Hospital (CCH) has been serving its community since 1942. In a region where malnutrition and poverty take a devastating toll (including over 600 child deaths under the age of five) the hospital stands as a beacon of hope. Despite many challenges over the decades, the last ten years have seen a remarkable resurgence, with a skilled medical and nursing team, modern diagnostic facilities, and a growing reputation for compassionate care. For families who cannot access government hospitals or afford private care, Chinchpada provides low-cost, high-quality medical and surgical services that can be lifesaving.

In 2024, Friends of Vellore UK contributed £15,884 to CCH to expand their Intensive Care Unit (ICU), making life-saving care accessible to the poorest patients. One of the first patients treated in the new ICU was Param, a 25-year-old agricultural labourer from a tribal community, who arrived just days after the unit's inauguration.

Param had suffered four days of relentless, painful body spasms, that locked his entire body in a rigid state and left him struggling to breathe. A small untreated wound on his toe had developed into severe generalised tetanus, a lethal but entirely preventable disease.

Tetanus is a disease that disproportionately affects the poor, who may slip through the gaps of immunisation programmes, live in areas with limited health education, and cannot afford private care. Param had never received a tetanus injection, and his own two young children were also not immunised. Left untreated, tetanus has a high mortality rate, often requiring several weeks of intensive care and rehabilitation. For families like Param's, the cost of treatment would have been catastrophic without charitable support.

The new ICU at Chinchpada was critical for Param's survival. Equipped for mechanical ventilation, endotracheal intubation,



Param during his hospital stay

tracheostomy and other advanced interventions, the 14-bed facility provides low-cost, high-quality critical care previously unavailable in this region. The modern design with spacious beds, improved lighting, ventilation, and additional rooms for counselling and staff duties, ensures better outcomes for both patients and healthcare providers.

Param remained in the ICU for a month, undergoing ventilation, tracheostomy and

physiotherapy, while contending with complications such as pneumonia, rhabdomyolysis and weight loss. Each day was a milestone, from weaning off the ventilator to his first steps with the physiotherapist. His survival was a testament not only to medical expertise but also to the collective generosity of Friends of Vellore UK and supporters who made his care possible.

Today, Param is well, a husband and father of two who survived a disease that could easily have been fatal in this remote area. His story is one of hope, resilience and the importance of accessible healthcare. The new ICU ensures that hundreds more in Navapur block and surrounding areas can receive timely, life-saving care. For Chinchpada Christian Hospital, Param and patients like him embody the hospital's mission: to stand in the gap for those left behind, providing care with compassion, dignity, and excellence.

Dr Ashita Singh writes:

God could distribute the resources of the world evenly, but He doesn't do that. He gives us all the opportunity and the privilege to give and receive love. When we recognise and respond to those on the fringes of society: the poor, the stranger, the foreigner, the imprisoned, we help bring His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. He doesn't turn a blind eye towards the poor. He sees them and knows them by name. If He provides for the lowly birds of the fields, He certainly cares for those who He created in His image. Thank you for your friendship and support on the journey, through your generous giving. As we witness God's wonderful works, our hearts are full.



Building bright futures

Children enjoying their lunch at the Pachaikili Play Centre

One of Friends of Vellore's ongoing projects is the **Pachaikili Play Centre**, a pre-school programme situated in a rural area 25 km from Vellore, overseen by CMC's Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs (RUHSA). The centre plays a vital role in laying the foundation for children's growth and development, ensuring that pre-school aged children from underprivileged families have the opportunity to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. Places are provided for 20 children aged 3-5 years, with care offered free of charge apart from a minimal monthly contribution for activities.

At the heart of the programme is a play-based approach to learning, which encourages curiosity, creativity and early cognitive development. The centre provides a safe, nurturing environment where children learn essential skills in language, numeracy, problem-solving and social interaction. Activities such as storytelling, puzzles, arts and crafts, songs, rhymes and outdoor play develop gross and fine motor skills while promoting collaboration and empathy. Beyond academics, children also benefit from experiences that enhance emotional regulation, independence, and confidence: qualities that prepare them for the transition to formal schooling.

The impact of the Pachaikili Play Centre can be seen in the stories of the children who have passed through its doors. **Sathiya**, for example, attended the centre from 2009 to 2011. Her early exposure to reading, writing and play-based learning gave her a strong foundation for future schooling. She progressed through local government schools, completing a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering with First Class Honours. Today, Sathiya works for Breaks India Private Limited, a career milestone she attributes to the confidence and skills nurtured at Pachaikili in her formative years.

Similarly, **Adithiya**, now in 11th grade at Sai Gurugi School, credits the centre for the early literacy, numeracy and social skills that helped him excel academically. His dedication led him to top his class in the 10th-grade exams, earning a 100% scholarship for his higher secondary education. He aspires to a career in engineering



Having fun on the slide

or technology, with the early encouragement from Pachaikili playing a crucial role in building his ambition and work ethic.

Other students, like **Tharun** and **Dhiviya**, demonstrate the long-term benefits of early childhood education. Tharun, from a modest family in Seetharampettai, went on to study Medical Laboratory Technology, while Dhiviya excelled in her Bio-Maths stream, winning district-level accolades in speech competitions. Both credit the foundational skills and



Height checks

confidence developed at Pachaikili for their academic and personal achievements.

Even the youngest children, such as 4-year-olds **Charitha** and **Rishi**, show remarkable progress in cognitive, social and physical development. They are learning to solve puzzles, engage in collaborative play, express emotions and build relationships with peers—skills that form the bedrock of lifelong learning. The centre also introduces health and nutrition awareness through activities like Nutrition Day, ensuring that families are involved in supporting healthy habits at home.

Extracurricular activities further enrich the children's experience. Visits to local parks, celebrations of Children's Day and Christmas, and interactive learning events foster curiosity, social interaction and joy. The centre recently updated its resources to meet generational needs, including new toys, puzzles, and a sandpit for sensory learning.

The stories of these children highlight the fact that early childhood education transforms lives. For families in rural Vellore, the Pachaikili Play Centre provides more than education: it instils confidence, nurtures curiosity and lays the groundwork for future success. The centre's approach ensures that children from even the most modest backgrounds are given the tools and opportunities to build bright futures.

Through dedicated teachers, a nurturing environment, and the support of Friends of Vellore and RUHSA, the Pachaikili Play Centre continues to make a tangible difference, one child at a time.



Caring for mothers, one smile at a time

At RUHSA, maternal care now includes something often overlooked during pregnancy: oral health. Friends of Vellore UK have funded a new initiative to integrate dental screening and oral health education into routine antenatal care. Every pregnant woman attending the antenatal clinic is offered a free dental examination, personalised advice and referral for treatment when needed.

Reaching mothers in rural communities

Over the first 20 months of the project, the impact has been significant:

- 140 antenatal dental screening sessions were conducted
- 2,608 pregnant women received oral health screening
- 1,560 women were referred for further dental treatment

For many women, this was their first ever dental check-up. The fact that more than half required further evaluation highlights how often dental problems remain untreated.

Why dental care matters

Pregnancy can increase vulnerability to gum disease, tooth decay, and oral infections. Yet dental care is often neglected due to fear, lack of awareness, or misconceptions that dental treatment is unsafe during pregnancy.

By embedding dental screening within antenatal clinics, the RUHSA team has removed

many of these barriers. Women receive reassurance, practical education and early treatment without needing additional hospital visits.

Each antenatal mother receives guidance, including:

- Correct brushing techniques and oral hygiene practices
- Managing pregnancy-related gum problems
- Dietary advice to reduce sugar intake and protect teeth
- Safe pain management during pregnancy
- Referral to the RUHSA dental clinic when treatment is required

This preventative approach supports not only maternal wellbeing but also the long-term health of mothers and their families.

A mother's story

One expectant mother shared how the programme changed her daily habits. She regularly consumed milk and fruit juices with added sugar, unaware of their impact on dental health. After attending the clinic, she

improved her brushing techniques and reduced her sugar intake.

"Earlier I used to take milk and fruit juices with more sugar. After the health education here, I understood how it affects my teeth. Now I am following the oral hygiene instructions properly."

At follow-up, she had completed the treatment needed to relieve her symptoms and no longer felt anxious about seeking dental care during pregnancy. Her story reflects the wider impact of the project: empowering women with knowledge and confidence that will benefit their health long after pregnancy.

Lasting benefits

By making dental screening a routine part of antenatal care, RUHSA is preventing avoidable complications and improving quality of life for mothers across rural communities. The project has also enabled the development of a well-equipped dental clinic that now serves the wider community. Small interventions are creating lasting change, one mother and one smile at a time.

Annual Supporters' Meeting: Sunday 4 October

Our annual meeting for all supporters of Friends of Vellore UK is on Sunday 4 October 2026.

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:

- 10:00am 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/> or contact the office, so we have an idea of numbers.

Strengthening care and education at Christian Hospital Mungeli

Christian Hospital Mungeli (CHM) is located in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh. This region lies in a predominantly tribal and rural area, with dense forests and limited transport links by road, rail or air, making access to quality healthcare especially important for the surrounding communities.

CHM has served Mungeli district since 1897, growing from a small clinic into a fully-fledged hospital providing compassionate care to underserved communities. Over the decades, CHM became particularly known for its eye care work, with pioneering 'eye camps' bringing sight-restoring surgeries to villages across the region. Today, CHM continues its mission with 120 beds and a thriving School of Nursing, training the next generation of healthcare professionals.

Thanks to your generous support, Friends of Vellore UK sent a grant of £8,795 in 2025 to further strengthen CHM's services and educational programmes. The funding enabled the purchase of essential medical, physiotherapy and teaching equipment, enhancing patient care and nursing education.

In ophthalmology, new technology (including a micro surgical bipolar coagulator, A-scan ultrasound scanner, and auto refractometer/keratometer) has transformed surgical and diagnostic services. Surgeons now



perform procedures more safely and efficiently, with improved outcomes and shorter operating times. Patient numbers have risen significantly, while fewer people need to travel elsewhere for treatment. The hospital's eye services are once again gaining a strong local reputation, restoring patient confidence in high-quality, accessible care.

Surgical efficiency has also improved across other departments thanks to a new cautery machine, which supports faster, safer operations. The addition of a video cable for the endoscopy machine has enhanced diagnostic accuracy, reducing repeat procedures and saving time for patients.

Physiotherapy services have been upgraded with advanced equipment, including infrared therapy lamps, shoulder T-pulleys, robotic hand rehabilitation gloves, and a 6-in-1 physio studio machine. These tools allow therapists to treat a wider range of musculoskeletal and neurological conditions, improving recovery

times and patient outcomes. Attendance in physiotherapy has increased, reflecting growing confidence in the hospital's services.

The grant has also strengthened the School of Nursing by providing essential training models, including a palpation model, IV-injection arm, and CPR manikin. These resources give students a safe and respectful environment to practise clinical skills, building confidence and competence before working with patients. New computer systems and a digital printer have further enhanced students' learning and digital literacy, preparing them for modern healthcare settings.

Overall, the support from Friends of Vellore UK has strengthened services, improved patient outcomes, and equipped the next generation of nurses with practical skills. We are grateful for the continued partnership that enables Christian Hospital Mungeli to deliver compassionate, high-quality healthcare and education to the communities it serves.



Christmas Appeal Update:

Thank you to everyone who supported our Christmas Appeal this year, part of the Big Give campaign. We are delighted to share that we reached our initial target of £4,000 within the first day, ultimately raising over £5,000 including Gift Aid and match funding. A further generous donation brought the overall total to more than £8,000. This is a wonderful result that will make a real difference to the work.



A special thank you to two supporters who provided match funding for the Big Give appeal: CMC alumnus Surrinder Garewal and Revise Radiology. Their generosity meant that every pound donated during the campaign went further and was a significant factor in reaching our target so quickly.

Donations to the appeal supported RUHSA's Elderly Day Care Centres in the K.V. Kuppam block, near Vellore. Here, 70 of the most disadvantaged elderly people from four villages receive daily meals, healthcare and structured activities, five days a week. Those attending are among the most isolated and

Strengthening care in the Himalayas

High in the Himalayan foothills, Lady Willingdon Hospital continues its long tradition of providing compassionate medical care to remote mountain communities. Recent equipment upgrades have significantly strengthened services, allowing the hospital to meet urgent and complex health needs for people who previously had few options.



Lady Willingdon Hospital Manali



The C-arm image intensifier in use

A key addition to the operating theatre is a new C-arm image intensifier, made possible through a grant from Friends of Vellore UK. This vital piece of equipment is already transforming care, enabling procedures such as fracture repairs and urgent stenting to be performed locally. Patients no longer need to travel hundreds of kilometres to Chandigarh for these interventions, ensuring faster, safer treatment for the mountain communities the hospital serves.

Since its installation, the C-arm has supported over 20 procedures, including urology cases, extremity surgeries and on-table cholangiograms.

One patient, Mrs Rani, a diabetic, illustrates the difference this equipment makes. She arrived in urosepsis, unconscious and hypotensive, with a blocked kidney caused by a ureteral stone. Typically, her only option

would have been a journey of over six hours to the nearest tertiary hospital. Using the C-arm, the team was able to place a stent locally, stabilising her condition. She later returned for stone removal, which was also performed at Lady Willingdon, and has now fully recovered.

In February, the hospital welcomed its first orthopaedic surgeon, bringing a service previously unavailable in the region. The C-arm image intensifier is now used almost daily to manage fractures and other complex surgeries.

A 95-year-old woman with a fractured hip following a fall, underwent successful surgery locally and returned home after just three days, a remarkable outcome made possible by having the right equipment in the right place.

The new C-arm joins other recent upgrades, including a digital radiography system and a portable X-ray unit. These were crucial during

an emergency in June last year, when a bus tumbled down a mountainside, tragically killing three passengers and injuring 18 others. Nine patients were brought to the hospital, and the upgraded equipment allowed the team to stabilise and transfer them safely after treating fractures and head injuries.

These developments show how targeted support can have far-reaching impact. Your generosity has enabled life-saving procedures, reduced dangerous journeys for vulnerable patients and strengthened healthcare provision for the region.

The team at Lady Willingdon Hospital send their heartfelt thanks: *"Thank you for standing with us in this journey of hope and healing."*

Together, this partnership continues to bring skilled care, dignity and hope to patients living in some of India's most remote communities.

Elderly Welfare Centres

economically vulnerable in their communities.

Ruth visited the Kaversham Elderly Centre in January and saw the centres in action. Residents were taking part in daily prayer, exercise and games using simple, locally available materials. What struck Ruth was not only the practical care being provided, but the sense of belonging and routine that the centres offer to people who might otherwise spend their days largely alone.

RUHSA's approach brings together health professionals, nutritionists, social workers and Self-Help Group volunteers from the local community. It is a genuinely integrated model, and one that those who benefit from it clearly value.

We hope to run a Big Give campaign again next year, with an even more ambitious target. Thank you for making this one such a success.

Georgina Crawford, Fundraiser





Rebekah with CMC student nurses



Rebekah with CMC nursing faculty

Learning across cultures: a nursing elective at CMC Vellore

Each year, Friends of Vellore UK offers elective grants to help medical, nursing and allied health students experience healthcare at Christian Medical College Vellore. These placements not only shape future healthcare professionals but also strengthen the global partnerships that have long defined CMC's mission.

In 2025, one of these grants supported Rebekah, a third-year nursing student from Edinburgh, to undertake a four-week elective placement at CMC Vellore: an experience that proved deeply formative both professionally and personally.

For Rebekah, the placement carried special meaning. India forms part of her family heritage, and members of her late mother's family had previously served at CMC. Returning to Vellore allowed her not only to learn about nursing in a global context but also to connect with an important part of her own story.

Trauma care

Rebekah's first week was spent on a trauma rotation at CMC's Ranipet campus, where she followed patients through the entire trauma pathway, from emergency triage and resuscitation to intensive care and surgery.

Working alongside nursing staff in high-pressure environments revealed the breadth of the nursing role. She observed nurses leading rapid assessments, coordinating multidisciplinary teams and responding with remarkable adaptability to life-threatening situations.

The experience highlighted the skill, resilience, and teamwork required in trauma care and strengthened her understanding of continuity of care across hospital departments.

Mental health care

During her second week at CMC's Mental Health Centre, Rebekah encountered approaches to psychiatric care that challenged many of her assumptions.

She was particularly struck by the open ward environment, where patients were encouraged to participate in therapeutic activities and maintain dignity and independence. Time spent with child and adolescent mental health services demonstrated the importance of family involvement, with parents actively supported in caring for children with autism and developmental conditions.

Regular multidisciplinary meetings allowed her to observe holistic care planning, while sessions with psychologists and occupational therapists broadened her understanding of mental health challenges within the Indian context.

Community nursing

Rebekah's final two weeks focused on community health, an area that left a lasting impression. Accompanying community nurses on education sessions and home visits, she saw firsthand how preventive care transforms health outcomes.

Community nurses worked tirelessly in challenging conditions, providing health education on nutrition, diabetes management, child health, and disease prevention. Their commitment demonstrated how empowering families with knowledge can reduce illness and improve long-term wellbeing.

A lasting impact

Rebekah reflects, "I am extremely grateful to Friends of Vellore. My time at CMC greatly deepened my understanding of how culture, religion, and available resources shape healthcare delivery. I observed the central

role families play in patient care, contrasting with the more professionally led systems commonly seen in the UK. CMC's strong commitment to inclusive, person-centred care highlighted the importance of cultural competence and the need to adapt practice to meet diverse patient needs. Overall, this experience challenged my assumptions, highlighted my own privilege, and strengthened my ability to provide compassionate, culturally aware care. The skills, insights, and perspectives gained during my time at CMC Vellore will continue to influence my nursing practice as I move forward in my career."

Opportunities like this are made possible by the generosity of supporters to Friends of Vellore UK. A grant of just £500 may seem modest, but its impact is profound, equipping future healthcare professionals with perspectives that can shape decades of patient care.

We hope that students who benefit from these grants will, in turn, become advocates for CMC Vellore, promoting its mission to serve the poor and marginalised here in the UK.

As Rebekah concludes: "Experiences like this cannot be replicated in the UK alone. I would strongly encourage other students to take part, as the professional and personal benefits are significant and long-lasting."

Through these elective grants, Friends of Vellore UK continues to invest not only in students, but in the future of compassionate healthcare worldwide.



Bridging the gap for Sandhiya

Sandhiya, a homemaker from Andhra Pradesh, lives a simple life with her husband, a daily-wage labourer. Her life, however, had been marked by heartbreak: she experienced multiple miscarriages, and two babies she carried to term sadly passed away shortly after birth. These losses left the couple emotionally shattered.

When Sandhiya became pregnant in her 40s, she and her husband were worried but hopeful for this child who would bring light into their lives. A well-wisher told them about CMC Vellore, and they visited the Foetal Medicine Unit in the Department of Obstetrics.

Because of her age and previous obstetric history, Sandhiya was admitted to the general ward for close monitoring. Consultations were arranged with the Medical Genetics unit, and with timely, coordinated care from a multidisciplinary team, she and her baby were closely supported throughout the pregnancy.

A few months later, despite unexpected complications, Sandhiya delivered a healthy



3 kg baby. Her husband shares their joy and gratitude, “We had no hope before coming to CMC, but now our family is blessed with a little one.”

CMC’s vision is to ensure that no one in need is ever turned away. Around 15% of its annual budget supports concessional and free care for patients like Sandhiya. Through initiatives such as the Person-to-Person Fund, the Emergency Fund, and free meal schemes, CMC continues to bridge the gap for those who cannot afford essential treatment. These programmes rely on ongoing generosity so that many more families can experience hope and healing.

Advancing liver pathology at CMC Vellore

Our support for the **Senior Training Fellowship programme** continues to strengthen healthcare at Christian Medical College Vellore by enabling clinicians to gain specialist experience overseas and bring vital skills back to India.

In 2025, Dr Rijo Issac from CMC’s Department of General Pathology undertook a three-month fellowship at Queen’s Medical Centre in Nottingham, one of the UK’s leading centres for liver disease. His training focused on liver transplant pathology, new diagnostic technologies and the emerging role of artificial intelligence in medicine.

Hosted by Professor Guruprasad Aithal and supervised by consultant histopathologist Abhik Mukherjee, Dr Rijo was welcomed as part of the clinical team. He reviewed routine liver biopsy cases, prepared reports and discussed complex diagnoses with senior specialists: an experience that significantly strengthened his clinical confidence.

One of the most valuable aspects of the placement was exposure to fully digital pathology systems. Instead of traditional microscopes, cases were analysed using high-resolution digital images, enabling collaborative reporting and rapid sharing of expertise. Dr Rijo also attended multidisciplinary team meetings where surgeons, physicians, radiologists and pathologists jointly reviewed complex liver and gastrointestinal cases, demonstrating a highly coordinated approach to patient care.

The fellowship provided insight into liver transplant pathology. Cases at Nottingham are routinely reviewed alongside specialists at Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation



Trust, allowing Dr Rijo to compare expert opinions and deepen his understanding of transplant rejection. This knowledge will be increasingly important as liver transplantation expands at CMC.

He was also introduced to research projects using artificial intelligence to analyse tissue samples and improve diagnostic accuracy. These experiences have inspired plans to begin similar AI-based initiatives in gastrointestinal and liver pathology on his return to Vellore.

Dr Rijo reports that the fellowship greatly enhanced his skills and confidence in managing complex liver disease. The knowledge gained will support more accurate diagnoses and improved patient care for those treated at CMC.

Through fellowships like this, your support enables learning that multiplies far beyond one individual: strengthening departments, advancing medical practice and ultimately benefiting many patients across India.

Lessons from India

“India teaches me again and again that the categories into which I try to divide things don’t hold up.” Dena Moes

I could not agree more after my recent visit to India.

This January I escaped the winter gloom to visit Christian Medical College Vellore (CMC), the hospital our church is supporting in the city of Vellore, about three hours inland from Chennai. Rather than following the well-trodden paths of tourist India, I wanted to encounter the real India in all its bewildering glory.

CMC Vellore is consistently ranked among the top hospitals in India. Patients travel from across the country, often selling possessions or borrowing heavily, simply for the chance to receive treatment there.

Let me give you some context, the parish I am vicar of is made up of some 3,500 people. Across CMC’s seven campuses, approximately 9,000 outpatients are seen each day and because of the Indian culture they will be supported by their families meaning as many as 30,000 people may pass through its doors daily. Being in Southern India the summers are even too hot for my African heritage, imagine seeing your loved one ill or going to work in an average summer heat of 42°C.

India overwhelms the senses. The sights of extreme freneticism, the aromas of curried



On a patient visit with the Palliative Home Care team

cuisine, the taste of magnificent spice, the hearing of constant noise and beeping and the touch of foreign delicacies constantly vie for your attention.

Our church is sponsoring two healthcare workers in the Jawadhi Hills, at a cost of around 25 times lower than that we would pay in the UK. Yet what I received from the visit was far greater than I expected.

I left with an incredible admiration and gratitude to a people and country that taught me how comfort and consumerism have led me to become stale. Stale towards the plight of others, stale towards daily blessings that I take for granted and stale towards the blessing God has given me purely by my birthright.

At CMC I met doctors and nurses who, motivated by faith, choose to earn far less than they could elsewhere so they can live out their calling through service. They work with extraordinary compassion and skill in conditions unlike anything I experienced during my time in the NHS or any other country.

I thought I would never see leprosy, but I saw it being treated with love, I saw amputations and tumours of the sort we would never experience in the west but being treated in slums with gentleness and humour.

What struck me most was the integrity, capability and dignity of the staff, that reminded me of the goodness of Christ. In a country where Christians are a minority, Christ’s love was outpoured on all those who needed it, especially the marginalised.

I came home with such gratitude and admiration for the simple things I overlooked like free healthcare and running water but also for the incredible men and women at CMC Vellore being Christ’s hands and feet.

It made me wonder whether we would be better off not seeking a holiday that increases our comfort. but rather experiencing a context where discomfort is prevalent and seeing humanity thrive through faith.

Rev Chris Kennedy



Enjoying lunch at one of RUHSA's elderly welfare centres

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