

## MWiB Partnership with the Church of North India (CNI)

Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) is keen to work according to the partnership ethos of the British Methodist Church which, through its expert World Church Relationships team, is part of a strong worldwide network of partner churches, which includes Methodist and ecumenical national churches in over 60 countries.

Partnership is built upon respect, upon listening to one another, upon mutual agenda-setting, upon a friendship which includes two-way prayer, learning and support. Some years ago, a church leader from Asia commented to a church leader in Britain, "I don't want to be your project, I want to be your partner" and this understanding is crucial in all our worldwide relationships.



Partnership has been at the heart of the production of this resource pack. The MWiB Dalit Solidarity Task Group was delighted when, at one of our early meetings in Methodist Church House, we were visited by Alwan Masih, General Secretary of the Church of North India. Alwan himself comes from a Dalit background and is passionate about the

need for an end to caste discrimination. He shared moving stories from his own childhood and warmly encouraged us in the work we were just beginning.

Building upon this, Linda Crossley's visit to CNI in February 2013 was the opportunity to lay the foundations for a prayerful and practical partnership between MWiB and CNI. In this we were greatly helped and advised by Steve Pearce, MCB Partnership Co-ordinator for Asia and the Pacific. MWiB has therefore committed to raising **£50,000** during the three-year period 2013-2016 for CNI to use in their work supporting Dalits, and particularly for the education of Dalit girls and in the funding of self-help groups for adult women. Linda shares here some of what she learned in India and you can find details about how you can contribute at the end of this article.



Jill Baker, President MWiB 2011-2013



**Self-help groups for adult women** are a feature I found in both urban and rural areas of India, where Women's Empowerment Workers engage with groups of women via confidence-building, awareness-raising on the rights they do have, vocational or self-employment training, and more, to help move women from dependence and fear towards more independence and confidence.

Linda with Mrs Poornima Lall, secretary of the Stewardship Ambassadors' Ministry, the CNI-wide committee leading on the re-establishment of the girls' hostels.

**Girls' hostels** provide residential places to support girls' access to and retention in education. Currently, many girls drop out of education at an early age, for work or marriage. Another factor is that, particularly in the rural villages, secondary schools are an unfeasible travelling distance away. With a hostel place, not only do the girls live, in term-time, very close to their school but also

- they sleep in a bed not on the floor
- they brush their teeth with a toothbrush not a twig
- they have regular sufficient nutritious food.

All of this helps them to receive the most benefit from their education. Relationships with families are maintained by visits, phone calls and of course by going home in school holidays.



The Church in North India already operates hostels, such as this one in Aurangabad, which is shortly to be re-organised in their new "PDS" model, where the cost of the hostel place is shared between Parents, Diocese and Synod (national church). The girls here danced as part of an evening's entertainment to bid farewell to me in February 2013.

Linda Crossley, President MWiB from July 2013

#### **Update: Autumn 2014**

After further consultation, a formal 3-way Memorandum of Understanding was drawn up in February 2014 and was signed by Linda, representing MWiB, along with Steve Pearce, Partnership co-ordinator for Asia and the Pacific with the Methodist Church in Britain and Alwan Masih, General Secretary of CNI. The Memorandum is included on the following page. This confirmed that MWiB is committed to raising £50,000 in the 3 years from 2013 to 2016 to support CNI's work on empowering Dalit women and girls, and also that prayer and communication links between MWiB and CNI women will be established.

*Linda writes, "Within the first year, £18,500 has already been raised by MWiB and transferred to the World Mission Fund. In eleven of the 31 Methodist districts, MWiB are making this partnership their major fund-raising for one or two of the 3 years, whilst almost every district has made some contribution already. The communication links and relationship-building will be developed during a return visit to India I am due to make in October 2014, which will include addressing the CNI Triennial Synod.*

*Since 2011, MWiB has raised awareness of caste discrimination widely across the Methodist Church in Britain, not only within MWiB. We have addressed Connexional meetings of superintendent ministers, and led workshops at a number of events, including Methodists for World Mission weekend in May 2014 (see 5.19-20). This campaigning work culminated in bringing a successful Notice of Motion to the Methodist Conference in 2014 (see 1.8). Whilst recognising that the issue is vast, we rejoice in the small seeds of hope that have been sown through this ongoing partnership.*

**Memorandum of Understanding**  
**between**  
**The Church of North India (CNI)**  
**and**  
**Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB)**  
**2013-16**

Following the visit made in February 2013 by Linda Crossley, as incoming President of Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB), this Memorandum of Understanding is hereby agreed by MWiB and the Church of North India (CNI).

**Its purposes include enabling MWiB to**

- experience and understand more of CNI's creative and liberating work with Dalits, especially women and girls and get to know some CNI dioceses and their work with women, beginning with the Diocese of Marathwada, with a view to developing prayerful and life-enhancing relationships.
- visit, learn about and support the new PDS (Parent/Diocese/Synod) model of CNI for education support through hostels that give Dalit, tribal and extremely poor children access to education
- develop closer links - of prayer and communication - with women in CNI, not least with the Stewardship Ambassadors Ministry, the Women's Fellowships, the Aurangabad hostel and the newly appointed Desk for Women and Children in CNI at Nagpur.
- develop partnerships, in time, between MWiB in British districts and the Women's Fellowships in some CNI dioceses.

**And enabling CNI to**

- develop the PDS hostels, especially those at Aurangabad and Jalna from their start-up in June 2013 for 3 years, thereby also assisting the Diocese with some of its responsibility for costs, whilst it continues to work to improve its financial position overall.
- support the Marathwada Diocesan Board of Social Service with funding for more women empowerment workers, believing that this work will yield more immediate results on a shorter time-scale than the hostels, which are clearly a long-term investment in young people and their future. Empowering adult women brings benefits to their whole family.
- Receive a commitment of funds from the MWiB membership of £50,000 during the years 2013-16 to be managed and monitored by the Partnership Co-ordinator for Asia and the Pacific in the Methodist Church in Britain's World Church Relationships team and the General Secretary of the Church of North India.

**Signed by:**

Alwan Masih	General Secretary, Church of North India
Steve Pearce	Partnership Co-ordinator for Asia and the Pacific, Methodist Church in Britain
Linda Crossley	President, Methodist Women in Britain