

Incredible INDIA

“Incredible India” proclaims the slogan on promotional posters that are produced by the Ministry of Tourism for the purpose of attracting tourists to India. And indeed India is an incredible country - as big as Europe and, linguistically and culturally, just as diverse.

The economic growth in India has been enormous over recent years: new buildings are being constructed everywhere and modern shopping malls are now common in the big cities. Along with the growth in economy, however, has come a growth in poverty – both physical, and spiritual. In the megacities about 50 percent of the population live below the poverty line, many of them in slums. In rural areas, where about 70 percent of Indians still eke out a living, crops often fail and many farmers are burdened by loans they cannot repay. And amongst the materially wealthy a growing number are spiritually poor, caught up in materialism and a Hollywood-influenced Western lifestyle. Traditional family values are forsaken, many couples live together without getting married, and more marriages are ending up in divorce.

Interserve currently has 116 Partners serving in India: 68 Indian nationals and 48 international Partners from Korea, the UK, Australia, the USA, Brazil, New Zealand, Canada, the Netherlands, South Africa, Germany and Hong Kong.

In recent years there has been a decline in the number of overseas Partners coming to serve in India. Historically,

Interserve provided medical personnel for mission hospitals in rural areas and staff for Christian international schools such as Woodstock and Hebron, but we are now struggling to fill these vacancies. Many factors, including entry restrictions, have contributed to this decline, but the primary cause has probably been the media focus on India’s economic growth, giving the misleading impression that India is financially secure, and that international mission Partners are no longer needed. Yet with a population of 1.2 billion people, only three percent of whom are Christian, the task is simply too big for national Christians to handle alone.

The following story from Indian Partner, Iris Paul, who serves amongst tribal groups in remote areas of Orissa, vividly illustrates the need. “After 20 long years I visited a village again. Our early contacts, Rajesh and his wife, were dying. Their daughter, who was only about seven when I last saw her, pleaded with me to cure her parents. They were medically beyond any cure, so I told her, ‘We will pray to Jesus and He can perform miracles if He wants.’ The daughter said, ‘I know you are too busy, so can you please tell me where Jesus lives and I will go and bring Him to cure my parents.’ I cried when I heard this. The work is too vast: with just a handful of staff, travelling every day on rough and dangerous roads, it is not possible to reach and minister to all.”

It is vitally important that we continue



to be able to place On Trackers and new international Partners in the fields of healthcare and education. Interserve was originally founded to meet the educational, medical and spiritual needs of the Indian people, and 158 years later it's important we stay faithful to the task. Currently Interserve Partners fill many crucial roles in a range of educational institutions from childcare and primary right through to degree level theological training.

Prem is a nine-year-old boy studying in a school in Punjab. What makes him stand out is not just his broad smile but the fact that he is two years older than his classmates. When he was first brought to Educare, an NGO in north-west India, last year, he couldn't

read or write, and was emotionally insecure. None of the traditional teaching methods worked, but then one of the Interserve Partners at Educare came up with a strategy to help him learn and also overcome his intense feelings of isolation and loneliness. Prem successfully passed Standard 1 and is now studying in Standard 2.

Besides healthcare and education Interserve India is also focusing on new areas of involvement,

such as the growing middle class and business, where the spiritual need is very high. Janet, a Partner from the UK, is an entrepreneur who is using her skills to run a small business in Bangalore, which employs local women (see page 20). Another couple from Australia are involved in a fair trade business called Freeset (www.freesetglobal.com). They make quality jute bags and organic tee-shirts, but their main business is freedom: providing employment for women wanting to break free from the sex trade. Two more Interserve couples, from South Africa and Brazil respectively, have recently also become involved with Freeset, and a young couple from NZ is currently in the application process.

We would like to see more Indian Christians in key positions where they can positively influence the direction of their country. In order for that to happen we need highly specialised professionals in fields such as Media, Education and Business to resource, train and coach a new generation of emerging Indian leaders for these positions. There are still so many opportunities to serve in India. We invite you to come and partner with us, and help bring a real change to this incredible country that is so loved by God. ✨

The author is an administrator from the Netherlands, and has been working in India since 2007.

JOB OPENINGS IN INDIA

Secondary school teachers (Art Department, Maths, English, History, Business Studies) are needed for several international schools.

Primary school teachers are needed for a school for tribal children in Chinchpada, and for a school in rural Assam.

Psychologist needed to train counsellors to work with abused and traumatised women.

Community/social workers and **teachers** to work with special needs children and the elderly.

Medical doctors, physiotherapists and **occupational therapists** are needed for a Christian hospital near the India/Nepal border.

For more information on Interserve India, please check our website www.isvindia.org