



Calcutta Connect Annual Review 2020



Welcome,

It gives us great pleasure to present you with the Calcutta Connect Annual Review for 2020. As everyone is all too aware, it has been an incredibly challenging year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with much of normal life around the world being put on hold and Calcutta was no exception to this. The year had started out promisingly for Calcutta Connect, with our school infrastructure programme in full swing, numerous visitors to Calcutta and the continued growth of our programmes with our local partner Panikhali Rural Development Society (PRDS). However, by mid-March this all changed with the global spread of Covid-19 and India imposing one of the world's strictest lockdowns, which lasted for almost three months.

Even with the spread of Covid-19 in India and West Bengal another

catastrophe was to strike in the middle of the lockdown period. In late May, Cyclone Amphan, the most powerful storm to hit the region in decades, ripped through the communities where we work with PRDS. Amphan caused widespread destruction to the homes of many of our students, leaving many of them badly damaged or completely destroyed. We immediately launched an emergency appeal and thanks to the incredible response received from our supporters we were able to quickly arrange the provision of food and temporary shelters to thousands of families in our communities. Later through a private donor we distributed home rebuilding grants to 500 families who were most affected by Amphan.

Notwithstanding the major setbacks of Covid-19 and Cyclone Amphan, we were able to make good progress in our school

infrastructure building programme at the beginning of the year and resumed this work towards the final quarter of 2020 when India emerged from its nationwide lockdown. Luckily so far India has not seen a significant second wave of Covid-19 that western countries have been experiencing after hitting its peak of cases during September.

As a result of declining cases, we began to welcome back students to our centres in limited numbers in December and taking the appropriate safety measures in place. We will work closely with our partners in 2021 to curtail the impact of COVID-19 and work to ensure children's education is prioritised in both local and global crisis contexts

Thank You,

Brian Kelly

Chief Executive Calcutta Connect

Calcutta Connect—Who Are We and What We Do

About Us and Who We Are

Calcutta Connect is a non-governmental organisation founded in 2010 by past pupils of the Coláiste Éanna India Immersion Project. Our committee is made up of individuals from a broad spectrum of backgrounds who can draw upon their experience to enhance the work we do. We work towards alleviating poverty by supporting education of children and young people from some of the poorest communities in Calcutta and surrounding districts.

Our Vision

All children, young adults and families, regardless of their background, can reach their full potential through education.

Our Mission

To work in partnership with local organisations to create sustainable change through Education, Vocational Training and Community Development, empowering children and young adults to secure a better future for themselves and their families.

100% Model

One of our greatest selling points to our supporters is that we operate a 100% model, meaning that 100% of all donations we receive go directly towards the projects we support in Calcutta. As we have grown as a charity we are proud to continue this 100% model as a fundamental feature of how we operate. Administrative expenses incurred (including the salary of our CEO) are met by separate funding, generously provided by a private patron. In short this means that every cent we receive in donations goes straight towards our projects in Calcutta.



Our Core Values and Principles

Partnership

We strongly believe that working with local organisations is the best way to understand, challenge and address the issues faced in underprivileged communities.

Respect

Respect is at the core of how we engage with each other, our stakeholders and the work we do.

Transparency

We believe in being completely open about the way in which we operate and clear about where all funds raised are used and being accountable to all beneficiaries, members, partners and the public.

Empowerment

We see education as a tool of empowerment in breaking the cycle of poverty.

Professionalism

In our work we strive to operate in a professional, honest and ethical manner and adhere to best practices.

Child Centred

We believe that the best interests of the children and young adults we support should be at the centre of all the work we do.

Diversity

We celebrate diversity and seek to challenge the many inequalities experienced as a result of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class, Sexualities and Religion.

Gender Equality

We acknowledge and actively challenge the additional difficulties faced by girls in completing their education.

Committee in 2020

As with many businesses and organisations, Calcutta Connect's meetings shifted online during 2020. Regular communication between Ireland and India, the Board of Directors, wider committee & partners ensured both the development of the organisation from a governance perspective in Ireland, and a coherent and targeted response to the emergency contexts on the ground in Calcutta.

We used the lockdown period in Ireland in the early part of the year to follow up on the progress we had made in 2019 to ensure compliance with the Charities Regulator's Governance Code. This involved a significant level of work, including the development of policies and procedures in the areas of finance, risk management, governance, child protection & safeguarding. Compliance with the Governance Code ensures Calcutta Connect is operating under best-practice and the time spent reflecting on the organisation's policies has been a valuable process. For example, we decided to become signatory to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages. The Dóchas Code aligns with Calcutta Connect's values on dignity, respect and accountability to those we support and also works as a helpful tool in communicating our work to supporters and the Irish public.

Towards the end of the year and with meetings of people and travel limited once again we decided to hold a virtual AGM. We were delighted to have many of our supporters join us for the event. It was a great opportunity for us to give an overview of the year in terms of programme and financial updates as well as looking forward to plans for 2021

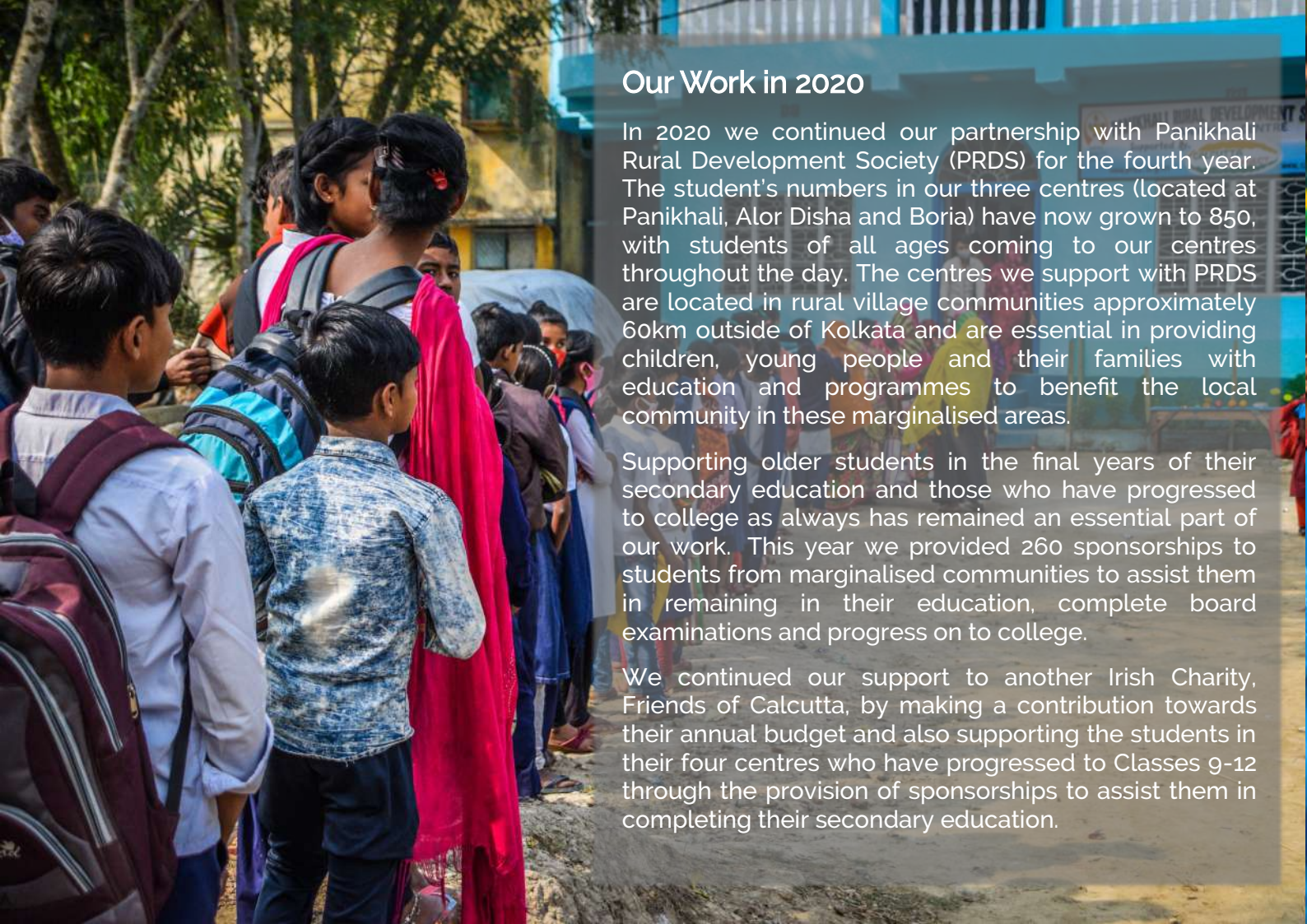
Development Education Training

A significant facet of Calcutta Connect's work comprises facilitating secondary schools during their trips to Kolkata. We have made it an integral part of these trips to provide development education to the students and staff who visit our projects. Development Education works as a tool to engage visitors in an analysis and critical reflection of social issues experienced by the communities with whom we work in Calcutta, and how these issues are linked, both at a global level and a local level at home in Ireland.

We are in the very fortunate position that three of our committee members are trained facilitators in providing Development Education (DevEd) Training. Committee members Alan McMullan and Alan Irwin worked with the Coláiste Éanna & St Colmcille's India Immersion groups in advance of their visits.. Emily Lyon facilitated a Dev Ed session on the ground in India for the Coláiste Éanna group which explored power dynamics, stereotypes and representation. St Colmcilles School's visit unfortunately did not proceed due to Covid-19. We hope that in the future, when the circumstances allow, we can welcome St Colmcilles to Kolkata.

We welcome the positive feedback following the facilitation of Dev Ed sessions and we look forward to building the capacity of our committee and continuing such workshops with visitors in 2021.

We are committed to facilitating Dev Ed workshops for any group travelling to visit our projects in Kolkata.



Our Work in 2020

In 2020 we continued our partnership with Panikhali Rural Development Society (PRDS) for the fourth year. The student's numbers in our three centres (located at Panikhali, Alor Disha and Boria) have now grown to 850, with students of all ages coming to our centres throughout the day. The centres we support with PRDS are located in rural village communities approximately 60km outside of Kolkata and are essential in providing children, young people and their families with education and programmes to benefit the local community in these marginalised areas.

Supporting older students in the final years of their secondary education and those who have progressed to college as always has remained an essential part of our work. This year we provided 260 sponsorships to students from marginalised communities to assist them in remaining in their education, complete board examinations and progress on to college.

We continued our support to another Irish Charity, Friends of Calcutta, by making a contribution towards their annual budget and also supporting the students in their four centres who have progressed to Classes 9-12 through the provision of sponsorships to assist them in completing their secondary education.

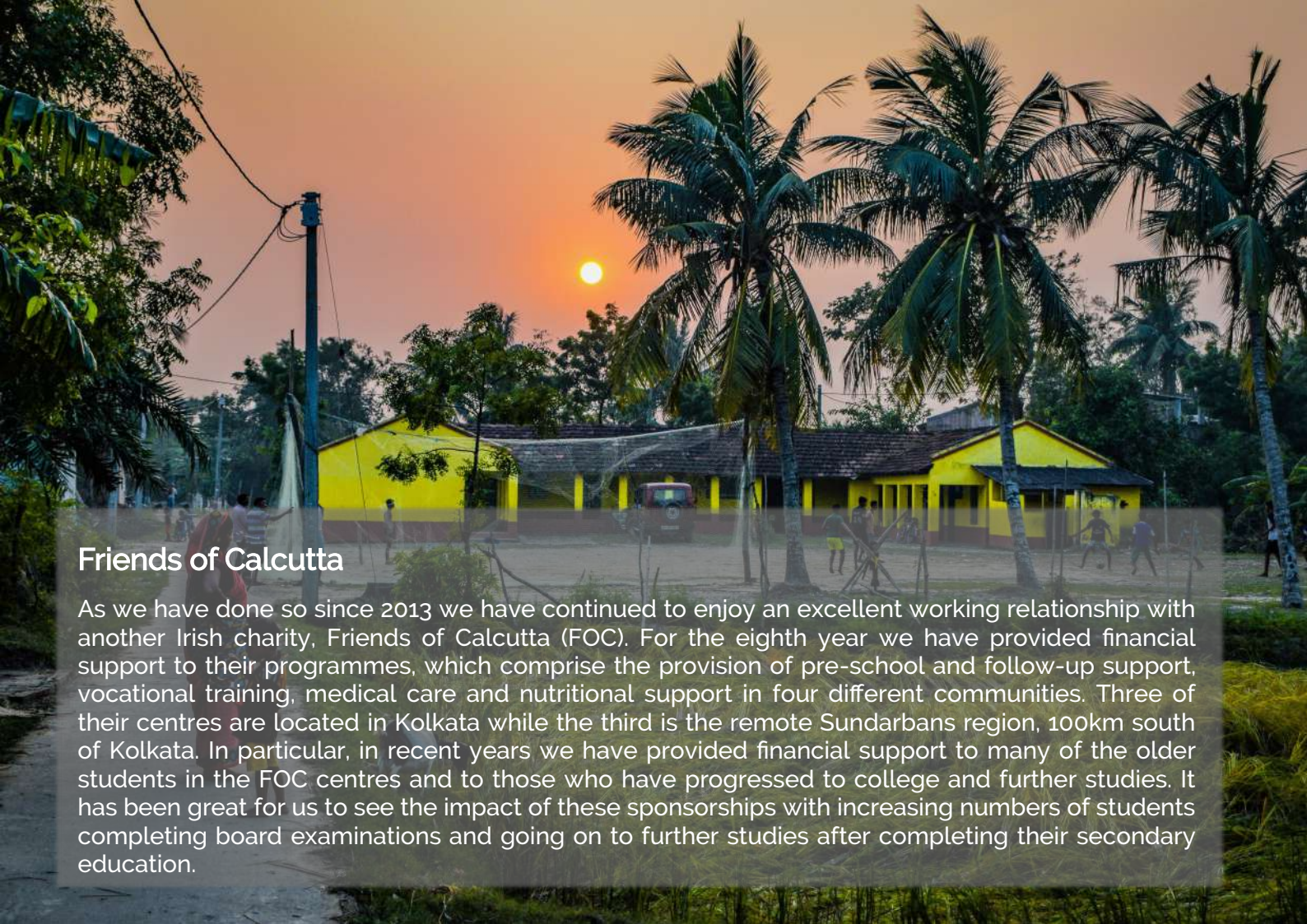


Panikhali Rural Development Society

As noted above, we entered our fourth year of partnership with PRDS and once again 2020 saw the number of students in our centres increase to 850 in our three centres. Classes begin at 7am each morning and continue each day until 9pm with different batches of students coming at different intervals during the day. We now have students ranging from pre-school children right up to young adults who are completing their final board examinations in preparation for entry to colleges and training institutions.

With the many challenges of 2020 we worked closely with the PRDS management and staff to address the issues faced by Covid-19 and Cyclone Amphan. We supported numerous food distributions as well as 500 home rebuilding grants due to income loss and destruction brought about by COVID19 and Cyclone Amphan.

The school infrastructure programme continued from 2019 and in the early months we made great progress in completing the new Panikhali centre and extension to the Alor Disha Centre. All work ceased in the middle of March with the national lockdown but work resumed once again in September. In the final months of 2020 we began work on additional classrooms in the Alor Disha Centre and construction of a new school building in our Boria community.



Friends of Calcutta

As we have done so since 2013 we have continued to enjoy an excellent working relationship with another Irish charity, Friends of Calcutta (FOC). For the eighth year we have provided financial support to their programmes, which comprise the provision of pre-school and follow-up support, vocational training, medical care and nutritional support in four different communities. Three of their centres are located in Kolkata while the third is the remote Sundarbans region, 100km south of Kolkata. In particular, in recent years we have provided financial support to many of the older students in the FOC centres and to those who have progressed to college and further studies. It has been great for us to see the impact of these sponsorships with increasing numbers of students completing board examinations and going on to further studies after completing their secondary education.

Student Sponsorships

One of the fundamental objectives for which Calcutta Connect was established was to support older students in completing their second level education and progressing to third level (i.e. attending colleges or training institutions). Once again this year we continued to support students from marginalised backgrounds who would otherwise be unable to complete their education due to the costs involved with admission fees, books and private tuitions.

In 2020, our student sponsorship programme assisted 230 number of students in Classes 9-12 (age 14-18) and 30 students attending colleges and training institutions in Kolkata. We have now seen some of the first students we supported complete their college education and progress on to further studies at Masters Level or get job placements in a clear indication of the positive impact our sponsorship programme is making on the students we support.



2020 Look Back

Rajiv Ganguly Sports Tournament 2020

After the highs of the 2019 tournament when our boys cricket team emerged as champions, the students from PRDS travelled to Kolkata in early January in hope of further success at this year's tournament. Once again this year our students travelled in large numbers to take part in the athletics, cricket, kabadi and football tournaments.

In the cricket tournament the boys once again put in some excellent performances and made it to the semi-finals and once again met the team from the Sundarbans who they had beaten at the same stage the previous year. However, this year the Sundarbans were to come out on top and secure the place in the final match. It was a great performance once again by our cricket team and all staff from PRDS were very proud of their efforts.

It was the girls team second year taking part in the Kabadi tournament and after a full year of practice and training from our teachers the girls were well prepared. Their hard work over the previous year soon became evident with some excellent performances in the early stages and the PRDS team made it to the semi-finals where they overcame a formidable team from the Sundarbans. In the final match they met the team from Khidderpore who had won the tournament the two previous years, the Khidderpore team proved to be a slippery opposition and after a closely fought final, Khidderpore were declared the winners. We were very proud of the performance of the girls and the great progress they made through their efforts over the previous year.

The boys football team proved to be the success story of the 2020 tournament for PRDS with the team putting in some strong performances throughout the group stages and then making it to the final where they faced an experienced team from the Sundarbans. It was a closely fought final with the scores level going into the final stages but two quick goals from the PRDS boys proved to be decisive and the team emerged as champions of the football tournament. It brought great joy to everyone in PRDS for the second year running to have one of their teams the winners of one of the main events of the Rajiv Ganguly Sports Tournament.



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TOPPIA BENGAL TIGER



Friends of Children



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Coláiste Éanna India Immersion Project

In February of 2020 we were once again delighted to welcome a group from Coláiste Éanna CBS in Ballyroan (Dublin) as part of the schools India Immersion Programme. This was the twelfth group from the school to travel to India since 2001 and as ever it was an incredible experience for everyone involved giving them the chance to visit NGO projects in Kolkata and immerse themselves in India culture.

The 2020 group was no different to those of previous years when they spent an action packed 9 days in Kolkata visiting all the projects we support and meeting many of our students during the course of the week. The trip began with exploring the city and getting to know their surroundings. On day two, an early start for the group saw them travel together with a large group of the local boys we sponsor for a trip to the Sundarbans (100km south of Kolkata) for an overnight stay. This gave an excellent opportunity for this large grouping of 52 Irish and Indian young adults to mix in a cultural exchange over the two-day trip and experience life in a rural community in West Bengal. The highlight of the trip was a boat journey along the Sundarban rivers and spending the night in the village school. Over the rest of the trip the group also spent time visiting the three Friends of Calcutta Centres in the city to spend time with the students there.

One of the highlights for us was the day-long journey to our PRDS centres when the group got to see much of the progress that had been made since the last group visited in 2018. They spent the day visiting all three communities where we work with PRDS, see the infrastructure developments, serving food to the preschool children and even painting some of the new tables and benches for the classrooms.

Following the group's return to Ireland we were delighted then to receive a donation of €10,200 thanks to the incredible fundraising efforts of the students, their families and teachers prior to travelling to India. We were not able to accept the donation in the usual manner due to Covid-19 restrictions but we hope in the future we will be able to acknowledge the students and staff in person for this amazing donation.



Covid-19

2020 began with such promise for us in Calcutta Connect, both in terms of continued growth and success of our programmes with PRDS and with longer-term infrastructure improvements progressing nicely. However, in the background we were all gradually becoming aware during January and February of Covid-19 and the problems it was bringing to other parts of the world. By March the situation had rapidly deteriorated worldwide and India was no different. On the 24th of March, with just a few hours' notice given, the Indian Government declared a national lockdown in an attempt to control the spread of Covid-19. This quickly became one of the most strict lockdowns seen anywhere in the world, and lasted until the end of May (almost 9 weeks). India then began to slowly



reopen from June with a series of unlocking periods in which restrictions were gradually lifted. However, to this day education remains one of the most heavily restricted areas in India with all government run schools and colleges still remaining closed in West Bengal, 9 months following the original shut down.



While much of the developed world switched focus to online learning platforms, as a means of continuing the education of children and young adults, this has not been possible for the majority of students in our PRDS centres, as the availability of smart devices and reliable data connections (and even

sometimes electricity) does not exist in these areas.

In an effort to combat this, the PRDS staff have played an incredible role by preparing worksheets for all students, safely distributing same to students homes safely and arranging collection and feedback to be provided each week. With our centres closed for the vast majority of the year, this became a vital link with our students in order to keep them in the routine of learning and doing school work throughout this difficult period. The continued support provided by teachers has also worked to mitigate against the risk that the pandemic leads to an increase in school dropout rates



The communities where we work were also heavily affected, where the majority of people living locally are solely dependent on a daily wage to support their families basic needs. Upon the introduction of the national lock down, so much of this work ceased, overnight, leaving families struggling to meet basic living costs. We have endeavoured to assist as much as possible in this regard and, throughout lockdown, arranged with PRDS to deliver food packages to all our student's families to help them during this difficult period.



Cyclone Amphan

By late May the communities where we work had already experienced severe hardship due to the nationwide lockdown. The worst was yet to come and on the 20th of May Cyclone Amphan ripped through the southern part of West Bengal. The cyclone caused widespread damage to communities across the region, including those in which we work with PRDS, with the homes of many of our student's families badly damaged or completely destroyed by the natural disaster. Our new centres proved to be effective shelters for many members of the community during Amphan and we were happy to see so many families took shelter in our centres during the



storm. We were

in regular contact with the management from PRDS and Calcutta Connects local manager, Baren Mondal, to assess the situation and it quickly became apparent of the large scale damage that had been caused.

We immediately launched an emergency appeal



in Ireland and received an incredible response from our supporters, with €2,300 raised within the first 48 hours of the appeal being launched. We immediately dispatched these emergency funds to PRDS, who were arranging an emergency food distribution to the local communities to assist them during this difficult period. Over the following weeks we liaised with PRDS to arrange the distribution of over 2,000 food packages and hundreds of tarpaulins to provide temporary shelter to local families faced by the cyclone.

We were incredibly fortunate to receive a substantial donation from a private donor which enabled us to launch a grant scheme in our communities, where five hundred of the worst affected families would be given either a grant or building supplies to help them repair their homes. The PRDS staff surveyed the communities and by August had distributed all the funds and building materials to those most impacted by Amphan.



Exam Results Success

Amidst all the difficulties brought on by Covid-19 and Cyclone Amphan, there was some good news in India, with State exam results being released for many of our students who had sat their board exams in early 2020. The results were released later than usual, but by early August we were delighted to hear that so many of our students had passed their exams with some in particular achieving exceptional results.

In total 78 students, supported through our student sponsorship programme, sat and passed their board examinations for either Class 10 or Class 12. Two notable results came

from Bikram from our PRDS Boria centre who scored an excellent 93% in his end of school Higher Secondary Exams and Debnaskar from Bhubaneswari who got 95% in Science Stream in his Higher Secondary exams also.

These results served as a timely reminder, during a very challenging year, of the importance of our sponsorship programme in removing the financial barrier faced by these students and their families and enabling them to complete their secondary education. Without this support, it would not be possible for most, if not all, of these students to complete their education - which in turn directly affects their ability to reach their full potential.



PRDS Staff

We have always been very appreciative of the efforts of our teaching staff and the work that they do in our centres on a daily basis throughout the year. However, throughout 2020 their



incredible commitment and dedication to our students and the local communities in which we operate became abundantly clear. Their hard work and collective efforts in meeting the many challenges during the year, has left us humbled and awestruck. Overnight, our teaching staff became community outreach

workers during this period by visiting student's homes to help them with their subjects, assisting in food distributions and carrying out surveys of each community following Cyclone Amphan. We are extremely grateful to all the PRDS staff for their hard work over the past year and the dedication they have shown to their students and respective communities during Cyclone Amphan and COVID-19 crises.

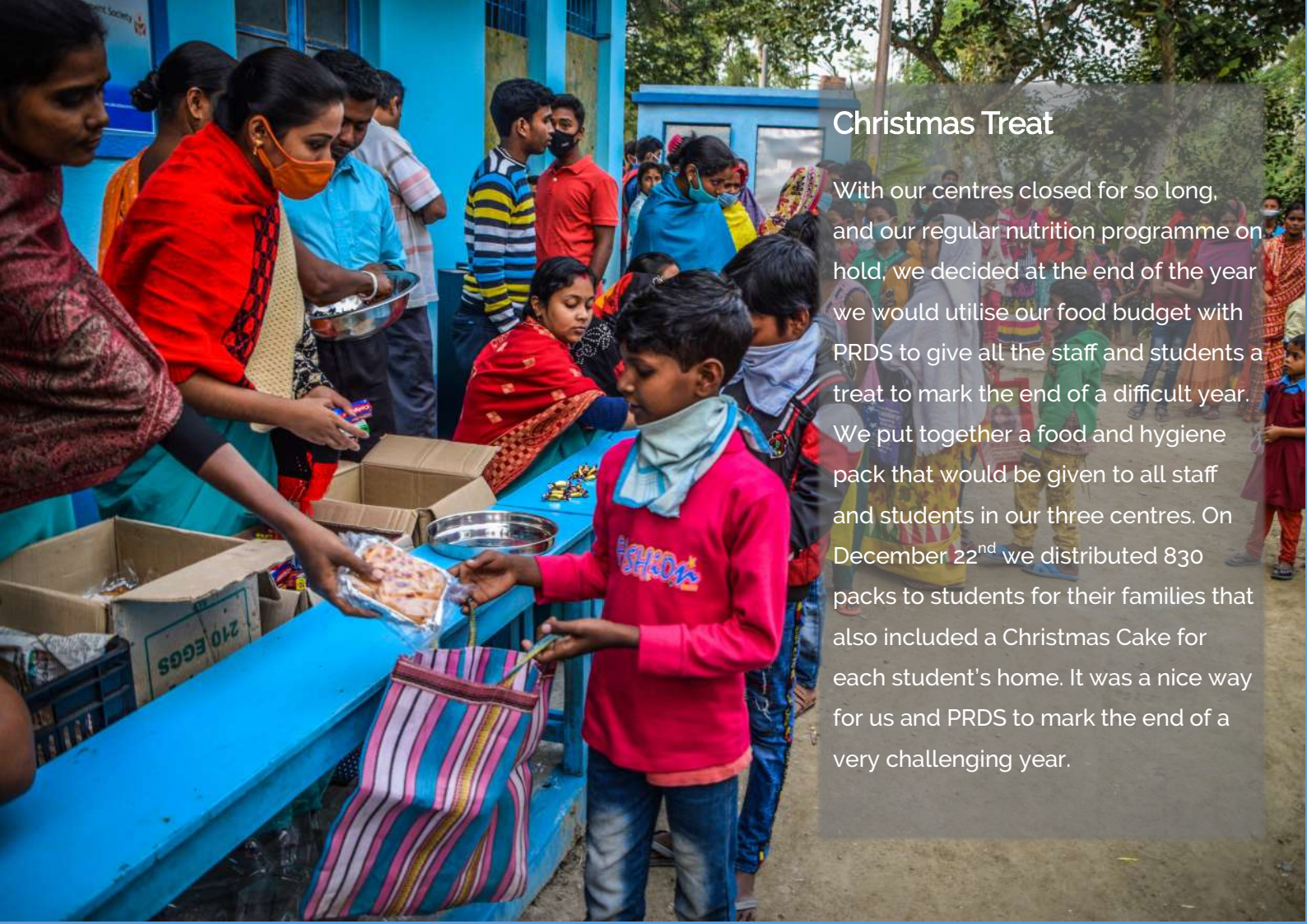


Calcutta Connect in Kolkata

In what was a difficult year for any international travel we were lucky that some of our members had been able to travel to Kolkata in the early part of the year before the Covid-19 situation took hold. Brian Kelly travelled in early January to Kolkata and Emily Lyon joined in late February for the Coláiste Éanna India Immersion Project Trip.

After the Coláiste Éanna group departed we were then looking forward to Alan Irwin accompanying the group from St Colmcilles coming to Kolkata in April. However, the global situation quickly unfolded with national lockdowns and international travel coming to a halt. The St Colmcilles trip was postponed until such time as it would be deemed safe to travel. We do hope to welcome the first group immersion project group from St Colmcilles in the not too distant future. .

Brian Kelly returned to Ireland from Kolkata on March 19th as the Covid-19 situation unfolded around the world and he remained home for the next seven months. In late October Brian returned to India with our school reconstruction programme recommencing and to develop a strategy plan and budget with PRDS for 2021. We hope that during 2021 the situation will allow for more members of Calcutta Connect to travel to India to see first-hand the progress that has been made in the projects we support.



Christmas Treat

With our centres closed for so long, and our regular nutrition programme on hold, we decided at the end of the year we would utilise our food budget with PRDS to give all the staff and students a treat to mark the end of a difficult year. We put together a food and hygiene pack that would be given to all staff and students in our three centres. On December 22nd we distributed 830 packs to students for their families that also included a Christmas Cake for each student's home. It was a nice way for us and PRDS to mark the end of a very challenging year.

Lessons Resume

As noted above, we are incredibly grateful for the commitment to education shown by the PRDS teaching staff in distributing worksheets and visiting student homes to give feedback for the duration of the school closures (over 9 months),

As time went on and with our older students in particular finding it increasingly difficult to prepare for the upcoming 2021 board examinations, we decided to explore the possibility of resuming classes for our older students on a limited basis from December onwards. Together with our staff and management we developed safe operating procedures after consulting best practices for schools from the West Bengal Government and World Health Organisation. We then consulted with guardians and local stakeholders and ensured all were satisfied that we could safely resume lessons for the higher class students.

The new school buildings would allow for ample space and distancing between our students alongside all recommended other safety procedures. On December 1st it gave us great joy to see small numbers of students return to our centres for much needed tuition and classes and we hope that we can continue to resume more classes in 2021, subject to developments in the COVID-19 situation in India.



2020 in Pictures



Rajiv Ganguly Football Tournament Champions



Sanitising before entering for classes



Home reconstruction grants after Cyclone Amphan



Students return to lessons in December



New classrooms at Alor Disha Centre



Coláiste Éanna India Immersion Group



Community food distribution during Covid-19



New Panikhali School building completed

School Building Programme - Panikhali

In the final quarter of 2019, with thanks to the incredible support from two donors, we were able to begin our school building programme that enabled us to vastly improve the infrastructure of the buildings from which PRDS operates. Our first major project was the complete redevelopment of our school in Panikhali village and this work began in late September 2019 and took a full six months to complete. The project made great progress towards the end of 2019 with the lower level complete and as we progressed through the early part of 2020 this continued with the construction of the upper level that was complete by end of February. This was followed by all the various finishing works of plastering, electrics, plumbing and painting of the building.

The lower level was completed in early January 2020, so we were thankfully able to make some use of this space for classes prior to the national lockdown commencing in March. Since then we have not been able to utilise the building due to restrictions. Whilst we could not utilise the space for education purposes during the restrictions, the building played an important role in sheltering large numbers of the local community during Cyclone Amphan. As noted earlier, in December we have slowly begun to resume classes for our older students so it has been great for us to once again see students in our Panikhali Centre.

The building consists of four classrooms, toilets, an office, kitchen, library, visitors room, vocational training room and a community meeting hall. An exciting new programme that we hope to begin the new year will be computer lessons for our older students. In late November we purchased 24 computers for our centres and are looking to start computer training for the very first time with PRDS in 2021.





Boria

Since 2017 we have been working with PRDS in the village of Boria that is located 2km from Panikhali Village. In Boria we have been running follow-up coaching for students in Classes 1-10 and have been lucky to be granted permission by the local community to use two local churches to conduct classes. A small number of pre-school children from Boria have been coming to our Panikhali over the past two years for their daily lessons. While we have been very grateful to be given the use of the two churches in the community, it has always been our long term plan to establish a more permanent and fit for purpose centre in the community of Boria. With the incredible support of the same donor who had helped us so much with construction in Panikhali and Alor Disha centres, we had the funds in place to construct a centre with PRDS in Boria.

In February 2020 we spent a lot of time with PRDS searching for a suitable plot of land where we could construct a building for our Boria centre. Following visiting and searching various different sites, with little success, we were approached by a local man, a supporter of PRDS's work, who offered to sell a plot of land his family owned and after we visited it we knew this was what we were looking for. All the necessary paperwork was arranged in early March 2020 and the land purchase was completed, however, building work could not commence immediately due to the pandemic restrictions. Once restrictions were eased it was then decided to prioritise the progress of the new classrooms in Alor Disha from September, following which the larger construction project in Boria could commence. We broke ground in early November, with excellent progress being made to date, with much of the structure for the lower level now complete. When completed the building will have four classrooms, toilets, kitchen, computer room, vocational training room and a community meeting room. We are hoping that the entire project should be completed by April and students should then be attending classes in our brand new Boria centre.



Future Projects - Panikhali Skills Centre

Together with PRDS we have been incredibly proud of the progress we have made since we began our partnership in 2017. The main focus of our project has been to support children and young people in their education and we have seen great results over the past few years of the positive impact our projects can have in the communities where we work with PRDS.

As we are now entering our fifth year of partnering with PRDS we have been able to identify more areas of need in the communities where we work together. One such area is that of skills development for the young adults in our communities so they can have the opportunity to learn a lifelong skill which can be used to earn an income and gain employment. To meet this need, we now intend to construct a skills and training centre in Panikhali Village, close to our main centre, where young people can learn skills in areas such as electrical work, computer hardware repairs, beauty therapy and other skills areas that are identified by the local team as being directly linked to gainful employment in the wider area. As an early part of our skills development programme we are already planning to expand our vocational training programme in tailoring and to start computer training in all our centres over the coming months.

We also intend that the skills centre will have a dedicated medical room, from which a regular medical check-up programme for the local community will be run. We have commenced contact with many local medical professionals from a number of specialties with a view to staffing the centre to advise and treat the local community.

We are presently in the early stages of identifying a piece of land for this skills centre project and hope to begin construction in the second half of 2021.



10 Years of Calcutta Connect

August 2020 marked the tenth anniversary of the foundation of Calcutta Connect. It was our intention to mark this milestone by hosting an event to bring together all of our supporters so that we would express our gratitude for the central role they have played over the past decade in enabling us to achieve all we have achieved in that time. However, as we are well aware, this simply was not possible in 2020 - hopefully we can do something once circumstances allow.

It has been an incredible journey for all of us in Calcutta Connect since 2010 and we are extremely proud of what we have been able to achieve since our foundation. When we started out, one of the first things we did was to purchase board games and sports materials and send these to India. Little did we know at that time, that ten years later we would be able to say that we have supported the education of thousands of children and young adults, funded a host of different projects and constructed school buildings that educate hundreds of young people every single day. We are immensely proud of what has been accomplished since those humble beginnings in 2010, none of which could have been achieved without the amazing support we have received from so many individuals, schools, business and groups who have helped us along the way. We are truly indebted to the generosity of so many people who have helped us in Calcutta Connect to assist so many children and young people in enabling them to make brighter futures for themselves.

As we look forward to the coming years we are in a great position to continue to make an impact on the lives of so many more young people. We have a very dedicated local partner in PRDS and a very hard working local manager in Baren Mondal. With new school buildings constructed over the past year and more planned for the coming year we are facing a very promising period for Calcutta Connect when we can fully utilise these new buildings to make the maximum impact in supporting the provision of education, medical camps and skills training in the communities where we work. Once again, a huge thanks to everyone who has supported us on this incredible journey since 2010!

Fundraising

With the restrictions in place in Ireland for much of 2020, our public fundraising activities were not possible in the same way they have been in previous years. Our annual quiz that has been a fixture on the calendar since 2012 sadly could not take place and any other similar events were also not possible. However, we have been in a very fortunate position financially, thanks to a number of key donors who maintained their commitment to Calcutta Connect and continued to support or work from a distance this year. We are extremely grateful to everyone who continued to support us during this difficult time, when it might be easy to forget the struggles of those less fortunate on the other side of the world. Especially in a year that was incredibly difficult for so many financially.

The Coláiste Éanna India Immersion Group gave us an amazing donation of €10,200 in May and we are extremely grateful to everyone involved in the group for all their hard work in fundraising prior to their trip. Following Cyclone Amphan we received an incredible response to our online appeal and received €2300 in donations in 48 hours that was put to use within days in our communities. Many of our regular donors continued to support through monthly or regular donations - we are extremely grateful for their continued support.

All of the construction projects we are undertaking with PRDS to improve our infrastructure have been supported by a private donor and we are extremely thankful for their incredible generosity in enabling us to vastly improve our school buildings to such a high standard.

We hope that as 2021 progresses we will be able to carry out more of our regular public fundraising activities but we will only do so when the public health guidelines allow us to. As always 100% of all donations we receive from members of the public go directly towards the projects we support in Kolkata as our administrative costs are covered by a totally separate source of funding. We would like to thank all our supporters for their incredible support in 2020.

10 Years of Calcutta Connect



Panikhali Centre in 2017



Coláiste Éanna India Immersion Group 2014



Realex Payments Group in Kolkata in 2016



Committee Members in Kolkata in 2018



First students sponsored in 2011



Annual Quiz Night in Revels in 2017



Rajiv Ganguly Cricket Tournament Champions 2019



India Immersion Project Reunion in 2014

Get Involved With Calcutta Connect

If you are passionate about helping support the education of young people from marginalised communities in India we want to hear from you. There are many ways to get involved in the work we do from making a one-off or regular donation, to attending one of our fundraisers (or organising your own), to becoming a corporate sponsor or visiting Calcutta with us. We are always open to new ideas and working with new people so please do get in touch if you have any suggestions as to how you might be able to help.

Donate

We are always grateful for any single donation and we also have a large number of ongoing supporters. 100% of all donations we receive go directly to the projects we support. Visit our donations page on our website to see the various ways we accept donations and make a difference

Organise a Fundraiser

A fundraising event is a great way to raise funds and help spread the word about the work we do in Calcutta Connect. No matter how big or small your planned event is we want to hear from you and will support you in the planning of your event.



Corporate Partnership

If you are looking to partner your company with a charity where you can be assured that all of the funds you donate go directly to education projects in India then look no further. We have been lucky to engage with a number of corporates in recent years and are always looking to expand our circle of supporters. Through partnering with Calcutta Connect you will help provide education to some of the poorest communities in Calcutta, while at the same time meeting your own Corporate Social Responsibility objectives. We can attend your offices and present on our work and we have previously arranged visits to our programmes in Calcutta for some corporate supporters. We are happy to work with you to design a programme that would fit best with your company so please get in touch.

School Visits

Our committee members are always available to undertake school visits or speak to other community groups to inform students and all our supporters of the work we do, the projects we support and more generally about development issues faced in India. We can tailor a session depending on the age groups of any students involved and the topics that teachers or group leaders may wish to explore. Please contact us any time to arrange a talk.



Planning for 2021

As has been the case for most of 2020, and will continue for some time into 2021, it is rather difficult to make long term plans due to instability and uncertainty that has been created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding these challenges, we have already commenced the planning and interim budget process for 2021 with PRDS and intend to expand our programme further over the coming year to cater for the ever growing number of students and to utilise greater capacity in our centres. In particular, we have more students reaching the latter stages of their secondary education and we need to hire new teachers who can specialise in subjects these students are taking.

Some of our plans for 2020 were out on hold due to Covid-19 but from early in the new year we look set to commence IT training in our Panikhali and Alor Disha centres, which will represent a tremendous step forward in these centres, with many of our students eager to get started. The Vocational Training programme in tailoring will begin in our Alor Disha centre for the first time as well. The new classrooms at our Alor Disha Centre will be ready for classes in January and our new school building in Boria should be completed and open for lessons by April. Classes have resumed from December on a gradual basis in the PRDS centres and we hope this can continue into 2021.

Our long established student support programme will continue and we expect to see numbers increase once again as more and more students are set to progress to the final years of their secondary education and on to third level.

As is the hope of everyone is that we will see somewhat of a normalisation return to our lives as 2021 progresses and we can once again come together with our supporters and even welcome committee members and supporters to witness first-hand our projects in Kolkata.





Calcutta Connect is a Company Limited by Guarantee with a Registered Company Number 591666. Registered Revenue Number CHY 19742. Registered Charity Number 2010153

To make a donation to our work visit www.calcuttaconnect.ie/donate



www.calcuttaconnect.ie