



## PAUL HARRISON AWARD 2016

The *Paul Harrison Award* was instituted to honour medical graduates or post-graduates of Christian Medical College Vellore, who, through their outstanding and selfless contribution in the field of healthcare, have been able to uphold the motto of our institution, '*Not to be ministered unto, but to minister.*' The awardees for this year have spent close to two decades in a remote, neglected and backward area of our country bringing hope, health, **healing**, development and change under difficulty and trying circumstances.

Dr. Vijay Anand Ismavel graduated from the Kilpauk Medical College in 1987. Two things mark his undergraduate training period - his academic brilliance and his decision to commit his life to Christ. The latter led to his realisation of the desperate need for doctors in remote parts of India. He spent three years at the Christian Fellowship Hospital, Oddanchatram, honing his clinical skills and learning about a life lived in total surrender to Christ. While doing his post-graduation in General Surgery, his paths crossed that of Dr. Ann Miriam, and he recognised in her a kindred spirit. Dr. Ann too, having studied in Madurai Medical College, had **discerned** the call of God to serve as a medical missionary. They **got** married and soon after decided to work in Makunda, Assam.

Makunda Christian Leprosy and General Hospital was started by the Baptist Medical Missions, USA in 1951. This large campus, located at the crowded junction of Mizoram, Tripura and Assam was situated in a thickly populated, but remote area, with very few health facilities. By 1992, the hospital had closed down, leaving deserted buildings with very little usable equipment, no money, electricity or running water. The Emmanuel Hospital Association took over the Hospital after which doctors Vijay and Ann moved there in March 1993.

The conditions under which Dr. Vijay performed the first surgery - by lantern light- was a precursor of things to come for many years: a place falling off the map with its inaccessible location that was compounded during the rainy season; little or no means of communication; court cases and litigations. But then there came a small trickle of patients that turned to a torrent, for the presence of two devoted doctors meant reliable healthcare at affordable costs.

In 1997, they joined CMC Vellore, where Dr. Vijay specialised in Paediatric Surgery, while Dr Ann trained as an Anaesthetist. On their return to Makunda in the year 2000, they crystallised their vision for the Hospital and the community through their mission statement which was to provide high quality medical treatment at affordable costs to the people of North East India; to use the assets to improve the spiritual, social and economic lives of the wider community and to create and sustain a pool of trained Christian manpower to carry forward God's work in the area. Humanly speaking, these were wishful thoughts. But God's provisions and providence proved far greater than one could imagine

Initially, Dr. Vijay and Ann resolved staff issues, developed sustainable and poor-friendly protocols and built up the staff of the hospital. They then moved to developing departments and facilities in the Hospital and in the community. This led to the establishment of an English medium school in 2004, where today over 900 children, including their daughters, Hannah and Deborah, receive quality education up to the higher secondary level. In an effort to reach other underserved areas, a branch clinic was started in the militant infested area of Kamalacherra, in the Dhalai district of Tripura in 2005. Today, it is a growing hospital that sees over 15,000 patients a year, and provides much needed healthcare to a remote and largely tribal region. A Nursing School, initiated in 2006, has trained over 225 students, and has opened avenues in healthcare for young people from all over the North-East.

Today, the Makunda Christian Leprosy and General Hospital sees about 100,000 outpatients, 12,000 inpatients, performs 2,400 major surgeries and 5,000 deliveries each year. This heavy workload is shared by 4 consultants, 3 residents and 5 junior doctors. Clearly, everyone multitasks. The Community Health Department partners with the government and private sector in effecting change in the neighbouring areas. The large campus of the Hospital is a flourishing model of sustainable agriculture - the farms and fishing ponds provide food for the leprosy patients, the school and nursing school hostels. Financial stability has enabled the Hospital to develop partnerships with other institutions. A community College and the Makunda Nature Club, which is committed to documenting biodiversity and wildlife conservation, were started in the past year. Future plans include similar health units in other states of North East India and possibly also in Myanmar, as well as an informal customized training programme for people interested in serving **in** similar remote low-resource situations.

Makunda Christian Leprosy and General Hospital is now seen as a successful, self-sustaining model of high quality health care that is focused on the poor and marginalised; that enriches a community with educational and development opportunities, empowering people to help themselves. It is a model, which can be implemented in resource-poor situations in different parts of the world.

Behind this compelling story are the two people who willingly '*stood in the gap*', who have willingly said '*yes*' to a difficult life filled with hardship, hostility, sickness and uncertainty, all at the Master's bidding in a life of selfless service and love in action. The story of Makunda is a powerful testament to their faith and commitment.

Christian Medical College Vellore is proud and honoured to **present its illustrious alumni** Drs. Vijay Anand Ismavel and Dr. Ann Miriam with the *Paul Harrison Award* for 2016.

**DIRECTOR**

**PRINCIPAL**

Vellore  
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