



The Paul Harrison Award 2025

The *Paul Harrison Award* was instituted in 1966 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 the Institution, '*Not to be ministered unto, but to minister.*' Drs. A.V. Ramanamma and Ravi D'Souza now join this august company.

Dr. Ramanamma joined CMC Vellore for her undergraduate medical education in 1981. Among other things, she stood out for her passion for Social Service activities, a portend of a life to come. On completion of the MBBS course, and despite not having a service obligation, she chose to spend a year at the Holy Cross Hospital, Ambikapur, a remote tribal district in Chhattisgarh. She also engaged with the Raigarh-Ambikapur Health Association (RAHA), a large community insurance program, providing critical outreach services in the area. She returned to CMC in 1988 for her postgraduate training in Community Medicine, where her path intertwined with Dr. Ravi D'Souza, who had also joined CMC for the same course. Dr. Ravi, having completed his undergraduate medical studies in Mumbai, had spent five years in rural India, working in Jamkhed (Maharashtra) and Karigiri (Tamil Nadu), where he led, among other initiatives, the Tuberculosis and Leprosy control programs. They discovered in each other kindred souls, with a '*simple desire to do things that needed to be done*'.

On completion of their postgraduate training, Drs. Ramanamma and Ravi returned to Chhattisgarh in 1992 and embraced community and public health in all its aspects. They initially worked with the Holy Cross Hospital and then with RAHA, providing primary and referral care for women and children, for patients with malaria, leprosy and tuberculosis, and training nurses and health workers using locally developed and adapted materials. In 1993, they moved to Berhampur, Odisha, working among the Saura and Kondh tribals in one of the poorest and most deprived areas of the country. Along with primary health care programs, they handled outbreaks of measles and meningitis, and worked with the

government to extend immunization services and develop monitoring tools for programme interventions. In 1997, Dr. Ramanamma joined the UNICEF for a decade, initially in Odisha and later in Madhya Pradesh. She was instrumental in initiating the Infant Mortality Reduction Mission, which helped reduce Infant Mortality in Odisha. She initiated newborn care training and piloted training modules that were adopted nationally. Dr. Ravi worked in healthcare planning, engaging with global agencies such as the EU, World Bank and the Department for International Development (DFID), UK. Both Drs. Ramanamma and Ravi played crucial roles in the relief and rehabilitation operation in coastal Odisha following the super cyclone in 1999 and the floods of 2001. These interventions encompassed health, nutrition, education, water, sanitation and child protection. In Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Ramanamma initiated nutrition rehabilitation centres for children with severe acute malnutrition.

In 2007, Drs. Ramanamma and Ravi joined the Jan Swasthya Sahyog (JSS), an NGO based in the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh. Apart from providing primary health services, Dr. Ramanamma developed a Cervical Cancer screening programme for women in the villages and supported the design and implementation of *Phulwaris*, village-based creches for under-3-year-olds to tackle the malnutrition that was rife in the area. Several public and private organisations have subsequently adopted the model of *Phulwaris*, including the Azim Premji Foundation. In addition, Dr. Ramanamma helped develop a rural health project in Udaipur, Rajasthan, and has worked with migrant workers in Surat. She has developed guidelines for health screening for occupational hazards like silicosis; supported adolescent and women's health programs in eastern UP and Uttarakhand; conducted evaluations on Nutrition, Gender and Equity for the state government of Odisha and evaluated public health facilities in Madhya Pradesh; and has documented reproductive history pathways for tribal women in Odisha. Dr Ravi has worked to strengthen the ICDS programme for marginalized communities in two tribal districts of Madhya Pradesh, as well as for the urban poor in Bhopal. In all these places and positions, they spoke the language of *swasthya*, seeking practical and nuanced solutions to the many paradigms of public health in India, and addressing deep-rooted prejudices and institutionalized indifference.

Dr. Ravi has been a visiting faculty at the Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar, teaching Rural Management to young students. Currently, Drs. Ramanamma and Ravi lend their expertise to

SOCHARA, an organization involved in public health and research, and continue to support several NGOs, including the JSS. They undertake field visits, support staff, mentor colleagues, and ensure quality in service provision, training and data collection. Through her eloquent writings, Dr. Ramanamma has drawn attention to the health needs of those in conflict zones in India, providing a voice to the voiceless and speaking truth to those in power. She was part of the Supreme Court-mandated health team to Manipur. Dr. Ravi has been an adviser to several state governments, including Odisha, Nagaland and Mizoram, on health strategy development and drug management policy.

Thus, for over thirty years, Drs. Ramanamma and Ravi have worked through a large swath of Central India, in rural, tribal and urban areas, in remote and challenging places, and among some of the most deprived, destitute and marginalized populace, for whom a new day has never dawned. For Drs. Ramanamma and Ravi, there is no quotidian life, but a relentless disquiet that has perturbed them. It started at a young age, through teachers and mentors who taught them to see the unseen; it haunted them as they met five- year- olds who only knew hunger and emptiness; and it continues to lead them to seek fresh answers to the new questions that public health and policy in India constantly pose.

As conscience keepers of our time, Drs. Ramanamma and Ravi have tirelessly sought to bend the arc of history towards a better, just and inclusive India. Their legacy illumines CMC and India's highest aspirations. Christian Medical College, Vellore rises as one to call them blessed and is proud to confer them with the *Paul Harrison Award* for 2025.

DIRECTOR

VELLORE
10.11.2025

PRINCIPAL