

India



The Republic of India is located in South Asia. It is the seventh largest country in the world by land area and the second most populous country with almost 1.3 billion people. Though some people in India are wealthy, most are quite poor. In the north of the country, people live in rural mountainous areas; in the south, they live in tropical climates and are mainly farmers or fish for a living. India is a democracy, which means they elect their government leaders.

The capital city is New Delhi.



The mountains of Agartala

Most Indians practice the Hindu religion. In fact, the country got its name from the religion: India comes from *Indus*, which comes from the Old Persian word for Hindu.

The Christian faith was first brought to India by the Apostle Thomas and survived in small numbers for centuries until the first western missionary (a Franciscan named John of Montecorvino) arrived in the 14th century from Italy by way of China. Now, just over 2% of the population of India is Christian. The Catholic Church is very active in India, however, through schools, hospitals, feeding programs, and orphanages in service to God's poor.

The Diocese of Agartala (see red arrow on map at right, above) is very new – it was founded in 1996. It has 44 priests serving 25,000 Catholics spread across an area almost twice the size of the Archdiocese of Boston. This means that priests, sisters, and catechists must travel great distances to serve the needs of Catholics who may not live in close proximity to many other Catholics.

MCA in India

Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC says that most of the people in his diocese are poor farmers, tea pickers, or traditional weavers. “We are very grateful for all the help that comes through the Pontifical Mission Societies to Agartala,” he said.



The Missionary Childhood Association—which is one of our Church’s four Pontifical Mission Societies—supports a large number of schools and religious education programs in India, including the Diocese of Agartala. A few years ago, a contribution of \$5,000 from MCA members in the United States helped purchase uniforms, books, paper, and pencils for 120 girls who attend a boarding school run by the Sisters of Charity. This is one of seven such contributions given to boarding schools in that diocese for the care and education of poor boys and girls living in a very rural area. “We are grateful to Missionary Childhood Association children in the United States for helping our students,” said Sister Mary, president of the



school, in a letter to our national office in New York.

“We tell students that they are children of God and teach them to appreciate the richness of different cultures.” The girls pictured below, at left, are taught to pray the rosary by the Sisters.

Faith formation classes are taught on Sunday and each night ends with special prayers for the children of the world. When they return home for holidays, the girls are missionaries to their own families – sharing what they have learned and reading from the Bible to their parents and siblings.

The Sisters also used some of the funds from the Missionary Childhood Association to build a rainwater tank so they could provide clean, safe drinking water to their students.



The tank is connected by a series of pipes to the gutters on the school buildings.

The rain water is trapped in the gutters, flows through the pipes and into the tank where it is captured so the students have access to clean drinking water. This is very important in India. According to the World Health Organization, over 900,000 Indians die every year from drinking contaminated drinking water or breathing polluted air.

At last report, through the prayer and sacrifice of MCA members around the world, the children in the Diocese of Agartala were able to attend school, receive regular meals, drink clean water, and most importantly, learn that God loves them. Missionary Childhood members sacrificed \$41,500.00 to make all this possible!

Missionary Childhood Association

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