

# A clinic for the Tharu tribes people

## Background

A health clinic is being created in India, in a remote jungle region of Bihar called the Don Tharuhat in West Champaran. The work will serve the Tharu tribes people, a remote community who depend on the forest for their livelihood. This is a largely forgotten part of India with no school or health care provision. The people have some money but bartering is still a way of life and rice is bartered for other basics such as kerosene, sugar and oil.

**The Revd Andrew McCabe** grew up here with his missionary parents, and Andrew has maintained contact with the tribe over a period of seventy years, bringing many of the children into his school at Nawabganj. A church now exists in the community whose dominant faith is animism. Andrew is uniquely placed to help these people as he speaks their language and many of the tribal leaders were once children he played with as a boy.

Charlotte Baptist chapel in Edinburgh asked Andrew to name a project that they would support as part of the church's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2008, and also to honour Andrew as the church's longest serving missionary partner.

Andrew consulted with the tribal leaders and a health care project was decided upon. The congregation raised the magnificent sum of £26,000 which is now being added to by friends and supporters. The McCabe Educational Trust is co-ordinating the funding and will provide regular updates on the progress of the work.

## The Project

Central to the project will be a dispensary with a remit to treat basic ailments such as irritations of the eyes, ears and skin. A core problem is a complete lack of knowledge of personal hygiene. Nurses will hold meetings covering subjects we just take for granted and teaching basic preventative techniques.

The Indian government has tried numerous times to help these people and they have always failed for the principal reason that outsiders find it virtually impossible to live in the forest. The climate is extreme - ranging from hot and humid with a constant risk of forest fires to being totally inaccessible during the monsoon rains from June to September. Andrew tells us that to drive from the market town of Harnatar to the Don area requires fording the same river sixteen times. **There are no bridges!**



Revd Andrew McCabe

For many years now, Andrew has been educating children from the tribe at his school in Nawabganj and housing them in the Anand Niwas Boys Home. Our project will provide an employment opportunity for these children returning to their community. **The plan is that these children will return to the forest with the necessary skills to initiate change.**



### Administration

The project is Andrew's initiative, has Charlotte Chapel as its principal sponsor and the McCabe Educational Trust is co-ordinating the UK fundraising. In India, the Assemblies of God church (AG) have adopted the project as an integral part of their work. They will supervise the distribution of our funds and provide audited accounts. They will also pay the local salaries and take full responsibility for every aspect of the work of the clinic. The local Manager of the project will be the principal of the AG school in Bettiah, Dill Kumar Singh, another former pupil of Andrew's from Nawabganj Bettiah is about seven hours drive from the clinic depending on the season and the state of the roads! The McCabe Educational Trust will remit funds to the school account.

### The Budget

Houses are being built for the staff. A dispensary building is being constructed and a deep tube well is being dug to provide clean water. A generator will provide electricity to pump the water. About an acre of land will be cleared and irrigated. A four wheel drive vehicle will be purchased to maintain communication with Bettiah.

Ongoing salaries are estimated at about 6,000 rupees a month for each worker (about £75). A watchman will receive about 100 rupees a day. Money will be required for diesel, medicine, maintenance and basic equipment.

The clinic will make a nominal charge for medicine on the principal that something that is paid for is more valued but nobody will be excluded for cost reasons.

### Future Development

The nearest hospital is the Duncan Hospital in Raxaul, a Christian establishment about a day's journey away by train. Serious cases can be referred here and medicines purchased. Perhaps in the near future a doctor from the hospital will make visits to the clinic.

