

It is 10 years ago that *Œuvre des Pains* entered in *Asmoli development block* for the first time. It is 10 years ago that we shared with you the ambitious project to develop an underdeveloped region. We have walked a long way since then with your unending support !

Our operations in the project areas for the last one decades stands for and presents a value system that is more human which gives more meaning and fulfilment for life. Men or women, young or old, those who have a good will and strong determination have the way open before them now. No more blaming their destiny, we have provided them with the opportunity ! Sick get treated, poor get financial support, illiterate people learn to read and write, unskilled get skilled ! There are hundreds of people who live a renewed life in this region. The value Christmas brings to the world of caring and sharing is celebrated among our people daily ! There is joy, there is hope for those of good will ! On behalf of all of them. Merry Christmas to each of you !

The School is full to its capacity...

Yes, this is true : no more class rooms are available for the new academic year (*April 2013*) in our school project *Saint-Anthony School* in the village of *Dugawar* (U.P., India).

1200 students occupy all the existing class rooms of the school ! For the 120 newcomers of the next academic year, we plan to use a laboratory room and the hall of the primary school used for the activities, until the ground floor of the next wing is ready, hopefully by March 2014.

A new collaboration with the BESIX Foundation !



The *BESIX Foundation* is a non-profit organization that works by giving financial support to associations active in Belgium and abroad that fall within one of the three following themes : *environment, construction and education*.

As you can see the school project in *Dugawar* is fitting perfectly within the frame of these three themes.

You might remember that we already received the support of *BESIX Foundation* for the building construction of the first wing of the Secondary school in the year 2009 (see *newsletter 25*). Since then the foundation has been closely following up our effort to build up the region and after having visited and seen the results, decision was taken to financially participate to the construction of the new wing of the school. (www.besixfoundation.com)

The next phase of the building...

The cost of building is increasing. The materials and labour become more and more expensive. The proposed estimate of the ground floor only of the next wing of *Saint-Anthony School* is approximately 150.000 euros. One third will be donated by *BESIX Foundation*. We are grateful to the Foundation for this continuous support which will enable us to take our project much forward !

Though we plan to start with the ground floor only, provision is there to add a first floor and a second floor like in the first wing.



On the right, the Primary block, on the left the first wing of the Secondary block consisting of 16 class rooms out of which, 3 class rooms are used for social work on the ground floor. The remaining area consist of laboratory, library, computer lab, main administrative block and staff room.



Most of you have been well informed about the development of *Saint-Anthony School*... for those of you who joined us later, here below is the evolution since the beginning :

Milestones of the school's development

- 2003:** Bought 2.5 hectors of land in Dugawar, a place deserted by the villagers, to build a school. No proper school or hospital is existing in the region.
- 2004:** Ground floor of the primary school with 9 class rooms were built. 160 students ageing from 4 to 6 started their schooling, the first generation to attend the school. Initially we had to go from house to house to motivate the parents, now they come on their own.
- 2006:** First staff residence (6 apartments) built. Since qualified teachers are not available locally teachers from South India are employed (distance : 2000 km from the school) Village houses have no facility such as flush toilet to accommodate teachers from outside. So accommodation facility is imperative.
- 2007:** Constructed the 1st floor of the primary school with another 9 class rooms, no. of children accommodated 720.
- 2010:** One wing of the secondary school building done. Three rooms are used for social work and training for the villagers.
- 2011:** Second staff residents for teachers from higher sections. Currently 28 staff are living in the school campus. School buses for the transportation are provided as the villages are scattered and children don't have transportation facilities.
- 2011:** The school got permission to go up to class 10 under the Central Board. A big step in the history of St. Anthony School. A lot of administration work had to be done.
- 2012:** Classes running from nursery to class 9 (3 to 15 yrs.). Total strength 1200.

Future plan

- 2013:** Children from class 9 will go to class 10. Construction work to be started for the newcomers.
- 2014:** Ground floor of the second wing to be ready. Apply for the permission for classes 11 and 12 to the Central Board (CBSE). Meet the academic requirements for Class 11 and 12 (specially science labs).

Solar Panels for Saint-Anthony School

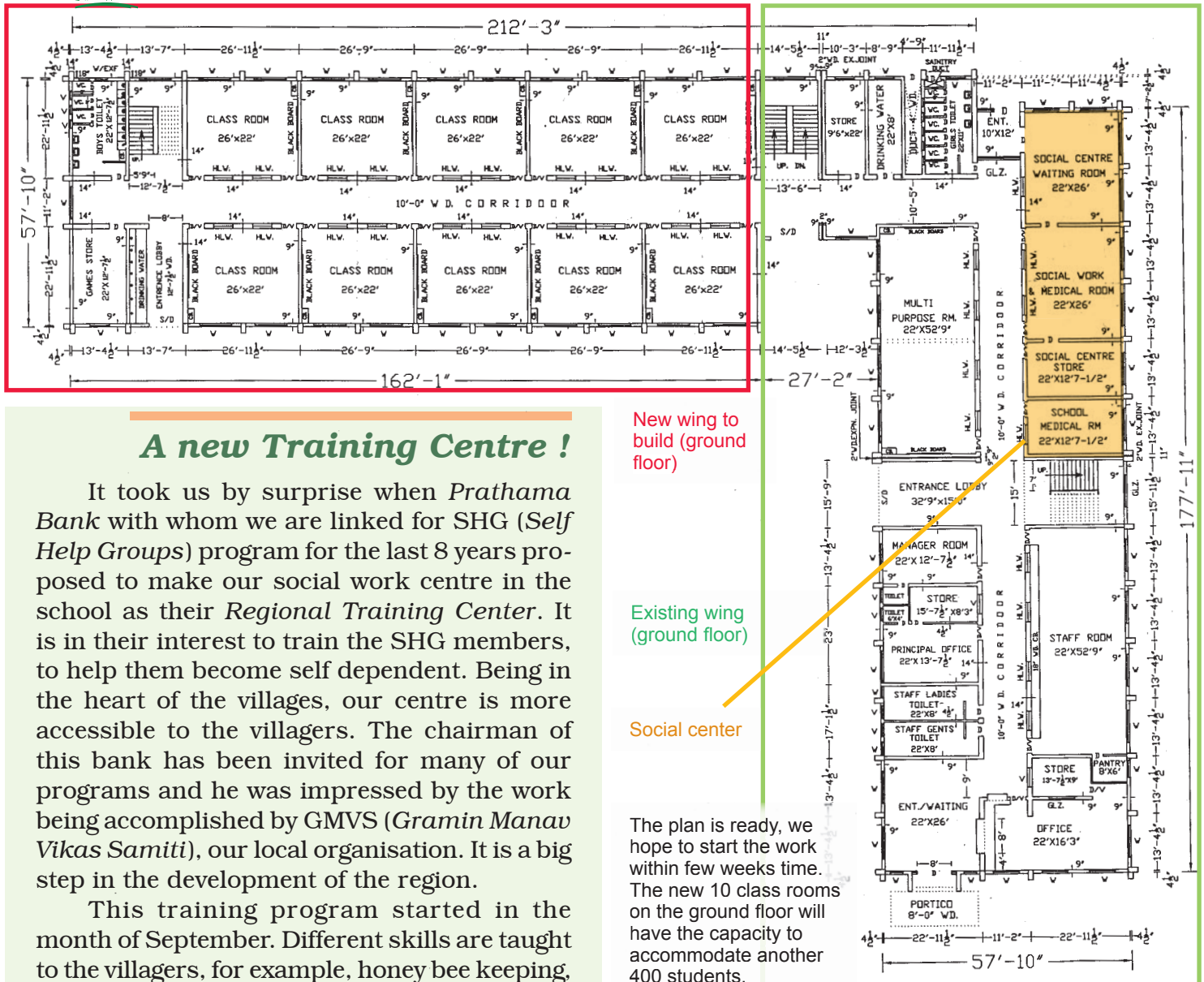
In the year 2009, *BESIX Foundation* visited the school. It was in the summer, the temperature was 42° Celsius ! They had the opportunity not only to see the work being done, but also to know what it is to live in the heat without having the electricity to power the fans and lights. When we submitted the project for solar panels, the need of it was well understood. Thanks to *BESIX Foundation*, today we have a 6 KV solar panel system ! We get 4 hours of electricity for the staff in the campus and the computers in the school can be charged with this as well !

Sometimes, people, here in Belgium, ask why we don't install more solar panels... Actually, in the school, the energy given by the solar panels has to be stored into batteries to be able to use it when it is required. In Belgium, during the night or when the weather is cloudy, we can count on the public electric network to supply the needed electricity... not there ! The life span of the battery is an average of 5 years and after that period, it has to be replaced. It is an important recurring expense.



The solar panels wouldn't be useful without the UPS (Uninterruptible power supply) and the batteries attached.





tion involves the cleaning of the house and keeping the lamp burning during the night to welcome the Goddess *Laxmi*. People buy new clothes and distribute sweets among family and friends.

Diwali, festival of lights !

« *Diwali* » was celebrated on November 13th in North India. Though it is an Hindu feast, everyone is participating with enthousiasm !

The word « *Diwali* » means a row of lamps. It signifies the victory of Goodness over evil. The celebra-



Our social workers in front of the local branch of Prathama Bank.

Diwali is a very important feast in India. Like Holi (see newsletter 35).



The *Mahilamandals* (women's groups) of GMVS came together to celebrate *Diwali* irrespective of their caste and religion. The festivals and celebrations bring them closer as they work together for a common cause now.

Rekha, a member of *Dugawar Mahilamandal* group says :

« This year the feast of *Diwali* is not just cleaning my house and making sweets for my family and friends. I feel happy to be part of a group and work together. It is a big change in my life. We live a better life in unity and work together for a better village. We started to be aware of our strength as a group and voice against injustice to bring goodness into our village. This is what *Diwali* really is and I am happy that GMVS staff is along with us to guide us ».

The emerging *Mahilamandals* are very active in several villages around *Saint-Anthony School*. The groups consist of volunteers from the village wanting to work for the development of their village. Our SHG (Self Help Groups) members are also part of it. Regularly they

come together to discuss the happenings in the village and find a solution if they can. They decided to have their own uniform : blue saree for the Hindus and blue *Salwar Kamees* for the Muslims. When they are together, their presence is noticed and the uniform has a strong impact on them psychologically as well.

During the last few months they have managed to bring some changes in their villages. For example, the women's group from *Dugawar* went to meet the *Block Development officer* in his office and complained against the men who use the village office of *Dugawar* to drink alcohol and play cards day and night. The women and young girls were afraid of these people and they wanted to stop this practice. The officer sent police to inquire about the situation and took action against those men. Successful incidents like this strengthen the group and they are more and more motivated.

It took us almost 8 years to convince women and motivate them to stand for their own rights and work together for their own development. This is a small but good start. Development becomes sustainable when they work for it. We have been preparing the women from the beginning to think on their own and to speak out the truth and work towards a better future.

The local newspaper has published about the *Diwali* celebrations of women from our *Mahilamandals* in the *Saint-Anthony school* campus. The picture shows the women in their uniform sitting in the shape of a "deep" lamp. On this occasion, they made candels and sold them in the villages around.



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