

Vocational Training Center — A small start

The Asmoli Development Block consist of 77 villages and the population is approximately 250000. We have extended our village development programs to 30 villages in this block, covering a population of approximately 100.000.

There are a lot of people with no skills or abilities to find a job either locally or in the cities. We have been aware since the beginning of our project that vocational training would be a need in the future. Helping the villagers to acquire skills and take up new income generating projects by themselves is very important.

Our mission initially was to prepare the villagers who are totally illiterate and stuck in their villages with their own daily routines and customs. It took several years of grass root level work to emancipate them. Initially they were suspicious but gradually they started to collaborate with us and finally, they have got confidence in us and in themselves. Now they are ready for more...

A few years ago, we had selected a few women from our project for a two days leadership training in the city of Moradabad. Accommodation was provided to them for



The graduation ceremony is an important event for all the participants.

the over night stay. With much difficulties we convinced them to participate in the program, but at the last moment, they stepped out. Now the situation has changed, they are keen on participating in all the programs we propose ! They are no more hesitant to travel alone or stay over night !

Through out the journey of development, we see how difficult it is to let go off the past and when it is done, we enjoy a new life of freedom !



Participants learned to do embroidery work on Saris and Churidar pieces.

During the last few years we have been in the look out for people capable of running a vocational training centre. We even approached some well known technical schools like *Don Bosco*, in Delhi, hoping that they could provide us some professionals. The problem was always the same, we could not find any reliable people to entrust a professional centre. The facilities of the cities are not available in the villages and those who are well trained and efficient can easily find a job in the cities so they are not ready to come to a village area.

At this point, we thought of approaching *Prathama Bank* which has a training centre in the close by city of *Moradabad*. *Pradhma Bank* is a pioneer in Micro Finance, all our micro credit groups have been registered with their local branch in the village of *Asmoli* and they have been very appreciative of the work we are doing in the area. During our last visit, we went with our village animators to meet the chairman of this bank and discussed about the possibility of having a collaboration with them to create a local training center. The Chairman accepted to provide the trainers and we would provide the other provisions like building, administration work, etc.

It was really a good solution for us and we started implementing the project immediately. Three class rooms of *Saint-Anthony's School* were converted into a training centre and everything needed for the centre was arranged. A tailoring course for 40 women during a period of 45 days started without much delay.

The news about the opening of a vocational training centre in the social centre wing of *Saint-Anthony's School* was welcomed with much excitement. Many of our villagers were looking forward to this moment. The micro credit program has already lifted up many of them from abject poverty, this centre for training will enable them to acquire skills and they will have many more opportunities.

So, how is it functioning ?

Several courses are conducted for the participants to acquire specific skills which will enable them to set up small scale income generating projects. These courses are chosen after evaluating the scope in the area. As soon as we receive the informations about an upcoming course, our team of social workers is spreading the news among the villagers about it. Those who are interested directly go to our training centre to register. The only expense the participants have is the registration fee, that is 0,25 cents. This is to avoid people to register and then cancel for a 'yes' or a 'no'. Snacks are served during the training and if necessary, transportation would be provided.

If the trainees need financial support to set up a business after the completion of the training, the micro credit program will lend them the amount. From what we see, people who are with commitment and hard-working are successful, they are very happy and make the best use of this opportunity.



Going to school...
better late than never.



Vermicompost is the process of composting using various worms to create a mixture of decomposing vegetable or food waste.



Field visit to a nursery of herbal plants.

The trainings already conducted are tailoring course, beautician course, embroidery course, candle making, bee keeping, surf and soap making, dairy management and animal rearing, leadership training, *vermicompost* making, nursery and herbal plants farming.

The inauguration of the training centre

On September 6th 2012, we inaugurated our Vocational Training Program in *Saint-Anthony's School*. The chairman of *Prathama bank* and other responsible persons took part in the inaugural program. Several hundreds of village women gathered to celebrate this day.

To make this function more meaningful, it was combined with the closing of a 45 days tailoring course. On this occasion *Prathama bank* distributed the certificates and also gave a grant of Rs.1000 (14 euros) to each of the 40 participants who completed the training. (The cost of a tailoring machine is Rs.2200 = 35 euros).

This new program takes us a step closer to reaching out to the weakest of the society, to help them make a living on their own. This center and our micro credit program will provide them the financial assistance and basic skills, with which they can start altogether a new life.

The success story of Naunita

There is a lot of request from many villages around the project area to extend our work in their villages as well. However, the problem we face is the limited number of staff. Recently we appointed many candidates but they all left the job. To go from house to house and to deal with the villagers is not an easy task, it needs extreme patience, diplomacy and good will. Till last year *Naunita* had no possibility to benefit from our programs as her village was not part of our selected area. She had been waiting patiently. When we selected her village, she joined a Self Help Group and started a micro credit with great enthusiasm.

Her husband *Singh* owns a very small piece of land, but his father is still cultivating it for his living. So, to make a



living, Singh has lend some land from a villager to cultivate it. The income was barely enough to sustain his family. Naunita also helped him out in the field along with their two daughters and one son. They could not afford proper education for their children and though they wanted to educate their son in a better school, they could not do it. When she got the news that a new group for tailoring program was to be started, she came to us and registered her name. She joined the first batch for the 45 days tailoring course and received a special grant of Rs. 1000 (14 euros) from the Bank to start her own business. She took the remaining money needed as a loan from the Self Help Group (SHG) and bought the needed material : a tailoring machine. She started working at home, people appreciated her work and the news spread in the village.

As she started to get more customers, she took another loan from the SHG, she bought two more machines and taught her daughters also to do stitching. As she started to get a good income, she managed to put back her son, who could not continue his studies because of the financial problems, in a private Hindi Medium school. Meanwhile, her elder daughter took another training of beautician course from our centre and started doing beauty parlour alongside, at home. The next step of Naunita was to take a bank loan of 550 euros. With this loan she started a garment shop at home. So, in short, she and her daughters are doing the stitching, shop and beauty parlour at home. Now she feels her house is too small to do this business and she is planning to take a room on rent in Asmoli town and shift her business there. She earns approximately 250 euros per month after paying back her monthly loan. The years of struggle for her seems to be over and she is very happy and proud of her success.



Naunita's daughter opened a beauty parlour...



With her loan, Naunita was able to open a successful shop !

Œuvre des pains asbl (Anthony's Charity), rue A. Delzenne 9, 7800 Ath, Belgium.
 Website : <http://www.AnthonyCharity.org>
 BIC/SWIFT : CPHBBE75 — IBAN : BE90 1262 0485 0532
 (Tax exemption, 40€ min., Belgium only)