

Dear all,

The nature keeps reminding us of how fragile we are. We just saw it once again as the Typhoon Haiyan so cruelly took away the lives of thousands and scattered the homes of hundreds of thousands in the Philippines. Though we are so helpless in front of the suffering humanity, we do the little we can in the best way possible, hoping that out there, some more people have a smile on their face, dream in their lives and hope for their future. We see it happening each day and we thank each of you for making it happen ! As we approach the end of the year, I join all the beneficiaries of Œuvres des pains asbl, to wish each of you Peace and Joy at Christmas and throughout the Year 2014 ! Merry Christmas ! Happy New Year !

As each year, Christmas will be celebrated with much enthusiasm in the school.



Giri and his team in Bahjoi

As we explained in the previous News Letter, the new team of social workers in Bahjoi are finding their way into the villages. Giri, Pramanik, Sardarji, three of them made a good team and started their new mission ! Giri feels he is the responsible person of this team and he tries his best to make it work.

Progress has been done within a short span of three months. Field work in 20 villages having an estimated population of 60 thousand people have started. Another 20 villages are under selection, the criteria for selecting the villages for Œuvre des pains is to reach the most deserving people !

« After studying the locality, we selected villages which are more economically backward. The people of these villages are very poor and belong to low casts. We met the village leaders, explained to them about our vision and mission and motivate them to collaborate with us. The villagers are very unpredictable, after the meetings they say they are ready to join the Self Help Group (SHG), but when we come next time, they say that they don't want to be part of it. It is like there is a negative force turning them away from

going ahead. It is really difficult to convince them. Now we are conducting meetings with the villagers; men, women and youth, we wish to involve all of them in our program. We look out for young boys and girls who have done some primary education, so that we can guide them in a better way to bring changes into the society. We really need to have a lot of patience and perseverance » says Giri.

Puppet Show

It is a universal fact that the strangers are watched suspiciously by the natives. In villages where people are victims of exploitation from the powerful ones for generations, they don't understand how strangers can just appear one day as saviours without any personal interest. To break this barrier of "outsiders" we have to get closer into the lives of the people, make them feel that we are there not to exploit them but to help them build up their lives. To explain

to them about our mission and vision we organized « *Puppet show* » in the selected villages. Entertainment and sensitisation ! A team of specialists from Lucknow, (capital city of Uttar Pradesh, 350 km from the project) came to conduct this program in these villages. The theme selected for this program was « *Stop drinking, start living* » and how SHG can build up a broken family from Ground Zero. People in many of these villages make liquor at their homes and end up in misery and ill health. Bringing awareness to this evil practice seemed to be important as many of the families, specially women and children are suffering from it. Then we had to offer them new hope, through Micro credit programs. The Lucknow team prepared their programs based on this topic and during the program, *Œuvre des pains* staff explained about our mission among them and how *Self Help Group* (SHG) can build up life from the ground zero. Many villagers came to attend this program. This was a good introduction to our programs and presence among them.

Though India is said to be the home of puppets, it is yet to be awoken to its unlimited possibilities. The earliest reference to the art of puppetry is found in Tamil classic « *Silappadikaaram* » written around the 1st or 2nd century B.C. Ancient Hindu philosophers have paid great tribute to puppeteers. They have



The Puppet show attracted many people in the village.



Initial meetings with the villages. Giri has a hard time to convince the villagers to collaborate to their own welfare.

linked God Almighty to a puppeteer and the entire universe to a puppet stage.

Kamdhenu SHG

A group of young girls who had done their tailoring training in the Vocational training Center of Saint-Anthony School wanted to start a business. Since they wanted to take up their own business, *Œuvre des pains* arranged to have them specialised in bag stitching. After the completion of this course Prathma bank gave them an order for 550 hand bags and unlimited number of school bags. They took this opportunity and formed their own *Self Help Group* (SHG) with thirteen being the maximum number of members. They named their SHG : « *Kamdhenu* ». This name can be translated in English as *Miraculous Cow of Plenty*, who provides whatever her owner desires.

Kamdhenu SHG took a loan of 30.000 rupees from the bank, they hired a room in the village and started to work from 11h30 to



15h30, the time they can save from the household work. They all had their own tailoring machines which they received with a reduced price from the project when they finished their training.

Each of them make two bags per day and gets 160 rupees (2 euros) income from it. At the end of the first month itself they were able

to pay back the loan and save some money for each of them. They are very happy with this activity and dreams of making it grow !

Board Exam preparation

The first batch of Saint-Anthony's School in class 10 is getting ready for their Central

Pradeep is full of hope

Pradeep joined Saint-Anthony's school 10 years ago at the age of 5, when the school started. This year he is in class 9. He is an outstanding student, I have seen him always smiling and that smile on his face veils the pain and struggles he goes through on a daily basis. He is academically topping all the other students in his class and he motivates and helps both his sisters to do their studies well. Here is what he shares about himself :

« I live in Dugawar with my mother, two sisters and older brother. My father fell ill few years ago, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. We sold a piece of land and treated him, we took him from one hospital to another, but the treatment was not effective and he passed away last year at the age of 42.

Though we had only a small piece of land (0.25 hectare), my father worked very hard to take care of us and we were able to manage the basic necessities of life. When he fell ill, our family went through utter darkness, it became worse. Later, without our father, without money, our future seemed hopeless. This is the moment I thought that I will not be able to continue my school, that I will have to start working to take care of my mother and sisters. My brother knows that I love to go to school and study well, he decided to stop his schooling and didn't want me to drop out of the school. Now he finds some work in the near by sugar mill on daily basis. After the school, all of us together cultivate the land.

With St. Anthony School sponsoring all of our education and we all working hard, our life came back to normal once again. My sister had ear infection from childhood and she had been complaining that she cannot hear. Since we didn't have money, we didn't treat her. When we brought this to the notice of the school management, we were given the expense for her operation. In the month of September, she was operated and now she is able to hear properly and she is happy.

Now I see that the way in front of me is open, I have the possibility to continue my study. There is some hope for us for our future ! When I think of it, I ask myself, what would have happened if we didn't have Saint-Anthony's school and the people who help us ? I am grateful not only for me but also for all those who are supported by this organization. I will never forget this well-being... Is there a way to repay that ? »



« Now the way in front of me is open » says Pradeep.

Board Exams in the month of March 2014 ! They are 37 students ! The place for their exams will be another affiliated school of the same Board, probably in *Moradabad* or *Sambhal*, nearest cities proposed by the Board.

The city schools in India are well qualified, they charge high fees and have very good teachers and they admit only the best children after interviewing both the parents and the children. Where as in the remote region like *Dugawar*, it is a struggle to get teachers to make things move, and many of these children are first generation being educated. They all answer the same question papers which come from the centre, the evaluation of these answer sheets will be done by another school, by teachers who are anonymous. A lot of tension and struggle is there in the school to prepare them. Though we are well aware of the importance of this exams, many of the parents are cool, when we re-opened the school in July, our staff had to go to some of their houses and get them back to the school, because they continued working in the field and take care of the house work etc.

Many of these children go to work in the field after school instead of studying. In order to prepare them for the exams, the management proposed to provide them accommodation in the school. Special classes are arranged for them in the evenings with the teachers who are staying in the campus. 10 boys and 3 girls

who need extra help are staying in the school from the month of October. Those who are from *Dugawar* come in the evening for special classes and go back home in the night.

The girls are staying in the staff residence and the boys are staying in one of the class rooms in the school. The teachers living in the campus give them special lessons. The children go back home on Sunday.

Preparing for the evening meal.
Munaseer (class 10) is the leader of the boys's group.



« We are so happy that our dreams are coming through ».

Kamdhenu SHG

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