

## Women in the village of Dugawar turn on the lights

How many of us ever think of people who live in countries where the day ends around 6.00 pm because it is suddenly dark ? We are so used to switching on the lights when it gets dark... We defeat the darkness ! There are around 2 billion people who have no access to the electric grid. They take a match, grab one of the home made kerosene lamps and light it. Problem solved ? Not really... The toxic fumes that enter into the lungs cause coughs, headaches and make studying harder. The fumes cause blurry vision that may lead to cataracts and eventually the fumes can lead to lung cancer. The World Bank estimates that 780 million women and children breathing kerosene fumes inhale the equivalent of smoke from 2 packs of cigarettes a day.

The majority of the population in rural India does not have access to electricity and they struggle to afford commercial fuels such as LPG gas or kerosene oil. The villages in the project area of *Œuvre des Pains* are connected with the public grid, however there are only 6 hours of electricity per day. One week the power supply is during the day and the other

week during the night. The night shift starts from 10.30 pm, which means, children have to study under the kerosene lamp.

A common practice in rural India is the illegal tapping into electric grids in order to avoid paying for electricity. This cause accidents and the breakdown of the system, sometimes for several days. In the village of *Dugawar*, only 20 percent of the families have taken connection from the public grid.

*Œuvre des Pains* field staff motivated the women in *Dugawar* to apply for a government sponsored solar light project. The government launched a project to promote solar energy by supplying solar kits with a 30 percent discount for a limited period of time. This solar kit consist of a 37 watt solar panel and the battery to store enough energy to run 2 lamps during 8 hours. The battery is expected to be good for 5 years minimum.

The total cost 14.500 rupees (180 euros), will be reduced by a discount of approximately 30%. *Œuvre des Pains* field staff took charge of getting this project from the government and installing solar panel kits in the village. The kit is installed in 150 houses in *Dugawar* so far.

A family has to make an initial payment of 1.500 rupees, and for the remaining amount



Solar panels are now present on many roofs of the village of Dugawar !



they take a loan from the bank through the *Self Help Group*, which will be paid back in 3 years time with 10% interest. Each family in *Dugawar* has joined the SHG, this micro credit program helps them have access to some comfort in their day to day life !

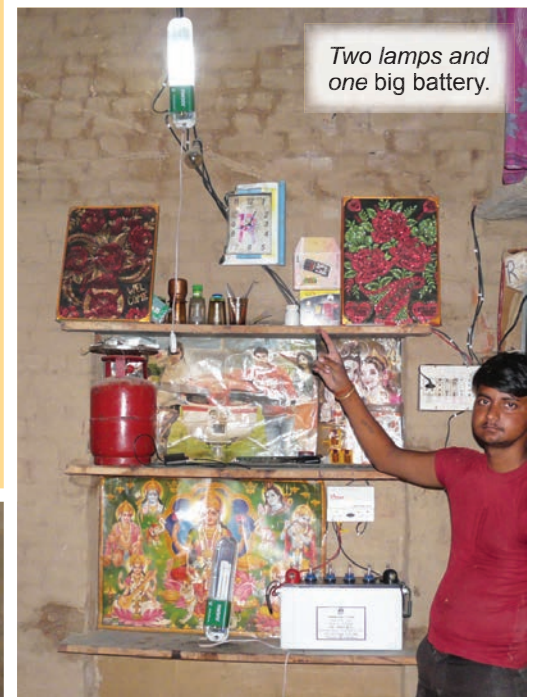
Villagers are very happy with the solar lamps. « *My children are very happy now, they have light till late evening and it is pleasant to study under this light. I no longer need to buy oil and have no more headaches from lamps. Children can study in the room and I can work in the house* » this is the response of all those women from *Dugawar* about the solar kit they just installed !

## People of India have elected a new Prime Minister

Few facts about the 16<sup>th</sup> election:

The 2014 general election was the longest election in the country's history and the world's largest exercise in democracy. Voting has been held in nine stages across the country, to enable the participation of an electorate of 814 million. Starting from 7 April to 12 May 2014, voting took place in 543 parliamentary constituencies of India to elect members of parliament in the *Lok Sabha*. The increase in the newly eligible voters from the last election in 2009 is 100 million. Cost ? 35 billion rupees (438 mil-

*Sudhir* and his wife and four children from 2 months to 11 years live in *Dugawar* with his mother. He owns no land, his house is made out of mud . He is an unskilled labourer, going from place to place looking for work on a daily basis. The amount he gets for a day's work is 160 rupees (2 euros) and he can find a maximum of 3 or 4 days of work in a week. Often his family struggles to make ends meet. The burden of the whole family is heavy on him as he has to feed 7 stomachs. It was out of the question that his wife could afford to pay 1.500 rupees initially for the solar kit and take a loan of Rs 9.000. It was a surprise for *Sudhir* and his family when the Solar kit offered by *Œuvre des Pains* reached his home. No words of thanks, but a big smile on all their faces ! This will help him to save the money he has to spend on the oil lamp... and will help his children to do their studies ! A smile on their faces, brings a smile on ours too !







lion euros). A total of 8,251 candidates stood for election and the percentage of votes caste was 66.8%.

The verdict of the people ? The ruling *Congress Party* had to face its biggest defeat in 30 years time by *Bhartiya Janata Party* which was in opposition ! The result shows a clear sign that the people of India wanted a change from the *Congress* government which was in power for the last 10 years. Mr. *Narendra Modi*, the new Prime Minister has promised '*economic recovery*' in his campaign. Can Mr. Modi solve the problems of slow growth and high inflation that he inherits from the departing government ? We have to wait for the answer !

Awareness programs were organised by our field staff in the villages to encourage people to cast their vote. It is for the first time that they organised a rally together with all the local schools for a common cause. Children were very enthusiastic and they did make an impact in the villages around. The percentage of votes caste in *Dugawar* was 78%, the highest in the region. The average percentage of votes caste in the State of *Uttar Pradesh* was 56%.

### **Board Exam - First Batch with 100% result !**

One more mile stone in the history of *Saint Anthony's School*.

All the students of class X from 1<sup>st</sup> batch succeeded with good results... 30 of them with 'A' grade and 3 with 'B' grade !

On the day the results were posted some of the students came to school to check the result which was published on the web site of the School Board. The high tension in the office was slowly released by the good grades ! It was a wonderful moment together... and in Belgium, we could join them through our webcam !

As we mentioned in a previous *news-letter* (N°41) the efforts we made during the last 6 months to keep the students in school overnight certainly had a good impact ! Most of them will be continuing in class XI and a few of them may join our new ITI (*Industrial Training Institute*) which will be starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2014.

The rally we organised with the local schools was a success, the percentage of votes caste in the area went high.



### **Preeti topped the class**

As the result of class X were published, we were all so happy that *Preeti* topped all the rest. She has got 93 %. This is a real example of the hard work and determination of a strong girl !

Some of you who follow the " *ACB News* " closely may recognize *Preeti*. She has been one of our sponsored students from the beginning and we have mentioned her earlier in the news.



Two weeks ago I had a message from the school that *Preeti* came to the school office worried about her father wanting to stop her studies ! The reason ? Her father and step mother feel that she has studied enough. Now she has to take up household activities and help her step mother at home...

It is not the first time we had to motivate *Preeti's* family to keep sending her to school. Last time the main problem was the financial burden. Her father could not afford the education of her brothers and sisters and wanted to stop all their studies. We helped him out with it, so that there was no more an excuse for not sending her to school. This time, the issue is that they want to make her work at home. We spoke to her father and made him understand the importance of her higher education. He agreed, at least for the moment !

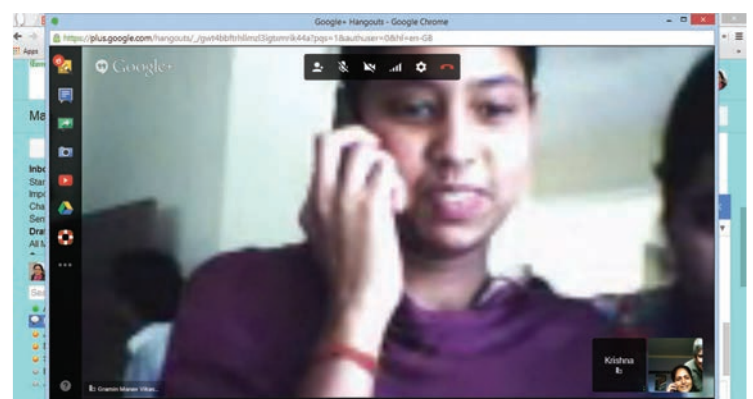
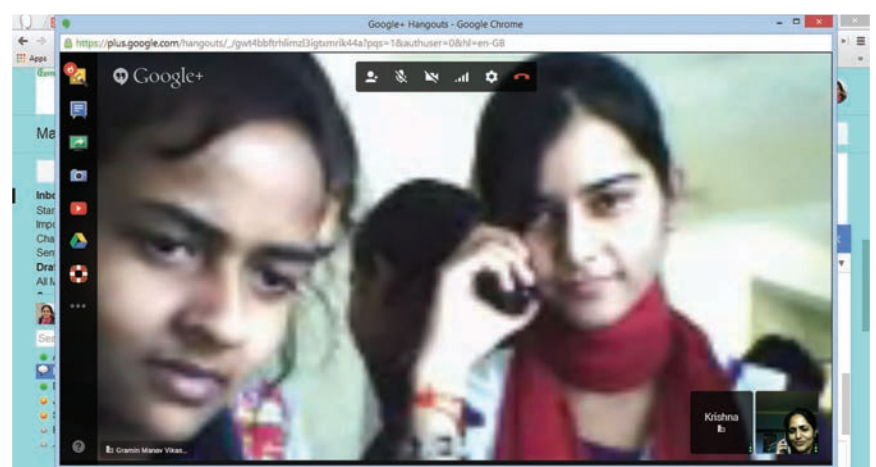
You may wonder how her days go... She wakes up 4.00 am, does cleaning, cooking etc for her family and goes to school at 7.30. Back from school, she continues the household work, helps her younger brothers and sisters with their studies, prepares the evening meal and after supper, sits to study at 9.00 until 11.00 in the night ! On Sundays and on holidays she also helps to cultivate the piece of land her father has, she works non stop !

## India, the most populous country by 2028 - UN Reports !

India is about 1/3 the size of the United States, and is the seventh largest country in the world, at 1.27 million square miles. According to United Nations reports, India's population is forecast to grow until 2050. This growth indicates that India is set to over take China as the world's most populous country from 2028. By 2028 India and China will number 1.45 billion people. Subsequently India's population will continue to grow until 2050, while China's slowly declines. UN also estimates that the current global population 7.2 billion will reach 9.6 billion by 2050. This is a faster rate of growth than previously estimated. At this point, the population growth will be mainly in developing countries particularly in Africa, the UN says. Where as the population of developed regions will remain largely unchanged.

During the year she was not doing so well in her studies and was taking leave to work at home. After evaluating the seriousness of her problem, we intervened with her father and kept her in our staff residence, where she was able to concentrate on the studies for the final exams. She is really grateful for all the support she got from day one in *Saint Anthony's School*. That was 10 years ago !

Internet helps us to keep in touch with *Saint Anthony's School* and share the joy of big events. Here we congratulate the students for their performance in the central exam.



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