

## Rahrai —

### The new project taking shape

Since the project started in *Rahrai*, there had been certain challenges we had to face. The current village leader is in jail accused of murdering his wife. In his absence, the previous village leader was in charge. The project was started in consultation with him and he was standing for the development of the villages around. Two months ago, the government officially put in charge a new village leader until the next local election which will be held in few months time. This new leader seems to have strong hold in politics and he is using his influence to create obstacles. These kind of situations are common in India because people try to make advantage of the situation. The more we resist, the more we get annoyed. *Bharadwaj*, in charge of *Rahrai* project for us is dealing with it by building up a good team in the area.

### Provision for expansion

As you learned from the last news letter, we had bought a piece of land for the new project in *Rahrai*. Though the land was just enough for a school project, the possibility to expand the project in the future was not possible with it. So we decided to buy the adjacent land before starting the construction.



Negotiating and convincing took us a lot of effort.



In *Rahrai*, we started building the compound wall of the future campus...

There were four small different plots, belonging to four different owners. Three of them agreed to sell and *Prakash*, the fourth one was not able to make up his mind. Our staff visited his house several times, each time he promised to sell and then changed his mind. It is at this point that I met him, hoping that I could convince him !

It was around 11 in the morning that we visited the house of *Prakash*. He was lying down on the cot '*charpai*' in the open, his wife was working in the field. He had been sick for a long time and looked very weak. Their small children were roaming around. We sent word with the children to call their mother as we had to discuss with both of them about their land. I wanted to understand their point of view and was surprised with their response. They had arranged the marriage of their son and if they were selling the land, people would say that they sold the land to pay for the expenses of the marriage of their son. They were afraid that even the marriage would be cancelled. (In India marriages are arranged by the families). I was really surprised to find the boy so young. Neither he nor his parents were able to tell how old he was. Having no education, no skill, he did not seem to have the ability to take care of a family on his own.

## First sponsorship

*Prakah* and his wife *Guddu* have 8 children. Five girls and three boys. The oldest girl was married a few years ago and the youngest son is around 4 years old. Their monthly income from the land is Rs.2000 (around 25 euros per month). You may wonder how can they manage the family of 9 with less than one euro per day? The wheat and vegetable cultivated in their land is their livelihood. (the land near to our project is a very small piece, they have land other than that). They cannot afford health care, education and any other basic facilities one may need to live a life without much struggle.

I explained to *Prakash* and his wife about the project and told them that their last three children (below 8) could be given free education up to class 12 and even can train some skill to their son who is to get marry and get him a job. They were happy and agreed, however next day when *Anthony's Charity* staff met them their tone was different, they were feeling that we were absolutely in need of their land. So *Prakash* put up the price saying that if he sells this land as housing plot, he would get more money. It seemed like he was manipulated by somebody. At this point we learned that children of the two brothers of *Prakash* who

Our sponsorship is a great opportunity for *Prakash's* family... 9 people living with less than 1 euro per day.



died also had some ownership of the land. Big discussion, big confusion and at the end the family decided to sell it.

## Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony

Soon after finalizing the purchase of land, the master plan for the new campus was prepared. The immediate requirement is the primary school building so that the children can attend the school from July 2016, the next academic year. Like *St. Anthony's School* in *Asmoli* 12 years ago, we plan to start the school from grades Nursery to class 1. Each year we would add one more grade until the school reaches class 12.

A small gathering was organized for the Foundation Laying Ceremony of the primary block. The local political leader was the chief guest and the local village leaders were invited for this function. On this occasion, we introduced the project to the people of the locality and explained to them about our future plan.



The people of *Rahrai* were finding hard to believe that the children performing the programme were the students of our school in *Asmoli*. They thought that these kids could only come from a city school because they were performing and speaking so well.



Officials and village leaders were watching our presentation with interest and curiosity.

Though it was vacation time for the children of *Saint-Anthony's school, Asmoli*, they were happy to perform cultural programs. Staff and women's group from *Asmoli* also participated in it. One of the senior member of the women's group delivered a speech to share her experience during the last 10 years.

One of the interesting comment from *Rahrai* villagers was that we hired children from city school to perform the program" They could not believe that village children could be smart like that !

### Plan for the next 5 years

The field staff started to work in *Rahrai*. Our target is to take up 20 villages, having a population of approximately 100,000 people. We will work for the elimination of abject poverty through micro-credit programs, for the promotion of health care through mobile clinics and for the education of all the children specially girls below 14 years of age through the existing public schools in these targeted villages. Support from local public services will be

sought and women's groups will be formed to facilitate these developments.

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### Meanwhile in Asmoli campus...

The success story of children from *Saint-Anthony's School in Asmoli*, brought immense joy all around : all the students of class 10 passed the central exam !

Yes, the school targeted to get 100 % result. This was a determination and all the possible help was given to the students to achieve that. Parents were motivated and special classes were arranged. From the month of October, accommodation for the students of class 10 was provided in the school campus. Girls were given one apartment in the staff residence and boys were given one class room in the school. They stayed in the school during the week and went home on Sundays. Different teachers who live in the campus were given charge to give them special classes after school and to supervise their study time. Thanks to this team we have good result this year also.

*Deepender* topped the class this year. He is a hard-working boy with commitment and determination. He acknowledges the hard work of his parents and the support of his sister who is also a sponsored student of *Saint-Anthony's*



« I am really proud to be the student of Saint-Anthony's Senior Secondary School. Its my good luck ! ».

Deepender.



In Asmoli, we are building an extension on the second floor of the school to be used as a boarding area for girls students...

school. He stayed in the school campus and took maximum benefit of the facilities given to the students.

### School Building Extension

Higher class students need additional support to prepare their exams. In cities, they can stay longer in the school and go home on their own and get special coaching classes. In Asmoli, there is no transportation facility and it is not safe for girls to go back home alone. Besides that, after school, most of our children are given a lot of work at home and they don't

get enough time for study. During the last two years we provided them rooms in the staff quarters. This was a temporary arrangement.

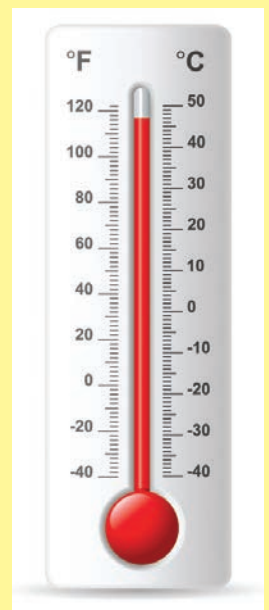
Currently we are extending one wing of the main school building as a girl's hostel. This will provide them a good opportunity to prepare for a better future ! For the boys, we may continue to use one class room in the school building like last year.

*Molly Sebastian*

### Heat waves kills in India

India recorded its highest maximum temperature 47 deg C this summer. More than 1500 people died. Delhi, the capital, is one of the most hit areas. Many of the dead are reported to be the poorer people, beggars, homeless as well as construction workers. Majority of the country's 1.2 billion people are enduring this blistering heat without electricity. Thanks to the solar panels in *St-Anthony's school*, the staff who stayed back in the school to supervise the work had some relief, they did not have electricity at all for several days.

The contractor did not stop the construction work in the school building. The workers took shifts in the early morning and late afternoon and continued the work. Their concern is to get money to feed their family.



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