



## Anthony's Charity a.s.b.l.

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<http://www.AnthonyCharity.org>

« *Educating the poor children for a better world* »

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All schools in India, adopt a uniform, we decided to do the same, having all children all well dressed. On this picture, the center child has a uniform, others got them later.

July 5th, 2004, has become a significant day in the life of the villages around Asmoli. Tiny children, holding tight their father's hand, coming to *St Anthony's School* was a unique sight. It was a memorable day to the village and the area because the day has ushered in the promise and hope of Quality Education to the children of these remote villages, which is available only to city dwellers. We did remember all who made this event possible in this remote village where it would not have been possible otherwise.

The big difference in the ratio between boys and girls in the school (4:1) surprised us most. We need to take special care on the education of girl children. Most of the parents don't want to educate their girl child. They want to keep their girls in their houses, teach them to do the household activities and get them married as early as possible. Some of the girls are married as they reach 12 years old...

*Marc Valentin,*  
Président

## The New School

Though the efforts to construct a school with the involvement and cooperation of the people in the villages we had to take up an admission drive in these villages. We began visiting villages two months in advance, explaining to people the importance of sending the children to the school on time and regularly. A sense of time and its value and punctuality are not normal ingredients of life in the villages. We took special care to make a beginning to create some awareness on these aspects. The principal of the school and other teachers arrived in the village a month earlier to start the procedures for admission. On the opening day of the school there were just 60 admissions. Many parents came to see how the school functioned. It did not take long before the classes were full and within a week's time there were no more seats available. We had to put out notice 'Admission Closed'.

## The School's accessibility to the poor

An important issue we took special care to incorporate in our admission policy is to make it possible for the poor children to have access to the school. The fee structure is kept to a level as minimum as possible, so that a child in our school is able to meet all his/her school expenses without much difficulties. Children from relatively well-to-do families benefit by this policy. The interest of the weaker section and that of the girl child will be always special consideration in all our policies of the school.

## Evening Classes

In the many villages around there are hundreds of other children. We feel the need to assist them in some way to get educated. We will work to motivate these children to attend school and help them with their studies. We plan to organize coaching classes in our school and our teachers will help them with their lessons. After noon classes will be organized for these children. It is quite common that quite a few children do not attend school in spite of all attempts.

## A new Start for the villagers

Sending a child to school at the age of 4 is not yet in the habit of villagers. There are no Nursery, LKG or UKG classes existing, children directly join the 1st standard. So, it was a new introduction for the villagers to send their children at a smaller age.

*Rajdeep* came to school with all his 4 children wanting to admit all of them in the school. While looking at the first child, it was clear that this child will not fit into our school because he is above 10 years old. The father of the child was ready to reduce the age of him in the birth certificate and make it 8 years. (Usually none of them has a proper birth certificate registered, they get it as they want from the local authorities). We admitted the last three children of *Rajdeep*. The next day, *Rajdeep* came again to school, telling that his first son refused to eat and drink, wanting to join our school. He was already going to a local school and was in the 4th class and he refused to go to that school again. We again refused the admission telling that we help him to continue his study in the local school and shouldn't come down to the 1st level. The protest from the child was so strong that at the end, we had to admit him, because we felt that it may affect this child and he may feel rejected. The argument from the part of the parent was that there is no proper study done in his school and even if the child is big, let him join our school. He is the biggest boy in the school and seems to be clever and keen to study.

## Village Leader's demand

The admission procedure is the first step of the process of getting into the school. An entire new world for most of these children...



It was on a Saturday, and we were in a staff meeting, evaluating the performance of the previous week in the school, when a group of people from a village, along with their leader came to the school, seeking for admission. The principal took much pain to convince them that the admission were closed. The people from the villages don't usually take 'no' for an answer. It becomes a prestige issue and such issues mean a great



Sheela is from a low cast. Low cast members are believed to be impure by high casts. Fighting cast system will be difficult for us.

deal for them.

It is indeed a difficult task to strictly adhere to principles. We have to be patient and tactful dealing with them. Discussing the issue in the staff meeting we decided to extend the period of admission by one more week.

### **Caste system and Gender discrimination, a big challenge...**

The school needed a person to clean the building and help small children in the lower classes to go to toilets, and drink water etc. We thought of giving this job to someone who is very poor and has no other source of income. So we looked for a woman in the local village for this job and the response was that no one other than the sweeper caste was ready to take up this job. The society in these villages observes strict caste system.

On the 3rd day of the the school, a group of parents came to me with a complaint, that the woman we employed to clean the school (Sweeper

Children are not used to discipline and at the beginning some training was needed to get them in lines. Little by little they became familiar with the school rules, and the school life in general.



caste) has given the children water to drink. Knowing the sensitivity of the caste system I couldn't confront the parents at once though I told them that I myself drink water from her and I have no problem with it.

*Mollykutty Sebastian,*  
Project manager

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*Anthony's Charity* is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to work with and for children. We believe that all children deserve the basic right to health, education and a future where they can realize and demonstrate their true potential.

We are funded through the generous donations of individuals. Our headquarters are in Belgium and our work is done mainly in northern India. Our newsletter is sent quarterly to all our supporters.