



Our effort continues to bring more girls to schools.

## News from Rahrai

St. Anthony's School Rahrai is completing its second academic year and we have around 300 students from nursery to Primary 3rd. Each passing day, the campus becomes more vibrant with the growing children. Last two years have made a big change in the life of these children, they love to come to school regularly and are very eager to learn and even communicate in English. Bringing more girls to our schools is one of our biggest challenge. Through awareness programs and educational sponsorship we improve the existing ratio of one girl for four boys. The atmosphere in the campus is very conducive for their learning. The impact of our school and our social projects in the locality is perceptible, people started to build new shops and houses closer to our school. Rahrai started to develop faster.

The admission for the new academic session has started in March, we expect to welcome another 130 students this year. Many parents from the neighboring villages come requesting for extension of transportation to their villages. Transportation remains as one of the main difficulties to deal with. Our school charges minimum transportation fee to make schooling affordable to the poor families. This is fine for our own bus system, but for the private service

providers this is not profitable. We had motivated and engaged two villagers to run their own vehicles. They find it also difficult to collect their transportation fee on time and requested the school to take care of that for them. We could not take up this commitment, because very often, we ourselves are not able to collect all the fees from the parents. However, our office staff take enough time to call the parents and motivate them to pay their due as early as possible. From our part, we do our best to collaborate with private transport providers so that they can continue their service.

To meet the requirement of the coming two years, we bought a new bus. Our experiment of buying second hand bus was not positive as we end up spending time and money in reparations.







Parents come to get the progress reports of their children.

## No new Private Schools

Recently, the government of the State of *Uttar Pradesh* decided to stop affiliation for any new private schools for the next five years. The move is aimed at reversing the declining number of students enrolling at state government-run primary and junior high schools. According to department records, over the past five years, the number of enrolments in schools under the government run schools have fallen by around 2.350.000 students as against total enrolments in 2010.

Affiliation to the basic educational department of the government is required to run a new private school. This has been always a lengthy process, the school has to fulfil the norms and standards laid by the government, such as infrastructure, minimum teacher qualification, pupil-teacher ratio, etc. In cities and towns people open English medium private schools to make profit and they cannot comply with the government criteria. However, these schools are affordable to the parents and perform much better than the government run schools. The move from the government to close down the unauthorized private schools and to stop affiliation to new private schools are going to adversely affect the education of the children.

The government is accepting the ineffectiveness of public run schools. NITI Ayog, a government policy commission recommended that the non-performing or « hollowed » government schools should be handed over to private players under a public-private partnership (PPP) model. There has been also a move from the minister of U.P. for education to convert some of the government run primary schools into English Medium primary school to meet the huge demand for English medium schools.

If they could not run a proper Hindi medium school, how could they run an English medium school ?! Many ask this question. We have to wait and see what will be the next move of the government and how effective or ineffective it will be.

Our *St. Anthony's School of Rahrai* has got its affiliation certificate last year from the government. We can run the school up to class 8. As per the new law, this certificate has to be renewed each three years. After class 8, we will need to apply to the *Central Board of Secondary School Education (CBSE)* for affiliation up to class 12.



## Solar Panels

*Uttar Pradesh* regularly experience power crisis because the demand for electricity in the state exceeds the supply significantly. The shortage during the period of peak demand means going without electricity even for few days. This unreliable power supply affect our project's functioning on a daily base in *Rahrai*. During the summer season, the temperature is more than 40 degree Celsius and we need to run fans. For our residential staff, it is inevitable to provide light throughout the year and fans during the summer. So far, we have been meeting all these basic needs with a small generator.

Few years ago, *BESIX Foundation* had provided 5 kVA solar panels for the *St. Anthony's School* in *Dugawar* project and this has saved a lot of our consumption. *BESIX Foundation* has extended now their





Installation of the solar panels...  
a day of excitement for the whole  
*Saint-Anthony's school of Rahrai* !

support to our *Rahrai* Project as well and thanks to their generosity, we installed the solar panels of 5 kVA which could meet all our basic needs.

### ***Building future extension***

In a previous newsletter about *Rahrai* School (« *ACB-News* » 52), you might have seen the on going construction of the first floor of the primary school. This work has been completed before the school reopened in July 2017. The ground floor and part of the first floor of the Primary block are used as class rooms. One wing of the first floor is modified for the accom-

modation of the teachers. It is well equipped with kitchen, toilets and four rooms. For the year 2019-20, we may not have enough class rooms and this situation compels us to start the next phase of the building work in a years time. This primary block building has the provision for one more floor.

### ***Sponsorship program***

To provide educational facility for girls belonging to disadvantaged sections of the society such as, scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, below poverty line, etc., the government of India introduced a scheme called *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyaya* (KGBV) in 2004. Under this scheme residential schools with boarding facilities from class 1 to class 8 were set up in some deserving regions. There is a KGBV center just 150 meter from our *Rahrai* school. This boarding school facilitates the education of around 50 girls from the poorest of the poor families from this region. This scheme is only for till class 8 and after that their education is not followed up. Many drop out as their family cannot afford to continue their education.

We have been to this boarding school a few times to meet the people in charge and under-



We plan to build the third floor by July 2020.





Laxmi is good at study and she is happy to continue her education.

stand its functioning. A lot of commitment is put into running this Institution in spite of the minimum facilities they have. Many children do

not come on a regular basis or drop out in between, but those who are motivated, they learn to take care of themselves and get passed class 8 with a good score. We are really impressed by the discipline and cleanliness of these kids. We could differentiate them from the other village girls of their age very easily.

We took this opportunity to extend our support to these children in collaboration with the people in charge of them. We invite them to participate in our different programs. It is also a good opportunity to support the education of those who finish class 8 so that they can continue in a higher secondary school. Last year we



met the parents of the girls who finished class 8 successfully and motivated them to continue their schooling. We sponsor them till they finish their class 12. We can also propose them to do a training in our *Saint Anthony's technical School of Dugawar (ITI)* after the completion of their schooling.

On the left, is Laxmi and her family. As per the culture of the village, the family keeps the big girls at home and get them marry even before they are 18. We met Laxmi's family and motivated her parents to help continue her education. We admitted her in a local hindi medium private school and she is now following her class 9.

Her three younger sisters and her brother are going to the local government school.



Students of KGBV in a meeting and rally organized by us in Rahrai village.

