

Vidya Jyoti completes 10 Years

As some of you might recall, *Vidya Jyoti Upper Primary School* was established 10 years ago with the financial support of ODP in the tribal village of *Kahuchuan*, in the state of *Odisha* (formely *Orissa*). The only school that existed in this area was a lower primary school till class primary 4, run by local Parish Church. Most of the children who finish lower primary school had no chance to continue schooling and were dropping out. All four directions of this mountainous terrain is covered by forest and there was no proper road connecting the village to the city, that is 30 km from *Kahuchuan*.

Our support to this project has enabled the new generations from this locality to continue till class 8 locally and go to the boarding schools in the cities for higher classes. Many of them have gone to cities and finished their schooling and some are continuing their education in technical fields. Currently there are 63 students in these three upper primary classes. The boarding school in this place accommodate 55 girl children from the primary and upper primary schools and they go home during the summer vacation only. However, parents are free to come and visit them during the year. Those parents who can afford provide rice and vegetables to the hostel times to time.

Jena, our field staff is originally from *Odi-sha*, he understands their language. He visited the project again in the month of May and spent some time in the hostel and the school. He found the children motivated to continue the schooling and to seek higher education. He says, the only

10 years in Kahuchuan.



Currently there are 63 students in the Upper Primary school.



Teachers of *Vidya Jyoti*... they are from the locality.



The hostel facility helps all the girls to attend the school and to continue their schooling in the cities....!

change in this area during the last 10 years is that now there is a road connecting this village to the city and that once a week, on the market day, there is a taxi service. Villagers can use this taxi service to go to the market. Electricity has not yet reached these villages, but some preparation is being done to get the village connected to the main grid. No solar panels or mobile phone access, they are completely cut off from the outside world. More and more youth are going to the metropolitan cities in search of labour, construction work and even many girls go there as house maids.

The four teachers who are teaching them from the beginning are from the locality, they had the opportunities to go to the city and learn. They are teaching in this school for several years.

India has an estimated 104 million Tribal population and most of them lacks basic education, primary health care and basic infra structures. Before the coming of the British, the tribals enjoyed unhindered rights of ownership and management over natural resources like land, forests, wildlife, water, soil, fish, etc. With the advent of industrialization in India and the discovery of mineral and other resources in tribal inhabited areas, these pockets were thrown open to outsiders. Tribal superstitions and prejudices, extreme poverty, nomadic lifestyle and a lack of suitable teachers and other facilities in the tribal areas are the main obstacles to bring educations among them. This barrier keep them away from participating in the development process. The migration

of these tribals to the urban areas causes psychological problems for them as they are not able to adjust to the urban lifestyle and values. Communicable diseases like malaria, cholera, tuberculosis, diarrhoea, problems associated with malnutrition like iron deficiency and anaemia, are reasons for high infant mortality rates and low levels of life expectancy.

The prime Minister of India tweeted on 29th April: « *28th April 2018 will be remembered as a historic day in the development journey of India. Yesterday, we fulfilled a commitment due to which the lives of several Indians will be transformed forever! I am delighted that every*

single village of India now has access to electricity. » Soon after this tweet, journalists from different parts of the country came up with the existing reality of villages, exposing the gap between the official claims and the ground reality. A village is considered electrified if 10% of its homes and all public buildings are connected to the grid. World Bank figures show around 200 million people in India still lack access to electricity. Our people in *Kahuchuan* have no clear idea of what is electricity. Some of them still think it can be put in a bag, like we carry any other materials and they are waiting for someone to bring it to them from the city.

News from St. Anthony's

The new academic year started in the month of April and as usual, the inscription to the new comers has been open. In the whole month of April, there was a big rush for admission in higher classes.

Bhaskar's daughter is a student of our school. In the first week of April, he came with his neighbour and his two children seeking admission in class 5& 6. The children did the written /oral tests and the teacher who examined them reported that they couldn't answer most of it. They hardly knew to read the book of class 1 in English and are not capable of understanding the lessons which are taught in English. The teacher tried to make him understand the difficulties in integrating his children who do not have the base even for lower classes.



Our effort to educate more girls continue...



Most of the newcomers have no basic knowledge of English. Our teachers are preparing them to integrate in the primary classes in St. Anthony's Dugawar.

The father was not ready to accept the fact that his children were rejected admission.

Next day, he came back with the village leader, insisting to admit his children. He was ready to produce the birth certificate of his children two years younger than their age and ready to bring them down two classes. We had tough time to make him understand that they do not even have the level for lower classes and that as they are over age, they will suffer with the age difference in the class. Besides that,

teachers with 40 children in a class will not be able to manage this difference. We had to send back most of them in the same way. Many came back several times, some of the children even pretended to be coming first time and reappeared the test.

We admitted those children who seemed to be able to pick up with some special classes during the holiday time, in the month of May & June. The head mistress of Primary school who is living in the locality agreed to prepare these children with the help of another teacher during the summer holidays. They are currently taking classes for them from 7.00 to 10 in the morning. The parents were happy with this arrangement. Some of them even stay in the campus for three hours and go back with their children. It really shows that the awareness about the importance of quality education is growing in this area !

As we mentioned earlier, some local businessmen in Asmoli area built their schools few years ago to make profit out of it. Now the parents started to realise that the quality of these schools are very low and their children hardly learn anything there. There are also parents who thought that they can go for small classes in these



First day in St. Anthony's Rahrai...

From 7.00 to 10.00 am kids come for special classes.



schools and later, when they are bigger, they can be shifted to St. Anthony's. We could really sense the struggle of parents who realized that they made a big mistake of admitting their children into those schools.

Each passing year, number of new comers in St. Anthony's *Dugawar* is increasing. Last year we had around 200 new students and this year, we expect to reach up to 250. The total strength of St. Anthony's *Dugawar* this year will be around 1700 students.

In St. Anthony's *Rahrai*, we are expecting around 100 new students this year. Our teachers have been visiting the villages in the evening time to motivate them to send their children to school.

Month of July, the re-opening period of the schools has been always dramatic. Either the

teachers who promise to join do not turn up or a few of them take off with a short notice. This year, a group of 5 young lady teachers from Kerala who have been with us for the last 4 years left the school. They want to be back in Kerala because their parents want to find a match for them and get them married. To fill these vacancies, we have arranged 5 teachers from Tamil Nadu, which is the neighboring state of Kerala. We expect them to join us in July.

Result of Senior Higher Secondary

Under CBSE Board to which our school is affiliated, a total of 11,86,306 candidates registered for class 12 examination that were held at 4,138 centres in India and 71 centres outside the country. The result was declared on May 26th. The overall pass percent this year is 83,01%.

The pass percent of St. Anthony's *Dugawar* this year is 88%. The top score of our school is 91.8% by *Akash Yadav*, from *Asmoli*. This is our third batch, they performed better than the previous years !

The school invest a lot of time for each of these students, following them up not only in the school, but also at their home. A group of committed and hard-working teachers are behind this result and it is inspiring and promising !

