

Our visit to Tahirpur colony

With folded hands and a big smile, *Sabita* will be the first one to welcome us as soon as we reach *Tahirpur* Leprosy Colony. Her eyes will be glowing with joy while she talks about her children. We first met *Gopal* and *Sabita* (names changed) in *Tahirpur* leprosy colony in the year 2007 and admitted their children to school under sponsorship. The long-standing relationship in shaping the future of their children has brought us close to each other. (Newsletter 27, 2010).

Both of them successfully finished their secondary schooling in the academic year 2018-19. Both of them wanted to peruse general nursing courses. We already have few of our sponsored children from the colony in a Nursing School,



Our support, guidance and care have helped *Sabita* to take her family to new heights. Above, the family with our staff in 2010 and below in 2019.



Happy Christmas ! Children of *Tahirpur*. (December 2019).



Mission Hospital in Chandigarh. We took charge of the nursing course of the boy and the girl was supported by another organisation.

Sabita's determination to educate her children while battling with the poverty, deformity and stigma is praiseworthy. She placed all her energy in getting her children out of this vicious circle and providing them a better life. *Gopal* and *Sabita* know very well that this was not possible without *Anthony's Bread*, that is each of you !

Hundreds of young girls and boys are roaming around in this colony without proper support and guidance. Those who get external support succeed in life and others are left behind. Many parents are worried about their children growing up in the colony. The house they live in has just a small room with a kitchen. There is hardly any space to live together. They share common toilets and bathrooms with the neighborhood, outside their house. Many get addicted to drinking, drugs and bad habits. It is the nightmare of the parents to keep their children safe in this vulnerable atmosphere.



Children are eager to show us what they have learned. Amazing to see how talented they are !

The School Supporting program we started two years ago to reach out to more of these children is doing well. Now we have 44 girls and 40 boys attending the classes in the morning and evening shifts.

Hundreds of families in one or other ways live a happier lives because of the support from *Anthony's Bread*. We convey their love and gratitude to each of you at this Christmas time ! Let the Peace and Love of the Baby Jesus guide us all !

India's Public Education

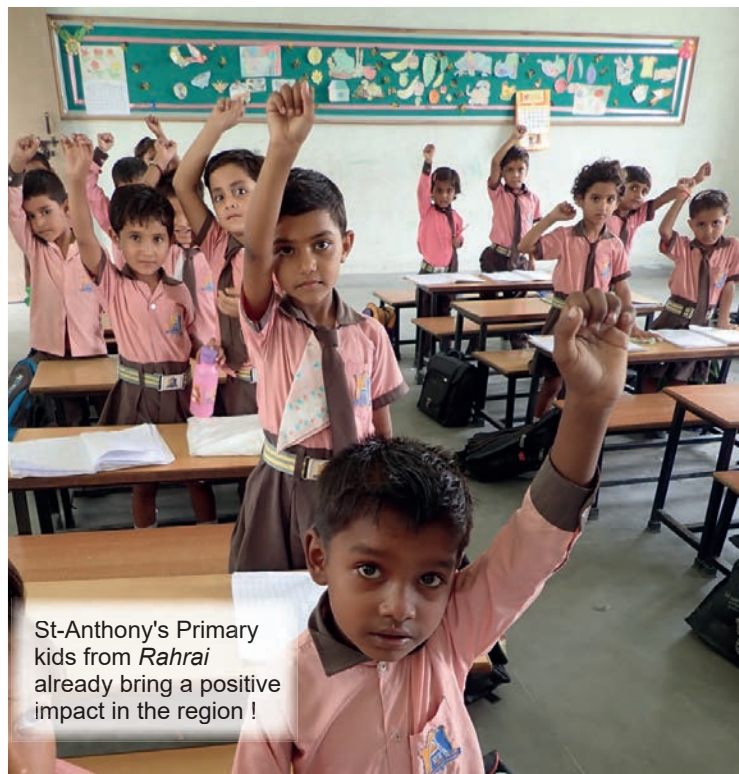
The 2018 Annual Status of Education Policy report highlighted India's dismal record on the quality of education. 73% of class 8 children cannot read beyond class 2 level material and only 44% of them are able to solve basic arithmetic.

Efforts have been made at national level to bring education to all the children. In 1992-93, the *District Primary Education Program* was launched. In 2002 Universal primary education for all the children from 6 to 14 was launched. In 2009, the *Right to Free and compulsory education Act* was passed, making the education compulsory for the age group of 6 to 14.

Along with these programs, the *Nutrition Support for Primary Education* program was also launched, providing children midday meal.

In spite of all these efforts why the educational reform in India has failed to improve the grade ? Why are the children still not going to school in the remote villages ? Scholars say, poor teacher training, lack of access, and focus on skills rather than learning are the main causes. It has failed to address the issue of learning levels of students. There is no teacher and institutional accountability.

Back in 2003, when we went around to the project areas, public schools were being built in some of these villages. We kept visiting these schools and we could hardly find any of them properly functioning. Teachers have regularly been absent. The motivation of the parents to send their children to school is mainly to get the free midday meal. These malfunctioning schools cannot meet the original goal of bringing the quality education. This was the story in our project area before we started our village development project and it is still the story of thousands of Indian villages. The situation is not much different in *Rahrai*, our new project area, where we have our second *Saint-Anthony's School*.



St-Anthony's Primary kids from *Rahrai* already bring a positive impact in the region !

Microfinance and Women Empowerment

Education eradicates poverty but how to get the poor educated ? Is it enough to build schools and make policies ? Our experience tells us that we need to prepare the communities to receive education if it has to become effective.

In 2003, when we started the *Saint-Anthony's school of Dugawar*, we sponsored several girls from the poorest families and admitted

them in our school. Sujatha (*name changed*) was one of the little girls sponsored from the nearby village of *Dugawar*. She lived in the outskirts of the village as she belonged to an out caste. We met her parents and convinced them to send her to school. She joined the school and started her schooling. For some time it went well, but gradually her parents were not ready to invest their time and energy for her education, she was forced to work at home and take care of her siblings. In spite of the regular motivation from the social worker, we couldn't continue her education. She dropped out. Gradually we started our grass root level field work and the scenario changed. Adult literacy, women's empowerment program, health education, and microfinance through SHGs, all these gave them the base for a new life, a new vision and from there, the transformation took place. Today we do not find any girl kept home in our project area. They all go to school. Many small private schools started in many of these villages and also the public school functions much better !

So, these are the main reasons for the success of *Anthony's Bread* education program !

32 Girl Children were sponsored in 2019

Anthony's Bread has kept a target of sponsoring 30 girl children in our schools each year. During the year, our field staff identify deserving

children and at the time of admission, we select them and integrate them either in *St-Anthony's School* or in other private or government-run schools in the locality. A regular follow-up is being done to maintain the quality education of these children.

We are also collaborating with the government run primary girls hostel in *Rahrai* (*Newsletter 58, 2018*) and also from other local schools. *Kesariya*



The illiterate mothers becoming literate. A new milestone in the history...



Kesariya en route for the secondary school, ready to explore new horizons in her life !

is one of our sponsored girls from last year. She had finished her class 8 last year and her parents wanted her to stay home. Her older sister is married and her parents are concerned

about sending her away in marriage as early as possible. But she is a good student and was dreaming of continuing her schooling. Our field workers came across her family, intervened and send her to school. She goes to the school which is 6 km from her home by bicycle. She is in class 9 this year.

320 New Admissions in Dugawar

Students seeking admission is increasing each year in the *St-Anthony's school of Dugawar* and this year we admitted 320 new students. The school building has reached its full capacity, no classrooms are available for next year. We tested the foundation of the primary school to see the possibility of adding one more floor, but unfortunately it is not strong enough. So we decided to go for a new building for the pre-school children in the land at the back of the campus. 12 classrooms which can accommodate around 400 students are being build. The work started in the month of October. Details about this will be in the next newsletter...

Rahrai building work is progressing....



The roofing of the first portion of the second floor has been completed. Now we are working on the other half.