



In the St-Anthony's school of Rahrai, classes have resumed. The new floor gives us enough space for the few coming years.



Rahrai — building work completed

St. Anthony's school building in Rahrai is used for multi-purpose. One wing on the ground floor is used as a vocational training centre for women and young girls. Three class rooms on the

first floor are used for the accommodation of teachers coming from far. This place has the facility to accommodate around 12 lady teachers. These rooms, temporarily converted as dormitories can be put back as classrooms when we build a separate residence quarter for the staff. All the remaining classrooms were already occupied by children from nursery to class 5 and we needed new classrooms for July 2021.

To get the classrooms ready for the following academic year, the second floor construc-

tion work started in May 2019 (see newsletter 64). When the school closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic lockdown, we were in the midst of this work. Materials were already stocked in the site and it was a big risk to stop the work altogether. The workers stayed at the site, in the campus and continued the ongoing work. Our original plan was to finish half of the second floor this year and continue the remaining work after one year. At a point, when there was no sign of school reopening in the near future, we decided to continue with the second part also. By February 2021, the structure of the second-floor building was fully completed. Electrical and sanitization fittings, furniture etc, will be done eventually. This building has now 19 class rooms (plus three used temporarily as residence for the teachers), one big library, one media room,



one computer lab and three science labs as per the requirement of the Board for its affiliation. Two classes combined as one hall on the ground floor will be kept for the social work.

We will have to apply for the *Central Board of Secondary School* (CBSE) affiliation next year when the older students reach class 8. All the building requirements for the affiliation till class 12 are ready with this building. The labs, playground etc, will be equipped before applying for the affiliation.

Supporting the Kasturba school

We have mentioned earlier about our collaboration with the *Kasturba boarding school* which is just 100 meters from our *St. Anthony's School* in *Rahrai*. It is a government run boarding school for the poor girl children from the villages near and far, for classes 6, 7 and 8. There are around 100 girls staying in this boarding. When they finish class 8 they have to move to another school but instead they go back to their village and get dropped out. We have been following up these children and sponsoring them for their higher classes.

Recently Government has built a hostel for older girls next to their existing boarding. When we went into detail, we realized that there is a government school just at the side for classes 9 and 10 but it has been dysfunctional for a long time. We took the chance to revive this school by providing teachers from our side so that children passing out from *Kasturba* class 8 could stay in the newly built hostel and continue to study till class 10. Of course, children from the locality, not staying in the hostel, can also come to this public school. This is a good example how we can support and collaborate with the public sector locally to make it more efficient.



We gave full support to the *Kasturba* public school in *Rahrai* to be able to open classes 9 and 10 for the young girls of the boarding.

Schools slowly returning to their usual activities

The government of the state of *Uttar Pradesh* took the lead to open the schools for children from classes 1 to 12 at different phases. Classes from 9 to 12 reopened in October 2020, 6 to 8 in the month of February and primary 1 to 5 on the 1st of March. Schools have to abide by the « *standard operating procedure* » (SOP) such as : no common assembly, use of mask, sanitization, etc. The authorities visit each school to make sure that the SOP is in place. No student can be forced to attend the school and parents have to give their consent in writing.

Transportation facility is needed for the children to get back to school, so school buses started to run again after being at a standstill for a year. Unfortunately those in the neighborhood who provided private transportation



couldn't withstand the lockdown. Many of them got rid of their vehicles. We are looking forward to find a solution to this problem.

The chain of Corona seems to be broken in the village area, no cases were reported recently. People in the village do not follow any Covid protocol though, they have gone back to their normal life. We cross our fingers and just hope that the situation continues to improve and no new wave of contamination will start.

Supreme Court on school fee

Parents' bodies and associations of private school owners at several States moved court demanding solution to their problems. In a major disappointment for the parents, the Supreme Court has in February announced that they will have to pay full fees to the schools for the period of the pandemic. They will have to pay this fees from March, and it can be collected in 6 installments. The court has also clarified that even if there is non-payment, no child's name can be removed from the school students list and that the students of class 10th and 12th cannot be denied from appearing for their examinations. Those parents who have difficulties to remit the fees should discuss the matter with the concerned school.

In some schools, this situation might put parents who have big dues at the mercy of the school and it is feared that it might force many parents to withdraw their children from the schools, specially those who have more than one child.

We have parents coming in groups, from different villages demanding to waive the fees. We are dealing with families who have problems individually. In *Rahrai*, we have reduced fees for all. We try to avoid drop outs and get back a maximum number of children in our schools at the earliest.



In St-Anthony's School Dugawar, the children discover the new building with the colourful classrooms.



New admissions for the coming academic year just started. Since we didn't do any admission last year, we may have many more students seeking admission this academic year. In *Dugawar*, our new building has the capacity to welcome 500 plus children, so we hope to manage the situation smoothly.

News from Tahirpur

Our people in the leprosy colony in Tahirpur continue to survive with the basic support from the government. Most of them who have been depending on the charity of the people lost their income. Pandemic restrictions such as social distancing don't allow them to get close to others. We have supported our sponsored student's parents

The school supporting classes in Tahirpur continued to be organized during the pandemic.



The nursing students, sponsored by Anthony's bread, needed extra support this year.



who needed extra support for the higher education of their children. End of November, the nursing students whom we sponsor returned to their schools in Punjab, the neighboring state. School supporting classes for the small children in the colony was a big relief, they continued to study while all the schools were closed. « *We have seen much worse, we will survive this too* » : they are confident that they will get through this.

World's largest immunisation

COVID-19 vaccination campaign started on Jan 16 in India. With a population of 1,38 billion, India aims at vaccinating 300 million people by August 2021. 30 million health workers and front line workers (police, sol-

diers) were vaccinated by the end of February and from early March it moved on to people above 60 years and those above 45 with co-morbidities. Applicants have to register via a mobile application.

Roy Mathews, our executive director was one of the first to receive the first dose in a local government hospital. We are taking steps to help bringing elderly people from the villages to be vaccinated, but we are shocked to see that most of the elderly people have entered wrong date of birth in their identity card (Aadhar). For example, one of our senior most members of SHG (Self Help Group), who is in her late 60s, has her age as 52 on the identity card.

India has previous experience in carrying out large and targeted vaccination campaigns against diseases, such as, for example, measles, tetanus, and diphtheria, under the country's *Universal Immunization Program*, which targets 26,7 million newborns and 29 million pregnant women every year. The country has also eradicated smallpox and polio.

The government hospitals will carry out the vaccination drive at no cost, whereas private hospitals can levy up to Rs 250 per person per dose. Two vaccines, Covishield (Astra Zeneca) and Covaxin (Indian) are administered at the moment. India is one of the biggest manufacturers of vaccine and both these vaccines are made in India.