



Empowering women is one of the main goals for our organization. We setup meetings, experience sharing and teaching sessions.

Empowering Women

Each year, the women of our groups eagerly look forward to March 8, the *international Women's day*, to get together and celebrate. However, this year, for the first time, they could not gather on this day because it fell on the day of *Holi*. This feast is celebrated during three days. It is a festival of love, colors and spring. The rituals associated with it don't make women gathering possible.

On this occasion, we introduce two young women who fight the odds in their lives and bring colors in the real life of the people of our *Rahrai* project.

Priyanka and *Rekha* were two candidates our program coordinator proposed for the village animation program. We were happy to have them both as part of our team. They were given charges as helpers to our coordinator in their own villages. *Priyanka* was smart and ambitious, she worked for a while with us and told us that she wanted to pursue a fashion design course from a government ITI (*Industrial Training Centre*). She started her new course and seemed happy. Then two months ago, our Program Coordinator got a call from her village announcing that she committed suicide. He rushed to the place and came to know that she went to the temple in the early morning and later went to clean the house



Priyanka was very creative and effective in her work when she was with us. (She is the one holding the paper).



We collaborate with the policewomen for the cyber crime awareness.

near the temple. She was found hanging from the roof. He met the family and saw the dead body of *Priyanka*. The village leaders were also present and in no time, they finished up doing the final rituals and cremated her

body. The situation at this stage didn't allow us to take any action. The family wanted this chapter to be closed immediately. The rumor is that *Priyanka* had an affair with a man who blackmailed her with the photographs she shared with him and she could not face the family and society.

After the pandemic of Covid 19, the use of the smartphone is on the rise everywhere and even a smart and educated young woman like *Priyanka* can become an easy prey. In order to curb the online crime, government has directed educational institutions to establish cyber clubs. We are collaborating with this team to bring awareness around cyber safety. Special meetings are being held to bring awareness to village women.

One roof... three generations

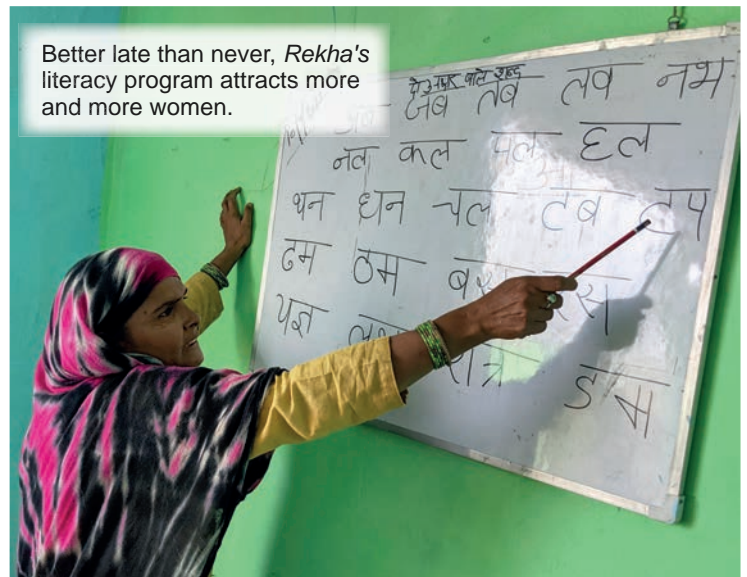
Rekha on the other hand gets deeper into the lives of the people and she started to make a difference. In November 2022, we visited one of her literacy programs where three generations were squatted in a veranda of a house, learning eagerly to read and write. They all had the spirit, like the young children in our schools, wanting to show what they learned! Though initial goal was to teach them to read small words and sign, they wanted to extend this classes until they were able to read the newspapers. They understand now that the old tradition of marrying girl children at the age of 13 has to stop. *Rekha's* mother was part of our program since 5 years and *Rekha* also was inspired by us to take her decisions in her life. Now in her turn, she is an inspiration to the people who come across her.

While campaigning for children's education, she is working for women's economical empowerment. We visited another meeting headed by her in March 2023, where the group consisting of 11 women, had to decide about an income generation activity. Eight of the women belong to the *keawat / Dhimar* cast (the occupation of this cast is fishery work in pond). The group wants to convert the marsh land in the outskirts of this village into a fishing pond. This 4 hectare land belongs to the government and their goal is to get it on rent. It has to go through a very long legal process before that could be achieved. The village leader has agreed to forward their application

to the higher authority. *Rekha* is hopeful to get this land for the group. She told us that her next dream is to cultivate marigold flowers which could bring more income to the farmers.

When I was small, I wanted to stop going to school like my other friends. Then my mother told me to continue till I learn to read and write. I followed her advice. When I reached class 8 I told her that I know to read and write and let me stop. She told me, now you have reached class 8, why not continue till class 10. So, when I reached class 10, I was big enough to understand that education was very important. I was the only girl going to the local school which is away from my village. I finished class 12 and then did bachelors degree online from an open university. I had no intention to work because girls in the village are not working.

Better late than never, *Rekha's* literacy program attracts more and more women.





Like other girls, I too got married. My aunty brought a proposal and my family found that the boy is healthy, handsome and earning for a living from the driving job. I said Yes. Things changed soon. He lost his job, he didn't allow me to go to work or to be in touch with my parents. The more I came to know him the more the divide took place. I couldn't continue any more in his house and fighting became a daily routine. So, at the 4th month of my pregnancy, I came back to live with my parents. They accepted me. All the while I really wished that he would change and get back to me but nothing happened. I gave birth to a baby girl and I was so happy because I dreamt of having girl child. Being a mother brings more joy and meaning for my life. I have a goal, to bring her up and empower her and give her what her father couldn't give me. My educational background came to my help now. I could go to teach in a local school or to work to empower women. I chose the later. I started to work with my baby girl. I want to make the women understand the capacity they have hidden in them and want each girl of my village to go to school. With Anthony's Bread, I will fulfil this dream.

Rekha



Rekha is very proud of her daughter. Her aim now is to give her love and a proper education.



Rekha is in charge of 20 women's groups in her village.

Admission Open, Jadwar

In India, the new academic year starts on April 1st. The summer holidays are from mid May till the end of June and the school reopens on July 1st. To start the admissions process on time we have placed billboards in the nearby villages. People call for enquiries. To start with, the phone contact number is the same of *St-Anthony's School Dugawar*.

The foundation of the ground floor is laid and one part of the building with 5 class rooms and toilets will be ready by the first

week of April. The classes of nursery, Lower and Upper Kindergarten (LKG&UKG), primary 1 & 2 will open this year. The rest of the building will be completed later. We have appointed a group of lady teachers for this new school. We are renting a place for the teaching staff near the town, and eventually will get one part of the school ready for the staff until we have a better accommodation, just like we are doing in the *Rahrai* school. *Elizabeth Paul* is one of the senior most teachers who joined us in 2004. In 2014, she went from *Dugawar* to *Rahrai* to help the new teachers to settle



Molly Sebastian's visit in March was mainly to conduct meetings with the *pradhans* and the villagers, specially women.

down. Now she will be moving in with the group of new teachers to *Jadwar*. Being a senior and experienced person, we are comfortable to entrust the group of teachers under her guidance. *Elizabeth* did convent schooling and is closely linked to catholic schools. Her daughter was over aged when we started the school in *Dugawar*, so we sponsored her in other schools and now she is well qualified and works in her hometown, in the city of *Meerut*, around 150 km from our projects.

Students who don't live from a walkable distance will need transportation. We are happy that two local people proposed to run the transportation for the *Jadwar* school.

While we get ready for the school opening, it is important to motivate the villagers to send their children to school. We are trying to find a lady for the social work but we

realized that it is not yet the right time to get the women out to work. A new field staff, Mr. *Singh* was appointed as the coordinator who eventually will get helpers in the villages. *Singh* has been working in the social work department of the business company TATA in the town closer to *Jadwar*. We came to know him through our program coordinator. He has 10 years of experience in the field work and is well known for the good work he has been doing. He is a father of 4 children and his youngest child will be given free education in our school. To ensure a better financial stability, we would engage his wife to take care of the small children in the school.

It is very important for the project to find a stable and capable person who has to develop field work along with the education of the children.



We started already the admissions process for the St-Anthony's school of Jadwar.

