

We were happy to be in the new St. Anthony's school in Jadwar in mid July to meet the staff and the children. The situation at that time was very challenging. On one side, there were the grilling machines and the workers, on the other side the overcrowded classrooms. Even if the fans were running, the rooms were so warm and the hot air was circulating. Though there was heavy rain at intervals, the temperature was really high and with the humidity it felt even hotter. However, for those who are in the project, everything seemed normal. There was much joy on the faces of the children and the staff. I was really happy to see them adapting to the situation without a word of complaint. It seems like the capacity to adapt to the difficult situations is inherent in Indians.



I was happy to meet the students of the new St. Anthony's school.

## Summer in Jadwar

The school in *Jadwar* reopened as scheduled on July 3 and another 100 students got enrolled by the end of July. Our target of getting the building ready by the beginning of July didn't go as planned. The finishing work took another 6 weeks. Also we couldn't find good teachers locally for the newly joined kids and had to look for teachers from the South of the country again. Two classes were combined to cope with the missing classrooms and teachers. *Hemalini*, the principal took charge to bring teachers from South. By mid August, things got better. We had four new teachers from South and all the classrooms were ready. We found the children really charming and curious to learn. The noise, the heat, the inconvenience, nothing bothered them. They were so happy to be in the new school, in the new environment. The senior students were happy to try to communicate with us in English.

## Inauguration of the School

School Inauguration is an occasion to share the joy of a new beginning. In *Jadwar*, a lot of people unceasingly worked hard to convert an open field into a full-pledged school in less than a year's time. They all were looking forward to this day. The children, parents, village leaders, architect and his team, staff from *Dugawar* and *Rahrai*, well-wishers, all gathered on this occasion. Though the monsoon was heavy, we were lucky to have a better weather on the day.



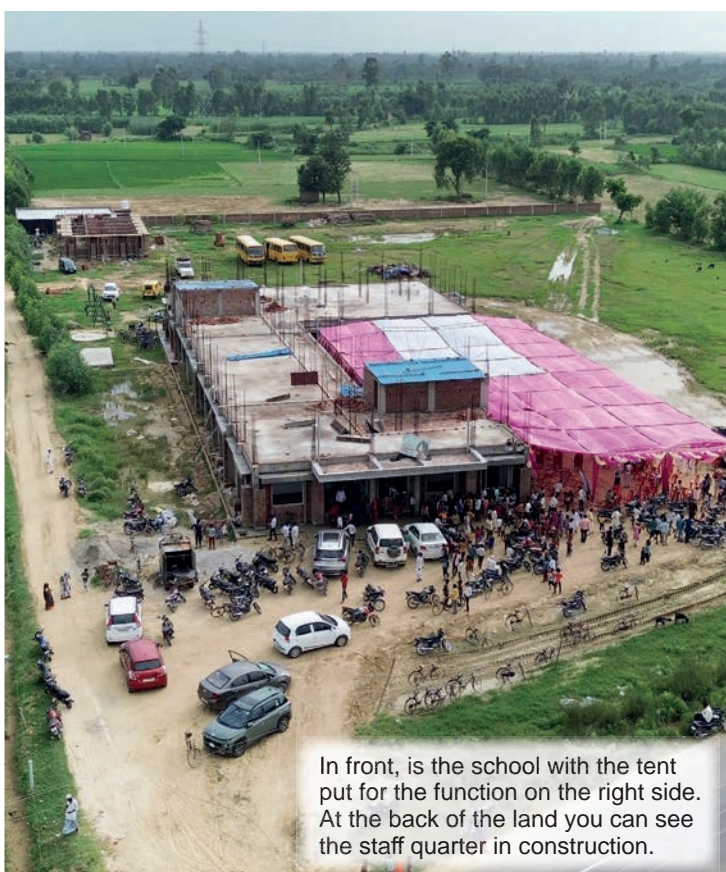




The performance of the students of Jadwar was amazing.



A lot of people came for the event.



In front, is the school with the tent put for the function on the right side. At the back of the land you can see the staff quarter in construction.

The second Saturday of the month is a school holiday and it was the most convenient day for all to organize the program. In a few days' time, the principal and the teaching staff prepared the children and the program. As the students of *Jadwar* school entered the stage for anchoring I was really surprised, are these children the ones who joined the school a few weeks ago? Not only me, all shared the same thought. They spoke well, had enough confidence to face a big crowd on the stage and it looked like they were just enjoying it! The show was well coordinated among the three *St. Anthony's* schools.

All those who were present watched the kids with wonder as they performed on the stage. *Schools of Dugawar and Rahrari* actively participated in conducting some programs.

After the function, all were given snacks and special guests were invited for lunch. Food was prepared in the school itself for around 1000 people and everything got over.

Many villagers told me that previous year (on August 12), they had come for the foundation stone laying ceremony and that they were so surprised to see the progress of the project. They were all delighted.

### ***Facing many challenges***

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, we were happy and relieved to have *Hemalini* and *Rajshekar* joining the project as the principal and coordinator. They planned to report well ahead of the school reopening. We rented an apartment in the nearby town to provide a better accommodation to them. After a long journey of 2500 km by train,





and another 4 hours by road they reached their apartment at 3 in the morning. The next day, a casual call was made to inquire about their stay and the response was disappointing : « *Sir, please do not feel bad, it is difficult for us to stay here. The toilet is overflowing, the aeration in the room is very poor and it is too hot.* » Our staff reached there immediately and shifted them to our rented office in the village near the school.

I had been to that office last year and I had discouraged our staff to accommodate them there in the first place. The toilet is next to the kitchen and it is unhygienic. It was a big relief when *Hemalini* told us that they could manage there for the moment. After a few days, as school started to function, we had two more teachers to accommodate. The worst scenario was when the transformer got burned twice and they were left without electricity for several days. They couldn't sleep and started to get sick. At week-ends, we brought *Hemalini* and *Rajshekar* to the *Dugawar's* school campus, in the teacher's residence. At this point, *Hemalini* fell ill and stayed in the *Dugawar* campus until she recovered. Even while being sick, her mind was fully with the school and she wanted to get back as early as possible.

To solve the electricity problem we bought inverters, charged them with a generator in the school and brought them to their residence for the night. With this arrangement, they could get enough sleep.

By mid August, 4 more teachers came from South and the office in the village of *Jadwar* was congested. By the first week of September, they all were shifted to the school building itself. 8 teachers, including the principal and her husband *Rajshekar*, are now staying in a newly built classroom. There wasn't a word of



A beginning is a delicate time... This is the team of the St. Anthony's school in the village of *Jadwar*.

complaint from them and they put up with the situation each time. Meanwhile, the staff quarter's construction is continuing...

### Aadhaar Card Camp

Either a birth certificate or an aadhaar card (identity card) is necessary for the admission in the school to prove the date of the birth of the child. But villagers do not have either of them. They took admission promising that they will get the certificate done. But many didn't turn up even after insisting. So, the school organized a camp where the parents with their children could come and make this card. The local agency making aadhaar cards came with all the biometric equipments.

We organized a camp to help the families to register the children to get an Aadhaar card.





Many children narrowly missed the chance of joining our school because they were over aged and the schools they were attending didn't have the base. We took those whom we could integrate, especially girls. The ratio between boys and girls is not good, it is 4:1, just as when we started in *Dugawar* 20 years ago. We will be working at the grass root level to bring more girls in the school in the coming years.

## Science Exhibition — St. Anthony's Dugawar

The curriculum in Indian schools is mainly based on rote learning, which focuses on memorization rather than understanding. This leads to a lack of critical thinking skills and makes it difficult for students to apply what they learn in real-life situations. Our curriculum needs to shift from theory to more practice and prepare students for real-world challenges and the jobs of the future. So to explore the creative talent of the students and force them to think outside of the box, the school organizes a science exhibition once

a year. Students of *St. Anthony's Dugawar* look forward to this event, which is usually done in the month of August. Creative and competitive spirit is in the air throughout the month and they are happy to skip some routine classes. The school is divided in four houses, blue, green, red and yellow. Each one of these houses prepare their exhibition in groups.

This year, *St. Anthony's Rahrai* participated in this exhibition too. They prepared their projects in their school and brought them to *St. Anthony's Dugawar* in the school bus. It was a good opportunity for an outing for the senior students of *St. Anthony's Jadwar* too. One school bus with senior students came for the day as well. Children from the public schools were also invited for the exhibition.



Students participated with a lot of enthusiasm.