

Report from Fr. Godfrey: Date 28 June 2006

Dear Chidu

after the good news of Asha's acceptance let me report on the beginnings in June 2006.

Our first meeting on June 1-2 found the teacher-activists ready with 27 learning centres' lists of children. They showed experience in sorting out the teaching learning materials which they packed in trunks and selected their tinsheet blackboards newly painted looking like graduate hats.

The atmosphere was enthusiastic as each teacher spoke about his (unfortunately only males dare the lonely forest and field paths to these remote centres) class logistics.

I have in addition to my personal involvement the help of an enhanced team of Jesuits in Shirpur:- Jimmy the human rights lawyer who will also train the teachers in basic rights and legal procedures; James Francis the agriculturist who intends starting small demos in our institution's fields besides supervising the credit groups and the AFARM/AWO agricultural project, Gus is directly going to support the learning centres' activities - making sure they actually run effectively.

My experience with the present project in Shirpur has brought other NGOs to visit our work and to consult on setting up similar ventures for poor and neglected children. I will be interacting with a chain of learning centre coordinators in Raigad District on July 6-7. I am also to conduct a workshop for teachers of classes for Ragpickers in Indore.

I guess you are more interested in the facts of our programme in Shirpur which you intend to support. It does not matter you cannot increase contributions to us. Its enough that you understand our struggles and give what is possible to complement other fundings to make up our budget.

Give me a bit of time this month because only in mid July will our learning centres offer stable details. Just now the scene is as follows:

1. Government teachers are to conduct learning programmes from morning till noon. Some are regular. Some struggle to get accross in tribal mother tongue. Our teachers are assessing where they need to complement or supplement the State effort.
2. Some of our seasoned teachers have been offered government jobs as tutors for children who have dropped out of regular school. If those jobs come through we will have to exercise our own administrative options - stop our classes in favour of the government classes when they actually function.
3. Some of our children will join an ashram shala and leave the village at the pitiful age of 6-7 to study free in those government schools. Hence the final numbers that attend the learning centres will take some time to fix.

The best way of sending the money is through the State Bank of India, Jalgaon MIDC Branch, which has a Foreign Exchange counter which can accept a TT in favour of the Shirpur Vishwa Mandal Sevashram, SBI A/c No. 01100005195 (in State Bank of India, Shirpur Branch). I would appreciate your help as early as you can send it.

Thanks

Sincerely

Fr. Godfrey D'Lima