

Partnership-in-Action was set up in April 1994, to work with (DIZ) our sister organization in Germany to support the work of the Ecumenical Sangam in Nagpur, Central India. The overall aim of the Sangam is to start and support a process of sustainable development in the rural villages and urban slums in such a way that the people do not become dependant upon the Sangam but are able to manage their own affairs. The Sangam is currently working in more than 50 villages supported from the Bamhani Base Centre and three Sub-Centres which are at Sawangi, Gondwananagar and Narayanpur. Bamhani is approx. 35 kms south of Nagpur on Highway 7 towards Chandrapur. The Sangam provides primary health-care and social development to all people when requested. At present the Sangam relies on funding from the German partners, Deutsch-Indische Zusammenarbeit (Indo-German Cooperation) and Partnership-in-Action. The building of the 'Rainbow Centre' in the Civil Lines area of Nagpur, which is a Guesthouse with a Conference Centre, has enabled the Sangam to generate funds locally. In the Rainbow Centre there is office space for the Ecumenical Sangam. Following conversion of the basement in 2006 there is dormitory accommodation, lecture and study rooms for the twelve month residential Trained Birth Attendants courses together with an office base for the Sangam's Slum and Leprosy Awareness Teams.

Partnership-in-Action has supported and funded for the past twenty five years three projects, a **Kindergarten Class** for up to thirty five 3 and 4 year old village children and a **Tailoring Class** for young women in Bamhani Base Centre plus the ongoing training programme to provide 'bare foot doctors' **Village Health and Social Workers (VHSWs)** for the rural villages and urban slums. The **VHSWs** training courses are run twice yearly for up to 15 young women with six weeks intensive training in Mamta cottage hospital in Bamhani, followed by 4 ½ months practical experience working in the rural villages. The trainee **VHSWs** work with the Sangam's Health Team from the Base Centre and three Sub-Centres at Narayanpur, Sawangi Burg and Gondwananagar. As well as making daily house to house visits in the villages with the Health Team, they assist in running weekly clinics with visiting doctors and in organising and running various Health Camps.

The **Kindergarten Classes** in Bamhani Base Centre have a well equipped playground with a seesaw, slide and swings, plus each of the two classrooms have a chalk board and numerous coloured charts showing animals, birds, fruits, insects, parts of the body and vegetables. The monthly fees of 60 rupees per child goes towards the cost of the return

transport from their village and a school uniform. The school uniforms are made by the young ladies in the Tailoring Classes and additional uniforms may be purchased for 200 rupees. The kindergarten is open from 9 am to 5 pm and usually the latest of the children arrive by 11 am.

On the 19th January the third annual **Kindergarten Awards Day** was held in the Community Hall in Bamhani Base Centre and was attended by children from all eight kindergarten classes together with the Trained Birth Attendant and Technical School students, and staff members from Bamhani and the three Sub-Centre, parents and guests. For many weeks before the kindergarten children, TBA students, Tailoring and Cosmetic class students had started to prepare dances, songs, role play and costumes with the children to present to their parents and guests. Their efforts paid off well and the parents and other family members along with their teachers and the Sangam staff enjoyed the performances. The Sangam were happy to host Bamhani's Sarpanch (Village Head Person) Mrs. Madhuri Godhmare and her husband, the ex-Sarpanch of Bamhani village for the Programme. The School Teachers prepared a song to open the proceedings and everyone worked well together to create another great celebration of the Sangam's work. Besides the various performances, Mr. and Mrs. Godhmare and Mrs. Karen D'Souza, Chief Financial Officer awarded the best kindergarten students for their studies and handed over small gifts to them to honour their efforts. This event was wrapped up with refreshments and great conversation outside Bamhani's Community Hall. Everyone present enjoyed the Annual Awards Day and are already looking forward to the next one.

The **Trained Birth Attendant's Course** is a one year follow up training course for those young women who have successfully completed the **VHSW** course and who wish to pursue a career as a nurse. It is run in co-operation with the Indian College of Maternal and Healthcare (ICMCH) and the National Association for Reproductive and Child Health of India (NARCHI), with the Entrance Interviews conducted annually with up to 12 young women selected each year. The Ecumenical Sangam subsidises 60% of the total costs for each student during the 1-year course and the trainees are provided with food and accommodation in the training facilities of the Rainbow Centre. This course aims to provide a comprehensive medical education, with daily practical training rotated through

various Clinics and Hospitals around Nagpur. Each student trains under the supervision of a Mentor and is given intensive medical theory tuition alongside written and conversational English classes. At the end of last December the Trained Birth Attendants of 2018 successfully completed their 12 months training and then started on a period of practical experience working with the Base Centre and 3 Sub-centre health teams. In January the newly selected group of TBA students for 2019 commenced their theory and practical training course whilst living in the basement accommodation.

In the autumn of 2018, the Management of the Ecumenical Sangam and the Rainbow Guesthouse, decided to refurbish the Rainbow Guesthouse's Solar water heating system and roof area. The project started off with the replacement of the old solar water heating panels that supply the building with hot water throughout the whole year. To keep up to date with the latest renewable energy resources the management decided to change the panels for more efficient ones that would also take up less space. The roof terrace was then used to create a beautiful relaxation area for the guests and staff with the feel of a holiday spot in the countryside. The Sangam team set up tables, chairs and benches with various plants and outside lighting that created a cosy atmosphere and an invite to relax after one of the conferences, workshops, seminars or other functions held in the Rainbow Guesthouse. On 17th of February the roof terrace was inaugurated by the President of the Ecumenical Sangam Mrs. Rita Dohrmann. She explained the need for the refurbishment and invited everyone present to a celebration of the Rainbow's new roof terrace and relaxation area. Among the guests, were the convenors of the 2019 Weltwärts Partner Conference for India and Asia from Germany and also our German Partners from the Indo-German Cooperation including Dr. Jona Dohrmann and Mrs. Sybille Franck. Mrs. Karen D'Souza, Mr. Nikhil Pedhekar and Mr. Awdhut Kukadar from the Sangam team then outlined a little of the Ecumenical Sangam's work to the other guests who had not previously visited the Ecumenical Sangam. Although Nagpur's temperatures seem to be currently continuously on the rise, it made us anticipate the forthcoming summer, everyone enjoyed the afternoon and thanks are due to all those people present, especially those behind the scenes who arranged everything and made the venture possible.

If you would like to make a donation or a regular monthly contribution to the development work of the Ecumenical Sangam please e-mail: pina@sangamonline.org, ring 01323 731715 or write to 14, Luton Close, Eastbourne, East Sussex. BN21 1UX

Partnership in Action

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Kindergarten Children taking part in the Awards Day

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Newsletter prepared by Bruce Williamson
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See the Ecumenical Sangam Website: www.sangamonline.org
for more regular updates of the Sangam's activities click on 'News Items' and see how individuals lives are being changed by the various training programmes and initiatives run by the Ecumenical Sangam