

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 & Tuberculosis Sensitisation Teams.

Partnership-in-Action has supported and provided funding for the past twenty five years for three projects, a **Kindergarten Class** for up to thirty five 3 and 4 year old village children, 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 4½ months practical experience working in the rural villages. The trainee **VHSWs** work with the Sangam's Health Teams 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 Ecumenical Sangam have 35 places in each class for children of age 3 and 4 years old in the 8 **Kindergarten classes**, with 2 classes in the Bamhani Base Centre and 2 classes at each of the Sub-Centres in Gondwananagar, Narayanpur and Sawangi Burg villages. The **Kindergarten** have proved very popular with families from the local

villages with the school in Bamhani having a well equipped playground with swings, a slide and a seesaw and the classrooms are provided with desks, coloured charts and a large chalkboard. The monthly fees cover transportation to and from school, a uniform and two daily good meals. The school uniforms are made by the young ladies in the tailoring classes assisted by the staff plus a second uniform may be purchased for 200 rupees. The Kindergarten classes are open from 9 am to 5 pm and the day starts with watering the plants in the gardens and beds surrounding the buildings. After the plants have received their 'food and water', it is time for breakfast. After breakfast all attention and concentration is turned to learning. With the aid of brightly illustrated wall charts the children learn the names of animals, vegetables, fruits, trees and body parts as well as numbers and the alphabet. The children not only learn the Marathi words, but their English and Hindi counterparts. Each child has their own desk and practices writing the words just learnt, often illustrating the words with a picture. Regular health records are kept for each child including weight and height development monthly along with attendance and sickness records, any concerns are then discussed with the child's parents at the regular meetings.

In March 2016 the Ecumenical Sangam set up the **Comprehensive Leprosy and Tuberculosis Sensitisation (CLATS)** programme with a grant from the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) plus ongoing financial support from our German Partners (DIZ). The diseases of Leprosy and Tuberculosis are still widely spread among both the rural village and urban slum population in India, with more than 60 percent of the worldwide recorded cases of Leprosy occurring within India's population. There are various misconceptions and social stigmas which result in the people's fear of losing face whenever the diagnosis of Leprosy is made public. The important early diagnosis and subsequent treatment of leprosy or tuberculosis will often be delayed. Leprosy, one of the oldest infectious diseases, if untreated can lead to nerve damage and deformities, whilst Tuberculosis a bacterial infectious disease, if ignored and untreated can prove fatal. The CLATS programme aims to outreach in three different areas. Firstly through education of the population in schools, village events and exhibitions, secondly through personal communication by house-to-house visits to slum and village homes both in the morning and evening hours and thirdly through information events for medical

personnel, whose knowledge about leprosy and tuberculosis and its treatment has often found to be deficient and out of date. These take the format of seminars, workshops and training to medicals and paramedics to ensure that they can recognise and appropriately handle any identified case of the ailment.

Naresh Kolhe the CLATS co-ordinator has organised awareness programmes in schools, local villages and urban slums. With the help of Dr. Deshmukh giving talks about the dangers and symptoms of leprosy, explaining that leprosy has a long incubation period and the fact that the illness at first does not appear to have any physical symptoms. The bacterial pathogen infects the skin and the nerves of the colder parts of the body (hands, feet, nose) and can cause severe damage and mutilation. Naresh Kolhe then outlines in his session on tuberculosis that it is a bacterial infectious disease most commonly affecting the lungs with the main symptom being a cough. The treatment therapy is time consuming and requires discipline in taking the medication.

In October the Sangam's Health Team organised an **Eye Camp** in co-operation with the local Primary Health Centre (PHC) in Borkhedhi, a village south of Nagpur. Having healthy eyes and good sight is important, especially in the rural parts of India where proper treatment can be hard to find or too expensive to afford. Improving healthcare and health awareness is, as well as offering training to the young women through the Volunteer Health and Social Workers courses one of the Sangam's main aims. The Eye Camp with Dr. Lambat and Dr. Andhare provided free eye check-ups, ranging from determining which glasses were required to the treatment of various eye diseases. The doctors were assisted by two of the Sangam's nurses as well as this year's batch of VHSW students, who gained first-hand experience which they will later be able to employ in their work. 103 patients were examined with those with poor sight or other vision impairments in one room while those with other problems including diabetes receiving advice and treatment in a separate building. Regular events like the Eye Camp are important opportunities for the villagers to receive specialist medical treatment and advice.

We are very thankful and deeply indebted to our regular supporters for the financial support that they have given Partnership-in-Action over the past 25 years. If you would like to make a donation or regular monthly contributions 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

Registered Charity No. 1036683



Leprosy and Tuberculosis Awareness Programme for villagers in the Community Hall

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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