

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 three years three projects, a **Tailoring Class** for young women in Bamhani Base Centre and the ongoing training programme to provide 'bare foot doctors' **Village Health and Social Workers (VHSWs)** for the rural villages and urban slums plus a **Kindergarten Class** for up to thirty five 3 and 4 year old village children. The Sangam run eight Kindergarten Classes providing 280 places for 3 to 5 year old village children with 2 classes in Bamhani Base Centre and in each of the 3 rural Sub-Centres at Narayanpur, Sawangi Burg and Gondwananagar. The Kindergarten teachers are encouraged to take the VHSW training course and with the help of the Health Team are able to monitor the general health of each child plus regularly recording their height and weight. The teachers encourage the children to develop good personal hygiene habits and to take them home helping to improve the general level of hygiene in their village homes.

The Kindergarten School in Bamhani Base Centre has a well equipped playground with swings, a slide and seesaw, and each classroom has a chalkboard plus numerous coloured charts showing animals, birds, insects, fruits and vegetables for the children to learn about. The monthly fee of 60 Rupees per child covers 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 arrives by 11 am. The day starts with watering all the flowers in the gardens and flower beds surrounding the buildings of the Base Centre. After the plants receive their 'food', it is breakfast time for the children and after breakfast all attention and concentration is turned to learning. For example, the children with the aid of the colour charts learn the names of animals, vegetables, trees and body parts in the local language of Marathi together with their English and Hindu counterparts. Each child has their own desk and slate and will practice the words just learnt, often illustrating the word with a picture.

Around one o'clock, the children have lunch and then take a short nap. The lunch will be made with vegetables from the kitchen garden supplemented with a daily dose of vitamins, iron and calcium. Regular health statistics are maintained including weight and height together with attendance and sickness records. The acceptance of the work of the kindergarten in the villages is high and there is not only the demand for more kindergarten places, but also constant requests for a follow on primary school facility to be run by the Sangam in Bamhani.

The **Beauty Parlour** Programme that was started in July last year in Gondwananagar Sub-Centre has proved to be very popular and in March following a number of requests for a similar programme, a **Cosmetics Course** was started in Narayanpur Sub-Centre for the young women from the local villages. This programme has started with training on various versions of hair styles designed around the 'French Knot', majoring on designs used for weddings. This has enabled the young women to gain an additional source of income.

The **Counselling Cell** based in Butibori village in a shop adjacent to the police station continues to have registered on average 15 new cases each month, with an ongoing case load of 65 cases. Many of which have been referred by the police and the remainder are from direct approach by the affected women. This cell is run by a Counsellor, Ms. Mamta Bhandarkar, assisted by 2 experienced field workers who typically during a month make around 20 village visits, not only visiting families involved in current cases but also following up on previously resolved cases. On the 8th March, International

Women's Day was celebrated in Bamhani Base Centre which was attended by 142 women from local villages with the chief speakers being Police Inspectors Hemant Chandewar and Bharti Konde from Butibori Police Station. Ms. Mamta Bhandarkar gave the meeting information about the Women's Day and made everyone aware of the most common relationship problems. This celebration was attended by Mrs. Rita Dohrmann, President and Mrs. Karen D'Souza Chief Financial Officer of the Ecumenical Sangam. During the month Ms. Bhandarkar also held meetings in two areas of Butibori to encourage the women to form Self Help Groups to share their problems and explain how better to resolve them together with the possibility of also forming savings groups to enable the participants to take out loans to start up their own businesses.

On the 25th March an **Evening Meeting** was organised in Dhawalpeth Village to encourage the need for Girls to be educated also to remind the villagers of the various courses run by the Sangam and to advertise the proposed Dental Camp. A role play was enacted by the Trained Birth Attendant students of the 2016 batch who are currently doing their rural internship in the Centres, this highlighted how parents are keen to have sons rather than daughters and how the daughters are a financial burden to the family.

On the 3rd April a **Dental Check-up Camp** was organised at Bamhani Base Centre with Dr. Sarap (Dental Surgeon) from the local Government Medical College travelling from Nagpur to Bamhani with the fully equipped Mobile Dental van and laboratory, together with 4 interns and a Laboratory Attendant. The team saw a total of 92 patients from 14 villages with the Sangam drivers providing transport from all three Sub-Centres. The Doctors carried out cleaning and de-scaling on 45 patients with 15 patients having fillings and 6 patients having teeth extracted. 10 further patients were suffering severe pain and discomfort with their teeth and were given a course of medication with the Sangam's Health Team taking on responsibility for those patients needing to attend the Medical College, along with a further 6 patients who were identified as requiring braces. The entire staff at Bamhani, the 3 Sub-Centres and the Counselling Cell worked hard to make the programme successful.

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



Dental Check-Up camp in Bamhani Base Camp with the Dental Team and the Sangam Team

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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