

Piali Ashar Alo School Report

May – September 2013

India's hottest days usually take place during the month of May, which is why we also close our



school for 3-week holidays at this time. Our students spend their holidays at home or with relatives. They look forward to their holidays because it's very difficult for them to concentrate on their studies during the heat of the summer weeks. Because our students don't spend their summer vacation at the seaside, they find wet summer fun in local ponds!

This year, the monsoon (India's rainiest season), had already arrived by late June. It has now been raining nearly every day for over two months. Because of the rain, small houses made from mud and bamboo – houses that seem romantic and exotic to many visitors during the dry season – are now actually in very poor



condition and dangerous. This unfortunately proved all too true for two of our students, whose house (in the photo above) literally collapsed on the entire family at night, while they were sleeping. Luckily, the two girls sustained only minor injuries.

Our students complete their second semester during the monsoon months and after successfully completing examinations, begin the final months of the school year.



1. Special Occasions

On May 9th, we celebrated the anniversary of the birth of major Bengali poet, writer and philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore. Together with the teachers, our students prepared a short programme that included singing, dancing and recitations. Jana Tomc also sang and celebrated with us - Jana is already our 22nd volunteer



and helped us during the last hottest weeks before summer vacation.

On August 15th, we celebrated Independence Day with a short programme. To mark this special occasion, we decorate the larger classroom with paper flags and prepare a space for raising a larger flag of India. The base of the flagpole is covered with flowers and incense is also lit. On this holiday, villagers typically treat themselves to samosa and sweet jalebi.



The 5th of September is a special day for teachers as India celebrates educators with a special holiday on Teacher's Day. We celebrated the school day with our teachers by preparing small

gifts and games, while the entire day's programme as well as regular classes were actually led by the students themselves! It was great fun! And although there were initially many volunteers who wanted to try out the role of the teacher, they quickly discovered that directing class is not quite as easy as it seems!

2. Visitors

India is not a popular destination among travellers during the summer and monsoon months, so we also receive fewer visits at this time. That's probably why we're all the more happy to host our guests! Our students sang and danced with Ivan and Maja by the guitar. Maja is a biologist from Slovenia while Ivan is a musician from Chile. The joys and challenges of a typically wet and muddy monsoon morning were shared with us by Martina (a lawyer) and Nena (a medical doctor).



3. Our New School



Our new school is growing and we hope that in our next report, we'll already be able to let you know that we've moved into our very



own spaces. The sponsor of our building construction is non-profit organization from Germany, CED. The founder and Director of CED is Ms. Susanne Pechel, a medical doctor who specializes in tropical medicine. As a 16-year old, Susanne held her first fundraising concert for a school in Kolkata. When she was 26 years old, Susanne personally visited Kolkata and founded CED with the help of seven friends. With each passing year, CED's support base has grown so that today, CED is supported by approximately 2000 individuals in Germany who help nearly half a million people by funding 12 projects across Africa, India and Eastern Europe. CED has become a big family that raises funds for its projects by carrying out various programmes like selling the typical food of different countries, cleaning the shoes of passerby's, holding musical performances and carrying out numerous other activities.



4. Activities in Slovenia

- During the month of June, the traditional and already 5th environmental-humanitarian action project *Preserve Slovenia - Help India* concluded in Celje for the year 2012/2013 under the honourable sponsorship of Member of European Parliament, Dr. Romana Jordan. Under the programme, everyone throughout Slovenia was welcome to donate waste paper – kindergartens, schools, companies, individuals, etc. Participants collected a total of more than 30,000 kg of paper and through its sale and other collected funds contributed 2.700,80 € to humanitarian causes. This year, most funds were raised by students of First High School in Celje. At Friday's concluding event, these students also hosted Member of European Parliament, Dr. Romana Jordan, Ambassador of India to the Republic of Slovenia, His Excellency Mr. Jayakar Jerome and one of the first Slovenian volunteers to work at our school, Ms. Tanja Užmah Mosquera.

But that's not all – the *Preserve Slovenia – Help India* action project is continuing this year and has actually already started during the month of September. You can find more information at the following link: <http://www.romanajordan.si/indija>.

- At the initiative of Ladies` Circle Slovenia and in cooperation with the Humanitarian Light of Hope Association, we`ll be carrying out a collection for school supplies during the month of October. Under the *Sketch a Better World (Zariši lepši svet)* action project, we`ll be collecting small school supplies for our students. If you would like to participate in this programme, please send an e-mail to: drustvolucupanja@gmail.com.

To conclude, following is the link to the Tednik national TV programme that was aired in June. The feature on our school was prepared by Nina Cijan and Marko Kumer:

<http://ava.rtv slo.si/predvajaj/tednik/ava2.169115685/>. (feature begins at 34:45)

You can find more news, information and photographs on our website: www.pialiasharalo.org.

Thank you for your support!

Kind regards,

Mojca and Anup Gayen