

# Piali Ashar Alo School

## Report May-September 2014

---



Our children have three-week holidays at the end of May and into the beginning of June, when the days are hottest here. After the holidays, we're already faced with the monsoon season which pretty much colours our months of July and August – and even today, at the beginning of September, it is from a rainy Piali that we send you our greetings. Because we're

safely 'stowed away' in our colourful new classrooms, we're well and happy nonetheless. Over the past few months, we've furnished the classrooms so that our students no longer sit on the floor. While kids in rural India are actually fairly used to sitting on the floor and are comfortable doing so, it isn't the most appropriate position for doing schoolwork. Our students like to sit on the floor when they listen to their teachers or participate in creative activities, but they have a hard time when they need to write something down or copy something from the board. When seating in an unsuitable position on the floor, they constantly shift their seating in order to alleviate the discomfort of having to slouch. Perhaps most important of all is the fact that our students can now also boast about no longer having to sit on the floor at school. The above photos compare our class of today with that from the past.



### 1. Events in Slovenia

☀ We also spent a part of our holidays in Slovenia this year. A special thank you to all those who were able to join us at our meeting for sponsors and to those who came to visit us at either of the two stands we held in Ljubljana and Maribor. I am always happy for the opportunity to speak with you personally, to answer any questions and to shake your hand in gratitude. These are very special moments that I take back to India with me and which I share with our students and teachers. We thank Tržnice Ljubljana and Europark Maribor, which enabled us to set up stands free of charge. I'm also grateful to POP TV for their sincere interest in presenting the continuation of our story on the programme *24 Hours*. The space for our sponsors' meeting was kindly provided by MIC – Ljubljana's Youth Information Centre.

We also owe a great debt of gratitude to the President of the Republic of Slovenia, the Honourable Mr. Borut Pahor, who took time out of his busy schedule in order to receive us. Over tea, we discussed the work we've been doing as well as our plans for the future. We spoke of the difficult position faced by many girls and women in India and on what we can do to improve their circumstances. President Pahor offered his support for our continued projects.

The Humanitarian Light of Hope Association organized and co-ordinated events in Slovenia and we also received a lot of help from our very loyal volunteers. Many thanks!



You can find more information about these events on the following links:

- 24 hour programme, POP TV:  
<http://www.24ur.com/novice/svet/slovenka-revnim-indijskim-otrokom-omogocila-solanje.html>

- Portal siol.net:  
<http://www.siol.net/novice/junaki-za-jutri/2014/06/slovenka-ki-revnim-indijskim-otrokom-gradi-solo.aspx>

- Publication on the website of the President of the Republic of Slovenia: <http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs.nsf/objave/71AB95EBD669030AC1257CEB004472E3?OpenDocument>

☀ While in Slovenia, we participated in the conclusion of the already sixth environmental-humanitarian action programme *Preserve Slovenia – Help India*, whose sponsor is Dr. Romana Jordan. In the 2013/2014 school year, schools, kindergartens, organizations and individuals across Slovenia together collected more than 36 tons of paper and donated 3,163 Euro for the poorest children of Pali. Over the past six years, 139 organizations have successfully participated in this project, together having collected more than 311 tons of paper and donating a total of 27,059.28 Eur. This year, the concluding ceremony for the project was organized by the Maribor Secondary School of Economics that with the help of numerous other organizations collected the most paper in the framework of its very admirable and ambitious project *Six Million Boats for a Different Childhood*.

This action programme will also continue in the upcoming year, thanks to the unselfish and sincere support of Dr. Romana Jordan and in cooperation with the Humanitarian Light of Hope Association. We invite everyone to participate, anyone can join in this great endeavour – individuals, organizations, school, kindergartens .... Please participate! You can find more information on: <http://www.romanajordan.si/indija>

## 2. Visits and Volunteers



With extreme happiness and wide open arms, we were again privileged to receive a visit from representatives of German organization CED - Ms. Susanne and Mr. Holger. Through its unselfish support, the CED family has stood by our side for a number of years and their love and care really does mean a great deal to us. During this visit, our students showed our visitors what they've learned in creative workshops and were also able to give our guests some simple gifts that they had made

themselves: dolls made from jute, embroidered handkerchiefs and drawings. In exchange, Mr. Holger and Ms. Susanne also brought small gifts and always welcome lollipops for all of our students. For an extra special end to the day, our elder students danced to the rhythm of songs that Ms. Susanne had written herself.



Young university students Mateja and Aneta spent part of their summer holidays with us. Despite the humid, rainy weather, their positive energy and creativity remained high, bringing a lot of freshness and fun to our lessons. Together with the children, we learned about the world, counted the oceans and continents, formed brooches in the

shapes of fish, made hand prints, flew paper butterflies and played with handmade dolls. Thanks for a really pleasant stay!

This year we were also visited by girls from the group POTA – an international group volunteer programme. Maja, Kristina and Glorija volunteered at the homes of Mother Teresa; Manja, Katarina and Jerneja spent their days in our company. The girls helped during English and Math class. They performed creative activities with the students and played group games. Using simple



puppets, they also presented the story of Jesus and sang songs with us. I think we can whisper the fact that they got their hair and eyebrows done with our cosmetician/hairdressing trainees and had their hands painted with kana. So it hasn't all been just about work! : )



We also received a visit from Mr. Bryan Beaton, an experienced teacher who has shared his knowledge and experience with students and educators throughout the world. He prepared an excellent workshop for our teachers, where we sought to find ways on how to develop a more interesting, diverse and rich curriculum; how to ensure that our students become more active and independent; how to stimulate higher processes of

learning, etc. We are not trying out our new-found knowledge in practice.

### 3. Special Events



On August 15th, we celebrated Independence Day with the raising of India's flag and a short cultural programme that has already become a tradition for this event.

Our students were especially animated for the celebration of Teacher's Day. To mark

this occasion, our teachers enjoyed participating in games that required that little extra bit of ingenuity, skill and courage.



Our students prepared for their teachers a programme filled with dance, singing and drama and awarded them with gifts.

#### 4. Adult Literacy Course!



In the month of August we started our long awaited course for adult literacy. This is being attended by a diverse group of women, some of whom are sitting in a classroom for the very first time and others who already have some knowledge which they wish to develop and enrich. It is a real new challenge for our teacher of Bengali who always adds that the students are working hard and making good progress.

#### 5. Our Children – Sima



Our greatest inspiration are of course, our children. This time we're going to highlight the story of Sima, who has been attending our school since its very beginnings. Because her family lives in a distant rural area, Sima lives with her grandmother in Piali. Sima and her



grandmother live in a small house that's squeezed around other similar homes alongside the train tracks. Despite their impoverished way of life - where there isn't enough money to buy even a toothbrush - Sima is growing up into a hard-working, ambitious young woman who wants to become a teacher.

***We thank you all for standing by our side!***

***Mojca and Anup Gayen, Piali Ashar Alo***