

DAIS – Indo-Czech Service Project March 22nd to 24th 2012

As a new initiative this year, our school has collaborated with – The Open Gate School - Prague, to promote an exchange programme that hopes to foster new ties & international understanding between the 2 schools at an educational & cultural level.



The first half of this exchange programme involved doing service in both the villages. From 22nd to 24th March 2012, 10 students from the Open Gate School, Prague, along with 18 DAIS students from Year 11 & Year 9, set off to complete the last leg of the Kumbhargharh project for the academic year 2011-12. They were accompanied by 2 teachers from the Open Gate School & 4 teachers from DAIS.

Only 4 hours away from Mumbai, and an hour away from the lush green fields of Patalganga, students found themselves almost straddling 2 worlds. On one hand was the heart wrenching plight of the landless adivasis, ostracized & living in deplorable conditions only a few minutes away from the main village & on the other hand was the comfortable Reliance Guesthouse that they retired to every evening after a long day's work under the scorching heat.



Our task over the 3 days included completion of the sewage pits & all the walls of the 1st mud house in the village – a herculean task for a handful of students with no practical knowledge of handling the tools of the trade or the structural information of building a sewage pit or creating a mud house for that matter. Guided by the Team Leader Mr. Yassir Choonawala who has overseen the entire development of this project & some a couple of masons from the adjoining village, the students set about to their enormous assignment.

Divided into 2 groups on arrival, the students swung into action. While one group worked on the toilet blocks & the sewage pit, the other handled the mud house. Although the students had initially decided to work on each site for half a day & then swap tasks, they decided against it later as they had created a pace that was almost rhythmical as it was swift. Once they figured out the mechanics of swinging the pickaxe, they couldn't wait to return the next morning to stack bricks to line the inside of the completed sewage pit. Their commitment to the project was obvious as they were all at the worksite by 8 am the next morning!

The second group perfected the art of making mud walls as they sang their way through the mixing of sand, cement mud and jaggery water in exact proportions. Much to our delight, the mud that had been pressed into frames was set creating a structure strong enough to withstand the weight of the entire team of students standing on the completed walls at the end of the task.



So on the 3rd day, with the sun blazing down on our troop of hard workers and only one tree in the entire village to provide us with some much needed shade, we packed our bags & returned to Mumbai, content with our contribution to the project of Empowering Rural India.

