

## COVID-19 September and October Report

### LEARN FOR LIFE EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

It has been over one-and-a-half years since the global pandemic began, and the Learn for Life Empowerment Project (LFL) India continues her work to guarantee health and social protection for both her workers and her beneficiaries, as well as to bring substantial help to the public at large.

The first highlight for which we are very happy is that the Badi Asha School has finally re-opened in October, and students from classes 1 to 5 can now give their lessons their physical presence. All the kindergarten pupils have been admitted to class 1; therefore, soon we will start the admission process for a new kindergarten batch. As COVID rules demand classes with smaller numbers of students, we are approaching this transition gradually. That is why online classes are still going on for students of classes 6, 7 and 8. In regard to the online classes, we have started a new cooperation with the Ramakrishna Mission, with whom we have collaborated several times in the past (for example, with the rural Telemedicine Project for which they were granted 25000 euros funds by the German Embassy). Now the idea is to employ the same technological resources used in the telemedicine for the online classes as well.

In order to bring back to school all our students, on October 15<sup>th</sup> we finalised the rent agreement for the building next to our school. This extra space will allow us to be in compliance with the new COVID rules and at the same time, allow all the students to physically attend their classes: in relocating the classrooms here, we will be able to provide our students with bigger and better-ventilated classrooms. They will be divided into more classrooms in smaller groups, and their body temperatures will be monitored twice a day: upon reaching school, and when leaving.

Furthermore, our Tailoring Project unit will be shifted here too. The Tailoring Project training keeps going on as usual and, apart from the production of organic cotton masks, lately it has focused on both stitching new uniforms for our students as well as on production of men and women's garments for export and sale in Europe. Currently we are in the process of obtaining the Fair-Trade Certificate for our products. We believe this will increase our products' outreach, allowing us to become a potential supplier to European Fair-Trade vendors.

As per Covid rules, we are not allowed to open the school kitchen and distribute lunch to the students at school. So, in order to guarantee them with a healthy meal per day, the food ration distribution at the premises of the school is still in place.

In this regard, both Ramakrishna Mission and Asian Bridge are maintaining their free food distribution to the population affected by the heavy monsoon this year, as well as addressing other people in need; in fact, although the COVID situation is presently under control, the economic crisis due to the pandemic is still dire.

At the Varanasi guesthouse, the cooking classes are going on as usual and we are preparing to reopen our restaurant and guesthouse for stay-in guests soon.

In Delhi, we are about to welcome 3 new trainees who will soon be part of our Bakery Vocational Training. At present, we are getting ready for the Christmas season, which we hope shall be as busy a period as usual for our Bakery. Once every two weeks we have a stall at the German Embassy where we sell our products to the Embassy staff, and every weekend we take part to the Sunder Nursery Market alongside (mostly) organic farmers and other small Delhi vendors. We started again our cooperation with the Nuernberger Messe and the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce, for whom we will provide staff and catering at the upcoming Trade Fair in Delhi ("Bio Fach"), which will take place at the end of October.

Although the situation seems to improve and LFL staff is working hard and making amazing progresses, nearly all our sources of income: that is our sales points like the LFL shops, Delhi and Varanasi Restaurants and Guesthouse will take time, once opened again, to generate the same amount of income as in a pre-COVID scenario. Therefore, The Project is still in need of funds and support in this phase; especially if we consider the recent increasement of expenses: the rent of a new and more spacious building for the school, in order to be in compliance with COVID regulations; new teachers to be hired to cover the extra classes (since we will split each class into two different classes to have smaller numbers of students in each); last but not the least, to reopen shops and restaurant after more than one-and-half year means that we will have initial expenses which won't be covered immediately by the sales as we will need time to rebuild our costumers pool and to be able to generate regular income. In fact, without external funds we risk to close our restaurants and shops permanently.