

The Society of St Mary the Virgin in India

Director's Annual Report 2021

2021 has been a difficult year as the pandemic reached its peak in India. Lockdowns and government restrictions have greatly affected the lives of families below the poverty line. Some of children in the Hostel and the Schools lost their parents and many families lost the source of their livelihood. We were able to face all these challenges with the strong faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and support of the management and cooperation from the donors, stake holders, staff and friends.

St Michael's Hostel

The St. Michael's Hostel is a residential setting providing support for 124 children considered at high risk; this includes orphaned children and children of single parent's, in particular children of sex workers, children affected by HIV-AIDS and children from very poor families.

When schools were closed in lockdown, we were able to provide online education. We managed to convert one of the study halls into an online classroom with all the required computer technology to deliver lessons online. We were also able to raise funds and coordinate donations in the form of food grains and other life essential items for almost 120 families during the lockdown period.

During this time the children were completely cut-off from social interaction and were facing emotional and psychological challenges. We conducted many online sessions to support the children's emotional wellbeing consisting of stress management and life skill programmes, as well as magic shows, origami, art and craft classes and yoga training. All of which helped the children face the stresses of this pandemic period.

Despite all these challenges, the Secondary School Certificate results of the hostel were superb as students excelled in their academic exams.

St Hilda's School

St Hilda's School is specially run for marginalized girls and girls from the slums of Pune City. 450 girls are educated here from kindergarten to 10th Grade. The school provides all facilities such as well-equipped computer and Science laboratories, a library and a playground. A mid-day meal is provided for the children, transport to and from school as well as all the educational materials and stationery equipment they need.

The school has an excellent academic reputation achieving great success in examinations, even during the pandemic period. Two students deserving of recognition for their hard work are Rajlaxmi Dhumal and Ashwini Bansode scoring 90% in the Secondary School Certificate exam.



Recent staff appointments to the school management team are Mrs. Binita Rathod as the Head Mistress of the St. Hilda's High School and Mrs. Sunita Thombre as the Head Mistress of the St. Hilda's Primary School. The school is making efforts to increase the student numbers for which we are looking for sponsors.



Epiphany School

The Epiphany School is a co-educational, English Medium School. The school caters for 520 boys and girls from lower income families of the community.

Out of the 57 students who took the Secondary School Certificate exam, all passed with flying colours and five students obtained distinction.

Shanti Sadan School

The Shanti Sadan School, Lonavala, Pune is also a co-educational English Medium School. The school caters for 212 boys and girls from the lower income group families and in particular students whose families have migrated from other states in search of jobs in Lonavala, a tourist area. The school also provides education for local children from rural farming and tribal families. With sponsorship from a local company in Pune, a new toilet block was also built this year.



Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the school achieved excellent results in the Secondary School Certificate exam, in which 5 students obtained distinction.

During the lockdown period of online learning, the teachers across all the schools we support in Pune have proven successful at supporting their students engage with online learning and adapt to the different digital learning platforms. Teachers were able to remain in continuous contact with students and their families to minimise any disruption to their learning.

Support for Women

The need for safe and affordable accommodation for women travelling to Pune from rural Maharashtra for employment is catered for by the Convent of St Mary's Working Women's Hostel. At present there are six working women resident at the hostel. A Tailoring Institute run by SSMVI provides training for women at a subsidised rate. The skills learnt enable these women to earn their own livelihood within the garment industry. At present there are seven trainees enrolled in the class. St John's Home provides care for vulnerable elderly women within the community, at present there are nine women being cared for at St John's Home.

I thank the Sisters, the Board of Trustees of The Convent of St Mary the Virgin and Sister Stella for the support in the challenging times of Covid-19. We look forward to supporting more children and women in difficult situations for which we need your prayers and blessings. I am sure we will be able to do so, as it is our vision and mission to support the Last of the Least. I thank my management for their support and guidance.

May God bless us all.

Ashish James
Director SSMVI