



Cataract operations at Bilari Community Hospital

- **FREE EYE CAMP**

On 10th November, a successful eye camp, funded by VRI trustee Janet Wilson, was held in co-operation with the Government District Eye Hospital, Moradabad. 354 patients were examined at the Amarpurkashi Health Centre. 33 were identified for possible cataract operations while all other patients were treated and given free medicines for a minimum of three days.

On 14th November, after checks on blood pressure and sugar levels, 26 patients were accepted for surgery and lens transplants without stitches were performed. They were then given free glasses to protect their eyes from dust and severe sun rays and taken back to Amarpurkashi where they stayed for the night under constant care and medication. They were provided with liquid food. In the morning of 15th November, their eyes were checked and medicine for twelve days was given to them. They were allowed to go home after strict instructions for post-operative care had been given to them and their assisting relatives.

On the 27th November 2011, the patients returned to the Amarpurkashi Health Centre where the doctor removed their bandages and checked their eye sight. Each patient was given a supply of medicines and a number of precautions to follow. They were told to return in 21 days' time for a final check. There were no complications.

Patients included 12 men and 14 women. They came from 18 villages, some of them are as far as 35 kilometres from Amarpurkashi. Four women did not have any friend or relative to help them but came on their own. They were very happy with the results and warmly thanked doctors and APK volunteers.



Two completed classrooms at Jafarpur High School and one in progress

- **BUY A BRICK CAMPAIGN**

This campaign to build new classrooms for Jafarpur High School has proved very successful. Two new rooms have been built, plastered and painted. A third is currently being constructed. The school now has official recognition as a high school. This year there are 219 pupils, 36% of whom are girls.

In two years' time, the school will be eligible to apply for sixth form status. In India, secondary schools with a sixth form are known as Inter Colleges. This will require more classrooms so we intend to continue our 'Buy a Brick' campaign.

- **HEALTH CAMP**

On 9th October 2011, a health camp for villagers was held at the Amarpurkashi Health Centre. 384 patients came from 30 local villages. The doctors, who came from Moradabad where they all have private practices, included three gynaecologists and a specialist in children's illnesses.

Three days' medicine was given to every patient according to the advice of the doctor and they were told that if they had any further problems, they could go to the doctor's clinic in Moradabad where they would be treated for free.



INTAF National Conference at Amarpurkashi

- **INTAF NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

On 26th and 27th November, a national conference organised by INTAF (International Task Force for the Rural Poor) and hosted by the Gramodaya Post-Graduate College, was held at Amarpurkashi. The theme of the conference was "Corruption and its effects on the Rural Poor". Over 240 delegates attended, including voluntary workers, researchers, students and villagers.

After a lively, well-informed, two-day discussion, nine conclusions were formulated and sent to the Honourable Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Honourable Chairman of the Rajya Sabha with a request that they be included in the anti-corruption bills due to be placed before parliament.



Fast in Amarpurkashi, supporting the campaign against corruption

- **ANTI-CORRUPTION FAST**

On 11th December, Anna Hazare, leader of the Anti-corruption Campaign, held a one-day fast in Delhi to put pressure on the government to pass a strong and effective anti-corruption bill in the forthcoming session of parliament. In Amarpurkashi, villagers gathered in support and fasted that same day to show solidarity for this important campaign.

- **AMARPURKASHI SURVEY**

In December, 50 students from the B.Ed. course run by the Gramodaya Post-Graduate College, worked in pairs to carry out a survey of the village. The results showed how much progress the village has made since the project began 41 years ago.

- Population is now 1522, a three-fold increase
- 51.8% are women
- 27.8% are children aged 6-14 years
- There are only 953 girls for every 1000 boys
- 48% of the population is literate
- 59% men and 41% women are literate
- Only 307 out of 420 school-aged children were attending school
- Among those not attending, 45 were girls and 68 were boys

- **VISITORS**

From 16th to 18th October, Amarpurkashi hosted a visit from Cynthia Wilkinson and Dr. Manjula Sharma from the University of Sydney. They are hoping to send a group of

undergraduates to do two weeks' field study at Amarpurkashi next year.

In November, Toby Whitfeld, pv from 2006, paid another welcome visit. After his time as a pv, Toby set up an organisation, Villages Espoir, which has generously supported some of the activities in the project at APK.

In October, four undergraduate students from the Department of Agriculture Economics, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University of Agriculture and Technology, Meerut came to APK for three months' field work. During that time, they surveyed the village and learnt about local villagers and their life style.

VRI NEWS

• PROJECT VISITOR/VOLUNTEERS

In October, Amarpurkashi hosted two pvs, Brigid Muldoon from Canada and Tom Horton from the U.K. Both settled in very well and took a keen interest in all project activities.

• SOCIAL EVENT

On Sunday 11th December, trustees met at the Sangeetha Vegetarian Restaurant in Kenton for a very enjoyable lunch. There was an excellent buffet of inexpensive South Indian food. We hope to hold another one in March.

• POETRY NIGHT

On Friday 16th December, trustees Jyoti Singh and Anita Duggal attended Poetry Night at Manor Farm library in Ruislip. The library is a Grade II listed building, situated on the beautiful Manor Farm Heritage site. Jyoti read a selection of poems from Tanya Turton's book, "The Phoenix Rises" and talked briefly about VRI.

• GET TWEETING!

VRI has been tweeting tantalising tit-bits with fellow Twitter users on the micro-blogging site since 2011 and would like to invite you to set up your own profile and follow us. If you are interested in keeping up-to-date with news and events in APK, please search for us

by the username @vricharity and select 'follow'.

If you are not familiar with Twitter, here are some basic instructions to get you started.

- Visit <http://twitter.com/>
- Enter your email address, full name and a password in the boxes on the right hand side for new members.
- You will be taken to a new screen where you are offered a suggested username. You can change this if you want but it will need to be something that hasn't already been taken.
- Once you have selected a suitable username, click "Create my account"
- A confirmation message will be sent to your email address. Open the email and click on the link which will take you back into Twitter in a new window.
- From here you can adjust your profile settings such as your time zone or whether you wish to 'protect' your tweets.
- Click 'Save'

You are now set up with a Twitter profile. Next you need to find VRI. At the top of the screen there is an option "Who to Follow" for suggestions which will tell you who the most popular Tweeters are at the moment. To find us, enter VRICharity in the search box and it should bring up our Twitter account and a button next to it that says "Follow" for you to click. If at any point you wish to stop following someone there is an option to Unfollow by going into the user's profile and clicking the unfollow button under their image.

If you own an iPhone or an android, you can download Twitter for free and even follow us on the move, so there really is no excuse!

Feel free to get in touch with me if you need any help: ms.shobhana.singh@gmail.com

• NEWS

We were very sorry to learn that trustee, David Blair, is off to New Zealand with his girlfriend in April. They hope to work there for a few years. David has been our Fund-

raising Co-ordinator and was responsible for setting up the successful 'Buy a Brick' campaign. We wish them the very best of luck.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Sunday May 27th at 2pm.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday 5th August at 2pm. All members are welcome.

- **APPEAL**

Do you have old cds, games or dvds lying around cluttering up the place? If so, please donate them to VRI. We will sell them to Music Magpie and raise funds for the project.

The collection place is the VRI office in South Harrow. Either ring Jyoti to let her know when you are coming or if it is difficult for you to bring them yourself and you live in London up to and including zone 6, Jyoti can come and collect them from you.

If you have any good ideas or suggestions for fund-raising, please email VRI. We are keen to continue raising funds for Jafarpur High School and for more health and eye camps for villagers so we would welcome all contributions.

- **GETTING INVOLVED**

If you live in or near London, you are most welcome to join our Executive Committee as a trustee. We meet at the VRI office in January, May and October every year.

If you live outside London or overseas, please publicise VRI. We now have new leaflets and posters which can be emailed or posted to you.

- **RAJNI'S RECIPE**

Stuffed Karela (bitter gourd)

Ingredients:

3 karela

Oil for frying

1 large onion or 2 medium ones

Zeera (cumin seeds)- 1 full teaspoonful

Hing (asafoetida) - pinch

Dhaniya (coriander powder) - one very full teaspoonful

Mirch (chilli powder) - one teaspoonful

Huldee (turmeric) – one full teaspoonful

Aamchoor (dried mango powder) – one very full teaspoonful

Saunf (fennel powder) – one very full teaspoonful

Salt according to taste

Wash the karela and slit them open length ways. Rub them generously with salt and leave them in a plastic container overnight.

Next day, squeeze out the salty water, rinse thoroughly and pat the karela dry with kitchen towel. Heat the oil in a flat-bottomed frying pan, add the zeera and hing and finely chopped onion. Cook until the onion is soft and transparent. Add all the spices and salt. Mix well. Now fill the slits in the karela with this mixture, wrap them in aluminium foil and cook them in a hot oven OR after stuffing them, lay them on the bottom of a frying pan in a little hot oil, cover with a firm lid and cook till done.

If you try this recipe, please let us know how it went!!



Karela or bitter gourd

Volunteers for Rural India
(Formerly IVCS)

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