



RITINJALI

Ritinjali's Flood Relief Effort in Bihar: Report from the Ground
Newsletter IV



1. Rampuria Vasa school after repairs are complete

After the floodwaters in Bihar had receded, a Ritinjali team had travelled extensively in one of the districts worst affected by the floods to conduct a needs assessment and understand the extent of the damage to local schools and the impact on providing educational services.

The team visited villages in Madhepura district, and met with the District Administration Officials, District Education Officials, local NGOs and the evacuees to assess and understand the current educational situation and to formulate a plan for future efforts.

As part of its efforts to improve the educational facilities in Madhepura, the Ritinjali team had zeroed in on the Primary school located at the village of Rampuria Vasa (see picture 1 above). The team had formulated the following plan of action during their previous visit:

- Improving the physical infrastructure. This will include painting the classrooms, building a boundary wall around the school for security,

building a toilet, providing furniture, fixtures and swing and play material.

- Providing teaching aids such as blackboards, books, copies, pencils and other materials to support teaching and learning.
- Empowering teachers through regular teacher training programmes, including those from surrounding villages.
- Rampuria Vasa Primary School will become a nodal point for facilitating teaching-learning in the surrounding villages of Madhepura district.
- Imparting social awareness and responsibility to the students of the school and empowering them to become better citizens.
- Improving the quality of life and decision making of the students and families of the students of the school.
- Providing scholarships to 2 students to continue their higher education. We identified 2 children, a boy named Mohammed Rustam and a girl named Rasina Khatun who we will support so that they can realize their ambitions and become leaders in their community.

Community Mobilisation and Involvement

To implement the plan of action a team from Ritinjali, including two boys from Ritinjali's Second Chance Program and two Ritinjali staff members, left for Khagaria on 14th of January 2009. They carried solar lamps, slippers and blankets for the inhabitants of the village of Rampuria Vasa. Before any implementation of the action plan, the team had to take into confidence the entire village and also the head of the village. The team from Ritinjali met the village head Mr. Parmanand along with the villagers and discussed with them our plan for the village and urged him for his support. Mr. Parmanand was more than ready to help us towards the successful implementation of the plans and arranged for labour and also agreed to arrange for material for conducting the work at the school and the village. The villages were more than happy to see the Ritinjali team and some of them recalled seeing us work the Zero Mile camp. The team was welcomed and served with local sweets and tea.

Renovating the school building

After assessing the school building carefully, the Ritinjali team listed a few immediate tasks to be completed: Paint walls, fill cracks in ceilings and walls, repair toilets, and paint blackboards.

After discussing the list with the local Mason, the material for renovation of the building was purchased locally. Labour was also hired locally and the entire school building was painted in dark brick red colour (see picture 4) while the classrooms were painted with green colour. The cracks were filled up and then painted. A sweeper was hired from Gwalpada who cleaned the toilet

and cleared the blockage to make it usable. All the blackboards in the school were painted by the team from Ritinjali (see pictures 2 and 3).



2. Before: A classroom at Rampuria Vasa school



3. After: A classroom at Rampuria Vasa school

While the renovation work was going on, an assessment of the internal requirements of the school was made. There were no proper seating arrangements for the students and they were found to be sitting on sacks that they would bring from home. To alleviate this situation, the team presented 12 dhurries to the school authorities.



4. Ritinjali team at work

Scholarships

On the last visit the Ritinjali team had selected two students we had decided to support financially so that they would be able to continue their education. Mohammed Rustam is 10 years of age and lives in Pama village, Saharsa district with his parents and 4 siblings. Raisina Khatun is 9 years old and lives in Bishanpur village, Madhepura district with her parents and 5 siblings. The hope is that, with our assistance, these two very promising children will complete their education and grow up to become leaders in their community. The Ritinjali team bought copies for Hindi, English and Math's, subjects Pencil boxes, Shoes and socks, Pencils, sharpeners and rubbers, School bags, Story and Drawing books and handed them over to both the students. Both Raisina and Mohammed were also given blankets and a scholarship of Rs. 500 each (see pictures 5 and 6).



5. Raisina Khatun



6. Mohammed Rustam

Solar Lamps

During the Ritinjali team's last visit, on one particularly dark night, they noticed a group of students studying in a tiny hut with a small lamp burning in the centre. It was inspiring to see the effort the students were making to educate themselves. The team spoke with children in the hut and asked them about their ambitions for the future: While most of them said that they wanted to become teachers one boy said that he wanted to serve the country by becoming a soldier.

On this visit, the team installed 2 solar lamps out of 5 that were donated by **Andromeda Energy Private Limited**. One was put up at Rampuria Vasa School and another at the neighbouring Anganwadi centre situated in the village. They asked the landlord to oversee the careful handling of the solar lamps and to provide space in the school in the evenings for those students who were interested in studying. A teacher was appointed who would help these students with their studies in the evening.

Sports and Development

To enhance the extra curricular activities of the students the Ritinjali team also bought some sports equipment which included a football, a cricket bat and balls, badminton racquets, frisbees, skipping ropes etc. When the football was handed over to the students of the school, they immediately started playing with it. The enjoyment was clear on their faces.

While the students now had sports equipment, the team noted quickly that there was no allocated playground for them to play in. The Ritinjali team requested Mr. Parmanand to allocate the land adjacent to the school building to create this space. He readily agreed and a boundary wall was erected using bamboos, so that the students had their own space to enjoy playing games with the equipment that Ritinjali had specially bought for them.

Finally, a football match was organized between the class 4 and class 5 of the School. Class 5 quite easily defeated Class 4th, with a final score of 5-2 (see picture 7). Both the winners and the runners up were awarded trophies. A drawing competition was also conducted the same day and 5 best students were awarded.



7. Class 5: The winning team

Other Activities

Next on the agenda was to buy teaching aids and other stationary material for the school. The team again purchased these materials from the local market and handed over 300 copies, 300 pencils, erasers and sharpeners, 10 pens for the teachers, crayons, drawing and story books, 10 registers for the teachers and headmaster, pictorial charts and Ludo games, and a wall clock for the school. Over 200 blankets were also distributed to the families in the village (see picture 8).

Additionally, it was noted that the mid day meals that are usually served in all the primary government schools have not arrived at Rampuria Vasa ever since the flooding. The Ritinjali team decided to give an impetus to this initiative by providing lunch to the students. Rice, dal, a vegetable dish, and papad were prepared at the village and were served to all the students.

Local Buy-in and Support

Throughout Ritinjali's relief efforts, whether at Zero Mile camp or in Rampuria Vasa, we have received a great deal of support from the local SP of Khagaria, Mr. Kamal Kishore and the local NGO, *Sarva Priya Khadhigram Udyog Samiti*, located in Khatghara, Gogri Jamalpur. Mr. Kaushal Kishore, the main coordinator of the NGO, along with Mr. Manoj specially came from Khagaria with his vehicle, to help transport the materials we had purchased for the village. Mr. Shravan, the NGO representative, accompanied us

throughout our trip, and was a big help whenever we faced problems at the local level.



8. Distributing blankets to community members

Next Steps

With the immediate infrastructural needs of Rampuria Vasa taken care of, the Ritinjali team is ready to facilitate workshops and trainings that will go towards improving the quality of education in the school through teacher training. The team had determined that Rampuria Vasa school would act as a nodal point to provide training to the teachers in the school and the surrounding area. With the support and involvement of the local village head, Mr. Paramchand, there should be a needs assessment conducted on the specific areas of training that would be most beneficial to the teachers. Then a teacher training team is to be assembled to provide training at the school.

Additionally, the team had noted the importance of imparting social awareness and responsibility to the students of the school, so that they are empowered to become better citizens. They had also indicated a need for a workshop that improved the quality of life and decision making of the students and their families. Again, in both cases, a training module needs to be adapted from existing Ritinjali materials and a team needs to be established to conduct the workshop.

Finally, the Ritinjali team suggested that donations of slippers, blankets, dhurries and stationary are needed.

For donations, questions or suggestions, please call Anju Dhar at 9312211876, Deepika Nanjappa at 9811066550 or Ashish Alex at 991144046. All donations to Ritinjali are exempted from IT under section 80 G.