



**AKSHY**  
ASSOCIATION  
[www.akshy.org](http://www.akshy.org)

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022

# INDEX

<b>1.</b> Letter .....	3
<b>2.</b> About us .....	5
Our association .....	5
How Akshy was born.....	6
Our team.....	7
<b>3.</b> Where we work .....	10
Our beneficiaries .....	11
<b>4.</b> How we work and what we do .....	13
How we act .....	13
Integral program .....	14
<b>5.</b> Achievements 2020.....	22
<b>6.</b> Origin and destination of resources .....	42
<b>7.</b> Awareness and outreach.....	43
<b>8.</b> Acknowledgments / Collaborate .....	44



## 1 Letter from the Director

*Dear Friends of Akshy,*

*2022 has been an intense year for our Akshy Association. With the support of all of you - sponsors, members and helpers - we were able to give continuity to our projects for education, empowerment of the women and social aid: our three main areas of activity.*

*In this same year and for the first time, Akshy was selected to receive a subsidy from the Caixa Foundation, which enabled us to improve our already ongoing projects as well as starting new ones.*

*These were months of intense activity with plenty work but at the same time highly satisfactory since we were able to reach out to many more beneficiaries this past year, not only among those already in contact with Akshy through our school but also among other villagers.*

*New to this year was our special interest in technology, providing the Akshy school with audiovisual systems which have improved pupil attention and also helped our teachers in their task of making the subject more comprehensible with computer classes. We have continued to concentrate on Universal Education (a programme of values) which is in fact the basis of the education Akshy offers, and for the first time, we introduced the subjects of Gender Equality and Sustainable Development. Specialized courses were held for the teachers so making it easier for them to handle such topics.*

*I have always been troubled with the kind of nourishment our children are fed which naturally has its effect on their physical and intellectual growth. For this reason we have distributed lentils or chickpeas to their families each month.*

*By means of weekly workshops with parents and also talks in the villages, we have tried to treat social matters that cause us much*



distress, such as domestic violence and the abuse of alcohol, as well too as a child's right to education and child marriage problems.

Under the heading "One Roof, One Home" we were able to provide a home for three different families who lived under plastics - no one should have to live in this way and often in very poor weather conditions.

I always remember the words of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar:

"I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress achieved by the women" and, as a woman

myself, I cannot agree more,

so our attention to projects addressed to the women is fundamental for changes to be made in the Dalit community where we work.

Once again I wish to show our gratitude for your trust and support which permit us to add our "drop of water in this ocean" and work towards a world of greater equality and justice for all.

Raquel Mason

Director

Asociación Akshy



# 2 WHAT IS AKSHY?

## OUR ASSOCIATION

Akshy India consists of a group of people sponsors, members, supporters and friends wishing to contribute voluntarily to alleviating some of the poverty and misery in which a large part of Indian society exists. We are a nonlucrative NGO which has as its main objective the improvement, by means of our different projects, of living conditions for the most illtreated children, women and old people in India, known as “dalits” or “untouchables.”

In conformity with present legislation, AKSHY is an NGO registered on 21 of January 2007 as a nonlucrative Association in the National Register of Associations at the Spanish Home Office, number 588315, CIF V84965912, and recognized by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID) having its seat in San Lorenzo de El Escorial. Akshy respects the multiplicity of traditions, cultures and religions of India, as well as its spirituality and customs.

## HOW AKSHY WAS BORN

Akshy India was started when Raquel Mason (Founder and Director) visited Bodhgaya, in the State of Bihar, in the winter of 2005. She began to recognize in greater depth the realities of rural India, the lack of equality existing among the castes and the needs of the population, especially of children. In the village she visited where “dalits” or “untouchables” live, Raquel was impressed by seeing a sick child whose name was Akshay. The poor boy looked sad, dirty, uncared for and surrounded by misery. Raquel found a doctor to cure him. She knew it was impossible to turn away and do nothing. She had to take action and began to realize that the only way to improve the living conditions of these little ones was through education in its widest sense, offering them in this way an opportunity to become adults with dignity.

Raquel began to send financial aid to cover the first needs of materials and, in the summer of 2006, a little school was opened in Amwan. In January 2007, the Akshy Association was formally registered and, little by little, more people interested in offering their drop of water joined, all wishing to help set up what is today the Akshy Association. With the commitment of sponsors and supporters, the team began



to develop different programmes. Although our Association has grown and new projects have arisen, we have always based our decisions on those principles on which our NGO was founded; Akshy is a direct, humane association accessible to all those who wish to join us.

## OBJETIVES AND VALUES OF AKSHY

Our aim is to promote the development of the most ill treated rural communities in India, with special emphasis on the dalits, or “the untouchables”, by means of education and improving the status of women, informing them of their rights, defending them, assuring and watching that the appropriate laws are applied. We work to alleviate extreme poverty, fight injustice and assist in the obtaining of a more equitable society with the same opportunities for this ostracized sector of India.

We give great importance to listening to the needs of individual persons, respecting their traditions and customs, trying to understand the difficult conditions and circumstances in which they exist. We are committed to continue supporting them regularly and seriously, and this encourages them to trust us in our work so that step by step we can increase our projects. We work with values: ethics, wisdom, responsibility and altruism which, being universal, can be shared by all persons regardless of their age, culture, race or religion, and are based on the Programme of Universal Education.

Our aim is to educate for a meaningful life to develop the individual’s potential for reaching happiness and personal excellence, in turn contributing to the welfare of others, to an improved society and to a more peaceful world.

The values and attitudes stated in the Universal Education Act and which we take into account in our programmes are essential to the honest character of our project. For more information on the programme, please browse website:

<http://educacionuniversal.org/>



## OUR TEAM

Our team consists of people wishing to help others by giving up some of their free time to assist voluntarily in our programme.



**Raquel Mason**  
Founder and Director

I'm Raquel Mason , founder and director of the Akshy Association. I have been living in India since 2008 and I direct the projects on the ground with the help of both the team in Spain and in India. I wanted my life to have a true meaning, convinced that we must feel a universal responsibility within us towards others. Therefore, I left my life comfortable in Spain to pursue a dream, that of a more just world. Every achievement is a reason for happiness for me.



**Enrique Tiscar**  
Secretary and Trustee

In 2013 I visited India on a solidarity trip organized by Akshy, I met the School in the village of Amwan. I was impressed by the great work that is done with the most disadvantaged. . Now I work as Secretary. Keeping the smiles of those girls and boys who live in the greatest poverty gives me strength to keep my commitment.



**Ana de las Heras**  
Vocal / Communication Manager and Trustee

Namaste! A few years ago I was a volunteer at the Akshay Educational Center. The students gave me life lessons that they would never imagine, since then, I collaborate whenever I can in the area of Communication.



## **Roberto Calderón**

### **Vocal / Technology Manager and Trustee**

I have always thought that it is very rewarding to donate your time and your know-how to causes that require it. Collaborating with Akshy fills me with satisfaction because I can see how every small gesture we make from Spain makes a big difference for its beneficiaries in India.

I started by supporting the Association with the Technological part and then I decided to join the Board of Trustees as a Member.



## **Ana Gutiérrez**

### **Vocal and Trustee**

Hello!! I'm Ana, I'm participating and supporting Akshy's projects since 2015. I've worked as a music teacher for more than 5 years and when I got to know the school in Amwan and Jaitiya. I was surprised to see how education was transforming the reality of each one of those kids, how Akshy with very little was giving them real tools so that they could choose and get out of the poverty to which they were condemned. Since then I continue participating in Akshy and contributing from my place in the different projects of Akshy.



## **Alexis Roitman**

### **Coordinator in Spain**

Namaste! I am Alexis Roitman, I know Akshy since 2015, I was lucky enough to go to Bodhgaya and see the projects that Akshy has been developing for more than 10 years. A work that impacts more than 200 families. Giving tools that last over time and that transforms the reality of the families that participate in the Akshy projects.

All the time that I was able to share in Akshy it did not leave me indifferent and when I returned to Spain I wanted to continue contributing with them, first as a volunteer and now as Coordinator. I hope I can continue to do my bit to support the social transformation that Akshy is carrying out with the most vulnerable in India.





## Hilary Lunn

### Translator

I have always helped children in difficult situations as much as possible, but when a friend explained to me how her daughter wanted to improve the lives of the underprivileged children in Bihar, India, it seemed like a wonderful project in which I wanted to collaborate, making English translations .



## Diana López

### Graphic designer

The best way to support a project is with what you do best. I am a graphic designer and I am very happy to be able to participate actively in Akshy, taking the design of the web and all the graphic elements that are needed to make this great little project known to the world.



## Juana Hidalgo

### Collaborator

Namaste. I'm Juana. I came to Akshy from the hand of my friends Diego and Pilar. Here we discover a project that made us fall in love, we discovered the smile of the girls and boys who can go to school every day, we discovered the beautiful work that is done with the elderly and families. That's how I got involved in sponsorship, in fairs and markets, in solidarity dinners and in weaving a dream together with other partners of Akshy and the Dalits of India.



## Maribel García

### Collaborator

I met Akshy for my friend Pilar, it seemed an interesting project and I became a partner. But when I traveled to India in 2013 I could see how beautiful and rewarding it is to be able to help the most needy children, women and old women.

I collaborate as a volunteer in the different events that take place.

## 3 WHERE DO WE WORK?



We work in Northeast India, in the villages of Amwan, Amwan Colony, Nautapur and Jaitiya, in the state of Bihar. It is an area where they live from agriculture and where there is no industry or other work alternatives.

India is one of the fastest growing countries in the world, it is even expected that it will become one of the most important economies in the coming years, but paradoxically, according to UN data, it also has 300 million poor people, the most on the planet and more than all of sub-Saharan Africa together, and some 60 million children are malnourished, so that 80% of children between 6 and 35 months suffer from anemia.

Bihar is the most backward state in India, with an annual per capita income in 2008/2009 of 235 euros (That of the country that year was stipulated at 646 euros). 53% of the population is illiterate (41% men and 67% women), of which 95% are Dalits (“untouchables”). Due to misery and social inequalities the state is immersed in economic chaos. Their population is often forced to migrate to other states to earn 200 rupees a day (2 euros approximately) in temporary Works (harvests, construction works, etc.)



## WHO BENEFIT FROM OUR WORK



15% of the population of Bihar are “dalits” who own less than 2% of the cultivated land. In Bihar’s rural villages the caste system is still in force and there is significant discrimination with regard to these people.

Akshy’s aim is to give particular support to the weakest, ostracized caste, the “dalits”, who live in extreme poverty and suffer as both social and financial outcasts. The “dalits” or “untouchables” are the members of a caste born with the “untouchable” stigma as a result of the impurity or uncleanliness of their traditional occupations.

They represent a community of some 170 million people in India. In Bihar there are almost 13 million dalits who have to face being ignored, discriminated and suffering violence from the dominating castes which do not allow them to possess one of the basic human rights, their own personal dignity. The Indian Constitution prohibits “untouchability”, meaning that the dominant castes cannot oblige the dalits to take the unclean jobs but road sweeping, corpse removing, toilet cleaning etc. are still carried out by them.

The “dalit” children have to sit apart in schools; in police stations no one listens to



them and they are treated badly; social workers refuse to visit dalit homes; access to the houses of other castes is refused for them and they can never sit at the same table to eat; in coffee bars they have different cups and other utensils. In some towns they are not allowed to enter the temples or cremate their deceased in the town's crematorium. They must keep their head down, work longer hours with lower wages and take insults and physical punishment. Their women are raped by their bosses as a form of punishment or humiliation.

We work in the districts set aside expressly for the “untouchables”, in the villages close to Bodhgaya such as Amwan, Nautapur and Amwan Colony, as well as in remote rural villages which become isolated during the monsoon season such as Jaitiya and Laxmipur. These village districts have no sanitary infrastructure or access by road. The dwellers there live in mud and straw huts, with one or two rooms for the whole family, no bathroom, light or running water; they have to share water pumps with the other neighbours.





# 4 HOW WE WORK AND WHAT WE DO

We have an integral programme which consists in different projects, starting with education and health awareness and finishing with environmental awareness. All our projects are directed to the most needed sector of the Indian society.

## WHAT WE DO

Aware of the fact that the future of a country depends on its schools, **our mode of action is always focused on education.** We believe that this is the best way for those most in need to reach a minimum standard of wellbeing which could be perpetuated in time. Firstly, we develop the area of child education. In addition to providing schooling, food, medical attention, emotional support, etc. for the most vulnerable children, we also work on projects favouring development and the health of the community in which they live. These children, once taught to read and write, will contribute to improve the living conditions of those around them. For this reason we place very special emphasis on the education of girls. They are the future mothers who will be in charge of transmitting to their sons and daughters the importance of attending school and receiving an education. In this connection, Akshy's education programme attempts to convince the children of the importance of developing behavioural and healthy habits which will endow them with the dignity due to them as human beings. We believe, therefore, that the care and education of the boys and girls will not only dignify future generations but will give a position of greater relevance to women and also teach the children to value the importance of respecting and assisting the old people and those with disability.

**The relevance of our project is social and for community integration,** deriving from education as the instrument of change. The establishing of schools creates a strong bond between the population and our Association, at the same time giving rise to a trust in us which draws us nearer to the women and old people. This also allows us better access to their problems, to see more easily their needs and so be able to act by laying down a base or structure which will make it possible for both the women and their children in the future to enjoy improved social and economic opportunities, perhaps being able to generate their own source of income, thus breaking down the vicious circle of poverty. As will be explained in later chapters, our prime objectives are to improve the conditions of the "dalit" boys and girls through education, raise their rate of literacy, dignify the position of the woman



within Indian rural society and encourage attention to the old and disabled. To this purpose, we have an integral programme composed of different projects adapted to the area in which Akshy operates: Bodhgaya and surrounding villages in the State of Bihar (North East India). Akshy Association works directly on its projects in the field in India with , personally developing and managing the activity. In this way management costs are reduced. Each project is supervised from start to finish, ensuring correct handling in a part of India where corruption is rife. We obtain firsthand information from direct contact with the people and this helps us to manage the projects correctly and also remain faithful to our own values.

## INTEGRAL PROGRAM

### EDUCATION PROJECT

We have two primary education schools. The children's ages range from 4 to 12 years old. In the Centre as well as the official subjects, they learn to express themselves, to take part in the programme of ethical values, have an opportunity in the plastic arts, value the environment and grow up with dignity. In our Environment programme we include different activities for the children so they become aware of the importance of living in surroundings free from plastic rubbish and filth. They are also taught the importance of not wasting but taking care of their natural resources.

#### **The Akshay School, in Amwan, Bodhaya:**

It was started in 2006. The boys and girls attending our school are the first generation of the "untouchable" caste to become literate in Amwan. The school is located in our Educational Centre inaugurated in 2012 where various different programmes are developed.



#### **Sangwaree Learning Centre**

The AKSHY ASSOCIATION together with the NIVEDITA FOUNDATION TRUST and the support of ZEN YOGA RUASOL has widened its field of action to the State of Chhattisgarh with a project addressed to the tribal community of the Sabariya in two centres - the Sangwaree Learning Centre has opened in two different towns. They have a 2 hour class each day with a teacher and learn Hindi, Maths and English. Since the teacher is one of their own community and so speaks the same language, the children understand these subjects better than they can in Hindi in the Government schools.



## Secondary and Higher Education



We finance Secondary Education and pre-university studies for those children who wish to continue once they have completed Year 5 In the Akshay School and when their parents agree. With our help they have access to more advanced studies. At present we are paying secondary education for pupils at various schools in Bodhgaya. **They are now mixing with boys and girls from all different castes.** Their academic life is in different surroundings but they continue their education in ethical values and environmental awareness as well as support in their studies by daily sessions in the Akshay Educational Centre. It must be mentioned here that the secondary education of our girls represents a true challenge if we bear in mind the traditional obstacles of child marriages and work in their home. The fact that girls can have access to secondary education is extremely important since, while being really hard to get them to the primary level, access to a secondary school signifies a drastic change and efforts which must be given their full due.

Very few families of “untouchable” girls allow them to continue with secondary studies once they complete primary; they have to take charge of the housework or prepare themselves for marriage. With the support we provide for secondary education, the girls and their families accept a short delay in marrying them which in turn enables them to continue their learning process for a few more years.



## Study Revision and Support Project

In the Akshay Education Centre private classes and study hours are provided each day for children at primary level who need extra help as well as for those with special educational needs.

The primary school children with learning problems receive help in private classes with a teacher in the afternoons.

Once the children complete their primary education, it is important that they have support and encouragement to continue their studies with tutors to guide them.

With our Support Project, the children can continue their secondary education and receive help in daily private classes during which the teachers can clarify doubts and revise the subjects studied at school.

By means of this project the children/adolescents reach a better understanding of their subjects and can enter their exams adequately prepared







## SOCIAL PROJECT

### Health Care and Preventive Medicine

It is also of vital importance that the children have access to qualified medical attention. Since their families cannot afford to pay for a doctor and medicines they have to access to witch doctors or rural medical men with no qualifications and this often causes an aggravation of the illness even to the point of death.

We have a nurse who provides first aid and also explains to parents how they should administer the medicines to their children. We finance visits to qualified doctors and the relevant medicines, vaccination campaigns, every day sickness care and first aid, as well as giving informative health talks in school hours to stress to pupils the importance of hygiene or tell them about changes during puberty and other typical matters of adolescence.

Preventive healthcare. We hold talks and practical workshops for the village communities we visit in which health representatives inform them of how to prevent illness or how and where they can receive free treatment.

They are given information on the most common of their illnesses such as malaria, diarrhea, dehydration, sunstroke, burns, tuberculosis and VIH. Furthermore, talks and informative activities are arranged with regard to problems caused by child marriages, alcoholism, undernourishment, the inappropriate care of babies of pregnancy.





### Dada-Dadi - attention for the disabled old people

This project is designed to meet our objective of reaching out to other sectors of society as well as to the children, in such a way that the Akshay Educational Centre act as a pillar of support for the weakest members.



It is directed to the adult communities of Amwan, Nautapur, and Amwan Colony who have been abandoned by their families and exist unprotected in subhuman conditions. The precarious economies of the families in rural areas together with the fact that they belong to the “untouchable” caste, place them in an atrociously vulnerable position.



When families have nothing to spare, in order that other members can survive, the old and disabled are separated from the family circle, relegated to isolation and extreme poverty.

With our programme we guarantee that they can have a roof over their head, a meal each day, be clothed and attended by a doctor, in short have the minimum necessary for survival.

We build or repair their huts so they have a roof, give them doors so they feel safe, beds so they do not have to sleep on the ground clothes so their bodies are covered and, in winter, blankets to keep them warm.

In addition they also receive medical care and medicines when they are ill and aid with cremation expenses at the time of death. Twice a month they come to our Centre where we give them food for the whole month. We listen to them and stay with them so they can tell us their needs. They also join our students in celebrations held in the Centre.

The primary and secondary pupils help in developing this programme by attending to the old and disabled. In this way they learn solidarity, respect for older and weaker persons or those with physical impediments, to be generous with their time, to open their hearts and be kind.

### **Humanitarian Assistance**

We set up a campaign of Humanitarian Assistance for times of crisis caused by the pandemics or other tragedies which the vulnerable families of the villages may have to suffer. When a family is deprived of its work through illness or natural causes or other calamities and have no savings or properties to guarantee them a loan to face the unexpected, and in order to avoid these families falling into debt with money lenders for years to come, we help them in an emergency, for example a house fire, an accident by the person who works to keep the family, etc.

### **Construction of Water Pumps**

The shortage of water or contaminated water are the main causes of gastro intestinal problems in the population. Many villages have to share a water pump among over 200 inhabitants

We build water pumps in rural villages of this area and show the people how to maintain them. Our plan is that they have clean water to drink, for personal hygiene or cooking and so avoid illness and gastric problems.



## **PROJECT - WOMEN**

### **United Women's Centre**

This project is available for all women adults, young girls and adolescents in the villages of Amwan, Nautapur and Amwan Colony to learn a trade (even have their own workshop in the future) or simply learn to sew or make clothes for their families. The workshop is also a place where they can meet, chat and and share their experiences and problems. The women who are illiterate have some basic classes first so they can follow the course.



The groups are mixed, married women and young adolescents together so that they share space and activity. Women from different castes also join and this is a fine opportunity for encouraging a feeling of unity and integration among them regardless of the caste to which they belong. The women's course lasts for six months on an everyday basis and when completed and the final exam passed they obtain a diploma. They all learn to make clothes for their family.

Later they can take an advanced course where they are taught other techniques, such as textile painting, embroidery, making uniforms, bags, purses, tablecloths etc. all of which give them the opportunity to receive payment for their work and so help in the domestic economy. Those women who are illiterate receive basic classes so that later they can follow the sewing course.



## Sewing workshop



The women complete a 6-month course, going to school daily and finally obtaining a diploma by passing an exam. In addition, they learn to make clothes for their family.

They can then take the advanced course where they also learn other techniques, such as textile painting, embroidery and sewing uniforms, bags, purses, tablecloths, etc.

This provides them with the opportunity to receive compensation for their work that will help in the economy of their families.

Those women who are illiterate receive basic classes so that they can later follow the sewing course.



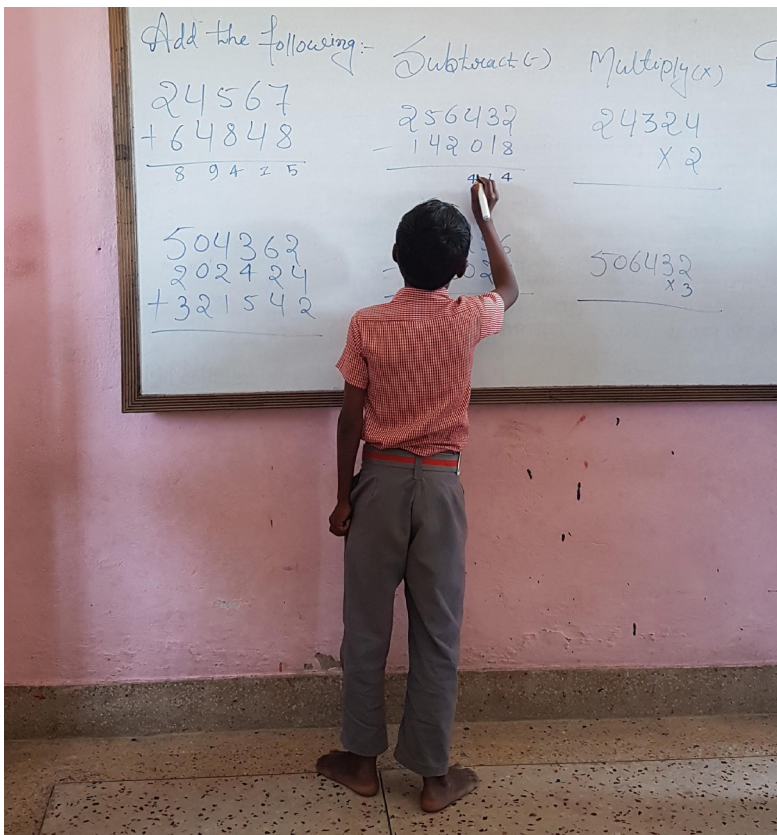
# 5 OUR 2022 ACHIEVEMENTS

Following is a short outline of the results of the projects mentioned at the start of the 2022 Annual Report.

## 1. Education

### Primary Education

During the Academic year 2021-2022, 241 boys and girls of the Akshay



School were hit by the Government Order on the closure of schools to avoid Covid-19 contagion. In spite of this we managed to set up open-air classes where pupils received 2 hours of study each day so that they did not lose the year and above all so that they did not give up their schooling altogether, which could lead to more child marriages, and we do our best to protect the girls.

Covid 19 - talks were held with the students on the importance of being vaccinated against Covid 19 and the places where

vaccination was available. In addition we were helped by the Primary Care Centre so that students of Years 5 to 8 could be given their Covid vaccines in our school itself.

A water purifier was installed in the Akshay School thanks to the donation of the Valdecás C.E.S. College. Until then pupils had no access to clean water, which gave rise to gastric problems. With the purifier not only have they access now to clean water but in summer they can also drink cool water.

New admissions. In the month of April, 32 children from the poorest dahlit families in the villages of Amwan, Amwan Colony and Nautapur were admitted



to the Akshay school in the Pre-nursery class and two in Years 3 and 5. As is our custom, we keep a special percentage of places for girls, in an attempt to avoid the discrimination they suffer from traditions.

Extra support classes were held in summer for the 241 pupils of the Akshay School as well as in the remaining months especially for students with certain learning problems. Each day they had a one hour class after schooltime to improve their reading as well as Hindi and English comprehension, plus Maths. The results of these months' work are seen in the fact that our Akshay School students can now read aloud better both in English and in Hindi, with special attention paid to their correct pronunciation and spelling. They also improved in Mathematics, particularly those who had greater difficulties.



We bought a Smart TV for each class so the teachers now have new tools enabling them to give more complete and more interesting lessons.

## Secondary Education

- I. A course in the Bodhgaya Hotel School of Catering for 4 of our former students. During this 6 months course they took part in theory classes and above all practicals directly with the hotel's clients, thus learning hotel work in the different departments. They received Diplomas confirming they are qualified to work in Luxury Hotels.



- II. **End-of-Secondary Exams.** 5 pupils from Akshay's Primary School who were also supported by us throughout their Secondary schooling, passed the End-of-Secondary exams and obtained official certificates for having successfully completed their Secondary Education.
- III. **The Jared Computer Centre.** We held 2 computer courses at the end of which 30 students were awarded diplomas in Basic Computer Studies. They were the third and fourth groups since the Centre opened. Computer classes were also given daily in all classes at our Akshay School.
- IV. **2 table computers, 2 laptops and a battery to avoid continuous power cuts.** The room was adapted for Wifi and all our children have access to the computer room.

180 children took part in the computer course.



Our school's pupils have no computer facilities in their homes, in their communities or in their towns. Neither can they pay for courses and/or special computer classes in computer centres. For this reason, we have included computer classes as part of the School Curriculum, so that our students have the same access to the new technologies and become conveniently prepared for the integration of their studies into a global scenario with its constant innovations and the use of new digital techniques. It's sad to realize

that these students had never touched a computer in their lives, even in the XXI century, until our school presented them with this opportunity.

On completion of the course, it was seen that it had helped students to gain more interest in digital access, besides helping them to use this new source of knowledge in their regular studies.



## Teacher Training, Experience in Educational Innovation - Universal Education, Gender Equality and Sustainable Development



Akshay’s teachers and the office staff of the Akshay Educational Centre also received various courses as a means of introducing the different aspects of new educational thought to them.

- **Universal Education (a 24 hours course) “Level 1 of 16 Guidelines for a Life with Meaning”, a programme developed by the FDWC (Foundation for the Development of Wisdom and Compassion - in the English lettering)**

The teachers and other staff of the Akshay Educational Centre completed Level 1 of the 16 Attitudes for a Happy Life in the FDWC programme. Raquel Monica Mason was in charge of directing the course during which, in periods of meditation, values were considered such as humility, patience, satisfaction, pleasure, friendliness, honesty, generosity, decency in speech, respect, forgiveness, gratitude, loyalty, hopes, principles, service and courage. They also shared and reasoned the different emotions they themselves experience in their day-to-day activity.



- **Gender Equality (a 16 hour course)**

The course was directed by Dr. Sai Thakur, Assistant Professor in the Centre for Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy Studies, TATA Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai Campus.

10 teachers from the Akshay School attended the course.

The question of gender is very complicated to understand in the social environment of India, since it is intertwined within the social structure with the caste system and especially deep-rooted in the rural areas where we work. The two cannot be separated since this would be penalised by their religion and is clearly evident in the everyday life of the Indian people. The majority of them think that to abuse and strike a woman is acceptable in the eyes of society and the law, furthermore Society and the Law are ineffective if we are aware of the fact that India's legal structures condemn violence to women of all castes.

Even teachers coming from these surroundings believe that beating a woman or for a man and woman not to equally share the chores of the home is God's design. They also think that cooking, speaking slowly and washing the dishes are the work of the women in their homes. Similarly the survey we carried out before the course on gender equality was held, demonstrated that both teachers and other staff thought that cooking, washing and cleaning are women's jobs (the



opinion of approximately 46%). In this survey it was seen too that the majority of Indians prefer male children to female during childbirth, as marriages for girls are costly (again approximately 46%) due to the tradition of giving the dowry. The negative opinions with regard to women and girls which are held by part of Indian society, especially in rural India, refer more to their way of thinking, of dressing and their abilities, etc.

This course was imparted by an expert on the subject, Dr. Sai Thakur from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, who has been working on matters relating to gender, caste and class since her early days as a student. The course was held to give teachers and other staff awareness so as to be able to transmit its concepts and the relevant knowledge acquired by them to the students in our Akshay School.

- **Sustainable Development (16 hrs)**

This course was imparted by Dr. Anju Helen Bara, Assistant Professor of the Department of Development Studies in the Central University of South Bihar, at our Amwan Akshay Educational Centre for the full four days of the course. The aim of the workshop was to prepare the teachers on subjects of vital relevance such as climate change so they in turn would be in a position to teach their students on matters relating to the environment and sustainable development as seen in the Organization of United Nations' Objective of Sustainable Development. The moderator, Dr. Anju Helen Bara, led the different sessions where subjects varied from explaining aspects such as the history of development and its destruction subsequent to development. The sessions also included exercises taken from the Children's Manual of the UNESCO-PNUMA International Programme for Environmental Education. On completion of the course an evaluation of the test was carried out for each teacher in order to analyze his/her knowledge of Sustainability Development. The object of the course was to make teachers and other staff aware so they can pass on the concepts and knowledge gained to the students of our Akshay School.

- **Weekly Workshops with the Akshay School Students**

Applying the courses in which our teachers had previously taken part.

- **Environmental Education Workshop**

Where students discussed environment problems, climate change and global warming, by means of debates directed by the teachers. In addition to this, they visited the villages to observe the effects of climate changes on their health and wellbeing, showing them the importance of these effects on their day-to-day life.



### • Workshops on Universal Education

Through these workshop we are supporting Universal Education by promoting qualities and values such as ethics, wisdom, responsibility or altruism, all universal concepts which can be shared by everyone regardless of their age, culture, race or creed. The workshop's objective is to educate for a meaningful life where each individual can develop his potential for happiness and personal excellence, so contributing to the wellbeing of the general population leading in consequence to an improved society and a more harmonious world.

Each morning we hold a period of meditation to help our pupils to concentrate, be fully conscious of the present time and find peace and calm throughout the whole day.

In the Akshay School we believe that education is the basis of our future as also of our day-to-day life and for this reason we also believe that the values and attitudes promoted by Universal Education are fundamental in giving genuine honesty to our project itself.

Universal Education is a daily concept for the students of the Akshay School who attend assembly each day.

### • Gender Equality Workshops

The question of gender is very complicated to grasp in the Indian social environment since it is intertwined with its social structure - the caste system. The two cannot be separated as religion would not condone it and both are operative socially in the real life of the Indian people. The majority of them think that to abuse and beat a woman is acceptable in the eyes of society and of the law, to such an extent that Society and Law are not usually active here, in spite of the fact that officially violence to women of all castes is condemned.

The teachers discussed this matter with their students every day once they had received some months' training. With these workshops, the children in particular begin to share the housework on an equal basis so that no one thinks that cooking, speaking slowly or washing the dishes are exclusively women's home duties. The majority of negative feelings with respect to women and girls in Indian society and especially in the rural areas, go beyond those mentioned and are also reflected in feelings about how a woman thinks, dresses or on a her ability. During the course, the children learn to respect the woman as an equal and the girls learn to be more confident in themselves. The workshop will also help change their mentality and so avoid domestic violence in the future when our students become adults.



## 2.Social Project - Achievements 2022

### Blankets in January 2022



Blankets were distributed to 31 families from the poor district of Karinganj close to the Gaya railway station.

### **Office for Children's and Families' Orientation and Emotional Support**

Emotional support and guidance for children of our Akshay School and for their parents when family problems and disputes have arisen.

We help the women who suffer domestic violence, first meeting and talking to the husband to try to avoid it being repeated and, where necessary, with the consent of the wife, we help to file a report as well as contacting the Dept. of Minors and Social Services when such cases affect the children.

We act as intermediaries in village neighbourhood disputes, attempting to reach an amicable solution so they do not have to go any further.

We offer emotional support to the children when they are suffering from problems in their homes; we try to make their parents aware of how these problems affect their children.



## Talks with the parents of the Akshay School children.

Over the year different talks were held with the parents on a weekly basis by Year groups so that education not only reaches the children but also their parents and on a number of topics affecting the life of their children.

The talks were given by our Social Worker on:

### Nutrition

The Dalit communities in which we work are basically illiterate and do not know which foods they need to provide for a healthy diet to avoid medical problems. They have no idea or knowledge of how to use the public health services located in remote rural areas. Access to health foods is none-existent since they are extremely poor. Pregnant women suffer anaemia from eating unsuitable foods by reason of being women and in addition belonging to the Dalit caste. The children born in these situations suffer various illnesses often leading to other complications as they grow older, since the poor nourishment they receive affects their physical and mental development.

With these talks to parents, our objective was to educate them on the nutritional values of different foods which are available and at accessible prices. The talks were also aimed at informing parents on the services available to them in nearby public centres, e.g. free food for them in accordance with Government plans whereby families can obtain a monthly ration of free foods.



### Workshop to learn to sign their names

The talk's aim was to teach parents the importance of learning how to write their names and how this can also be useful in obtaining certain dignity in front of others. It made parents aware too of how to avoid being cheated when vital business is done regarding land, money and applications for public services.

In this workshop mothers and fathers were taught to sign their names, since, being illiterate and incapable of signature is a risk when they need to open a bank account or sign an important document.

### A Talk on Access to Public Services

In this workshop parents were informed of their rights of access to certain public services offered them by the Government and of which they are unaware, so they do not obtain the different aids available. The Dalits we work with are basically illiterate and ignorant

of which services are open to them, so access to public welfare is unknown in their community. Even to obtain the construction of a basic public path requires a great deal of time. The gap between State institutions with their policies or plans and the public in general, especially for Dalits, is a constant problem, on the one hand due to the lack of knowledge with regard to the public services available and on the other the lack of community mobility for access to such services.

With these talks for parents, we aim to inform them of the public services available for them.

An example of these is that during pregnancy and after birth they need to know what types of free services are open both for mothers and for babies. For access to these, our talks tried to convince mothers to register themselves in the State birth institutions, i.e. the hospitals for free medical attention in different Governmental schemes, as well as the money mothers should receive when they give birth in public hospitals.

The talks also explained the various services open to children when they register in rural kindergartens, the fact that there is a free lunch for them on weekdays, also free uniforms and school materials. Similarly, the talks covered the six services accessible to pregnant women and the children in Bihar which come under the heading Bihar Integrated Child Development Services, of the Bihar Government. We spoke of the aids and means of access to them for the benefit of the community as well as for the private individuals themselves. The objective of all of this was to make parents aware of how to access public services and how to use them.

### Talks on Gender Equality



By this type of workshop we try to make parents realize the importance of allowing their daughters to study so that in the future they can bring monetary help to their homes and to their own children. These talks also seek to increase respect for women, that they be considered equals in all aspects, thus avoiding domestic violence.



## Talks on Hygiene

This is a workshop we hold every year in our attempt to avoid different illnesses which as well as being health problems, involve important medical expenses and, as a result, parents having to resort to loans. We emphasise not only the personal hygiene aspect but also the clothing, the house and food preparation.

## Awareness Campaigns in the villages

- **An awareness campaign against the abuse of alcohol**

360 people were present.

Dr. Manoj Kumar, the Manager of the Bodhgaya First Aid Centre attended the meeting and the talk was given by Dr. S. I. Ahmad, from the Fátima Clinic in Gaya.

Although alcohol is forbidden in the State of Bihar, it is smuggled in or the locals distil their own at home and then sell it. The consumption of alcohol is the main cause of gender violence and fighting among neighbours. It also means that money instead of being spent on food or better living conditions for the family, is wasted on alcohol.

We initiated a campaign in the village of Nautaput with Dr. S.I. Ahmad to inform villagers of the dangers of alcohol for their health and the consequent money





losses involved, as well as the violence it can cause and the possibility of them being put in prison for breaking the law.

- **An Awareness Campaign on the Importance of Cleanliness**

529 people took part.

An Awareness Campaign was held on the importance of the use and construction of baths in the village of Amwan with Mr. Subodh Kumar Ravidas.

The communities where we work have a high rate of illiteracy which leads to them having no access to public services and conveniences. From the point of view of education, these communities are very much behind the times and know nothing about any legal rights or the policies open to them. At an early age, the boys tend to migrate to other States in search of work or other job opportunities to earn more and have a better life style.

The girls tend to help their parents in jobs on farms as well as in the home, i.e. taking charge of the cooking. Neither boys nor girls are educated to leave their environment of poverty, there being many reasons for this. First, their social position in this particular caste causes financial inequality and secondly, the former leads to inaccessibility to other facilities such as education and health care. With no education, no land and no income, these communities cannot afford to have baths in their houses. Just a small bathroom in any home is a true luxury. Not having one, however, presents a safety problem too as the number of rapings of women and girls is higher in homes with no baths, as well as curtailing a woman's freedom to use a bathroom for her private needs. It also brings with it illnesses caused by anti-hygienic habits as well as causing safety worries when needing to go at night.

In this context we invited Subodh Kumar Ravidas to speak on the importance of bathrooms in homes and to explain how this affects both health and safety. The talk especially concentrated on privacy for women and girls and how to convince villagers of the consequences of not having baths at home.

- **A Campaign to Promote Action against Domestic Violence.**

385 persons attended.

For this talk we invited Ms. Manjula Pradeep, the founder and director of the WAYVE Foundation, a well-known activist for Human Rights for the Dalits and a lawyer. She was invited to speak on the question of domestic violence and offer psychological support and promote awareness in the community of the laws on domestic violence.

The talk took place in the village of Nautapur where we work.

The communities in which we work show a high rate of domestic violence as well



as child marriages.

All of this is due to the social position of the women and girls in society in general and as well as in these communities.

There are many reasons for the violence committed to village women (mothers of the children studying in the Akshay School); these are the traditional negative concept of the men with regard to their wives plus their excessive consumption of alcohol. This violence is unbearable to such an extent that the mothers come to our Akshay School asking for help. We give medical care and emotional support, also offering suggestions as to legal resorts. In fact, with their consent, we file reports at the police station when such situations require it.

- **A Campaign of Awareness of the Problems of Child Marriage**

497 people attended.

The talk took place in the village of Amwan and was given by Ms. Manjula Pradeep, the founder and director of the WAYVE Foundation, a well-known activist for Human Rights for the Dalits and a lawyer.

The girls in India get married when they are very young due to the lack of resources in their parental homes, the traditionally negative ideas on girls, the money/dowry involved in their marriage (more education means a bigger dowry) and many other reasons tending to make them lose their freedom at a very early age. As a result of child marriage they have babies far too soon, losing all formal education and suffering important medical, psychological and financial problems.

- **Campaign on the Right to Education and to Legal Aid**

A 151 persons attended. It was held in the Nautapur village.

The talk was given by Mr. Subodh Kumar Ravidas.

Some young men tend to help their parents with work in the fields, or become apprentice bricklayers, hotel cleaners or kitchen boys. There are many reasons for only having these menial jobs, one being their position in society as Dalits who suffer inequality and difficulties to access education and health care. In view of this the children do not receive the education needed to free them from their cycle of poverty.

As was mentioned previously, the communities with which we are in contact have a high rate of illiteracy that in turn leads to a lack of information on public services and aids available to them. Such illiteracy means these communities are completely ignorant of their own legal rights. At an early age, the male teenagers tend to migrate to other states in search of job opportunities for a better income



and life style. This in many cases takes them to jobs where they are exploited.

Their lack of education restricts their access to public places such as the Development Office or their municipal building where they need to go to apply for any public service even from birth.

Mr. Subodh Kumar Ravidas spoke on the importance of education as well as on the 2009 Law on the Right to Education, approved by the Indian Government for every child from the age of 6 to 14 years old. He also spoke of the importance of paralegal aid which is available for the poor and on other rights contained in the Indian Constitution.

### • **Advice and Obtention of Documents**

Due again to illiteracy the families with whom we work are incapable of obtaining the documents they need such as as Identity Cards. Between corruption and the lack of knowledge of our families who are unaware of their rights and find these applications complicated, they choose not to obtain certain essential documents. Sadly without them they have no rights to social aid, going even as far as a child not being admitted to school unless he has his ID card. The situation results in many children being excluded from the schooling system. Throughout this year we have been helping families complete the necessary applications for their children who had no valid ID or birth certificate or ration cards.

### • **3 Houses Built**

We have built 2 dwellings with the local mud and tile materials for two families who were living under plastics. One of them had no hut at all and lived like this with 3 children, having to endure the cold or the heat as well as the rains. Now they have a spacious wood and tiled cottage to protect them from the cold, the rain and the sun.

Another 2 families lost their houses in fierce monsoons which tore down very old walls. Today they have new homes to protect themselves from severe weather conditions.

### • **Care to the Dada-Dadi Project**

Food was handed to the elderly each month. We also took charge of the necessary medical care as well as physiotherapy and medicines

We bought beds for them to sleep on and repaired the roofs of 3 huts to avoid monsoon rain filtering through as the tiles were broken or had moved. All this meant that their basic needs were covered and they did not have to go to Bodhgaya to beg.

- **Distribution of Food and other articles among the poor families of the villages**

Food was given to 194 families in the villages of Amwan, Amway Colony and Nautapur. 7,300 kgs of lentils, potatoes, flour, salt, rice, oil and spices were handed out. The delivery was made periodically and was of great help to families to cover those food requirements they themselves could not cover, especially families who had food no at all.

- **Distribution of Blankets in December 2022**

531 persons benefitting.

In December, 531 blankets were distributed among the poor families to protect them from the winter cold in the villages of Amwan, Amwan Colony and Nautapur. Many of the children and adults have no protective clothing for winter. They have to suffer the low temperatures in Bihar in winter with no heating and cold houses without insulation. Each family with a child at our school received a blanket and also the older people and the national community. In addition we also gave out blankets in the Karingani district, near the Gaya railway station as well as to the tribal community of the Nat and Goudulia.

- **Food given to 500 children**

Beneficiaries: 500 children.

On The Day of the Child, more than 500 children without resources from the nearby villages were given food cooked on the 14th of November 2022. The idea of giving them cooked food was to offer them certain nourishing items not included in their usual diet owing to the poverty in their homes and in their communities in general. The children of the Akshay School together with their brothers and sisters and other village children enjoyed this meal.



- **Preventive health care**

During the past year we took care of those children in the Akshay School who needed medical attention, covering part of their treatment and medicines. We also took charge of the treatment for two children who suffered epileptic fits - rather costly.

Each months we held a talk on preventive health care to inform villagers of how to avoid different illnesses which are frequent in the community where we work.



The talks were given by Dr. Neelam Rani who, besides providing information, also explained what remedies could be used and where to find help.

To each of the talks an average of 160 people attended and the following topics were dealt with:

- Alcohol and meditation
- Anaemia and asma
- Leucorrea and back pains
- Dental hygiene
- Womb prolapse
- Child marriage and its health dangers
- Nourishment and Undernourishment
- Pregnancy
- Menstrual health
- Paralysis and Leprosy
- Depression and Mental Health
- Urinary tract infections

### 3. Project for women 2022

#### A Talk on Female Hygiene

A talk was held with the village women to explain to them the importance of female hygiene in avoiding infections. This topic is taboo in India, so it was handled very delicately in an attempt to make the women aware of how they should take care of themselves, especially on period days. They were told how yoga exercises can help to alleviate menstrual pains. At the finish, 138 packets of sanitary towels were distributed to those present.



## Courses for Women

### • A 6 months Dressmaking Course

The sewing course enables women to learn a skill which can be used later to earn money for themselves and their families. It also gives them a place for meeting other women without being too far from their homes. They learn how to make different garments for children, women and men. Three different courses were held, the 18th, 19th and 20th groups, with a total of 60 women completing the course. On completion a sewing machine was given to the woman showing most progress plus two sewing kits in each group. .

### • Beautician Course



A 3 months course during which the women learn how to apply makeup, different hairstyles, how to prepare a girl for her wedding, wax hair removal, etc. After completing this course the women are ready to open a beauty salon or visit private houses for wedding preparations and so earn some money for the family.

2 courses were held, our 4th and 5th groups with a total of 42 young girls.



- **An ABC Course**

With a duration of 4 months, 24 girls taking part. This course was for teenagers who had never had the opportunity to go to school since they had to stay at home and take care of siblings while their parents went out to work. In the course the girls learned a little sewing, hygiene, to sign their names, to count, to handle money, dress correctly, comb their hair, to know where to go and how to carry out important jobs like going to the post office or townhall. They also touched on matters of health education, which foods give greater nourishment, how to take care of their future babies, etc.c.

- **A Karate Course**



This lasted for a year and its aim was to give the girls tools to defend themselves from possible personal attacks. They acquire confidence in themselves as well as exercising. 74 young girls took part.

## 4. IMPROVEMENTS IN AKSHAY EDUCATIONAL CENTRES INSTALLATIONS

- **The Construction of 4 new toilets**

Neither State nor private schools have toilets in India, which affects student attendance.

For the girls, not to have a toilet is a problem that has a psychological effect on them, from the point of view of their health and of course of their education. Particularly at menstruation times it is more of a problem if they have no access to bathrooms at school. This often means girls lose years of schooling and favours early marriages.

Many of the students have no bathroom at home and go to open spaces to defecate which as a result contaminates public places and the environment, giving rise to illnesses.

Sexual abuse or rapings in India are always due to the lack of a safe place for the women to defecate. They tend to walk further away in order to do this in the open air.

4 toilets have been built at our school which, together with those we already had, gives us 7 bathrooms and 4 urinals. Both boys and girls will have access to facilities they do not have at home and will be taught how to use them as well as their importance so that gradually they may claim them for their own houses. By using the bathrooms the children also learn health care and safety, especially the girls.

• **CONSTRUCTION OF 2 NEW CLASSROOMS TO ADMIT MORE CHILDREN AND TO USE FOR OTHER ACTIVITIES**

2 new classrooms were built with electricity, fans, tables, shelves, benches, with appropriate ventilation and white boards. These rooms were built to reduce numbers in the classes as well as to give a sensation of space for learning and promote more interest in what was being studied. They also allow us to accept more admissions in the school for the following terms and give more space than at present for other learning activities.

**5. A PROJECT FOR A STUDY CENTRE FOR THE SABARIYA COMMUNITY**



The Sabariya project in the State of Chhathisgarh commenced in June 2021 in conjunction with the

Nivedita Foundation Trust and the financial aid of Zen Yoga Ruasol and has continued for another year. In this year Zen Yoga Ruasol accepted a firm agreement to continue supporting the education of the children of the Sabariya tribal





community. During this time we have seen how the boys and girls have become more interested in their studies through a better understanding of the language in the local school, thanks to the support classes held in the Sabariya Studies Centre. They have improved significantly, can now read and write, and attend the centre each day where they count on the support of their teacher.

Various monthly meetings were held with the parents to explain to them the importance of schooling for their children so as to not just limit their future to helping their parents in field work.

## 6. A PROJECT FOR THE DR. BHIM RAO AMBEDKAR STUDIES CENTRE



In November 2022 we inaugurated the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Studies Centre with the collaboration of Deep Jyoti Kalyan Sansthan in B.N. Pahari, in the district of Nalanda, Bihar.

In this centre 80 teenagers belonging to the Dalit community who wish to continue their studies to University level are given the benefit of support classes and orientation.

Generally these teenagers once having completed their secondary or pre-university education are not informed of the different options

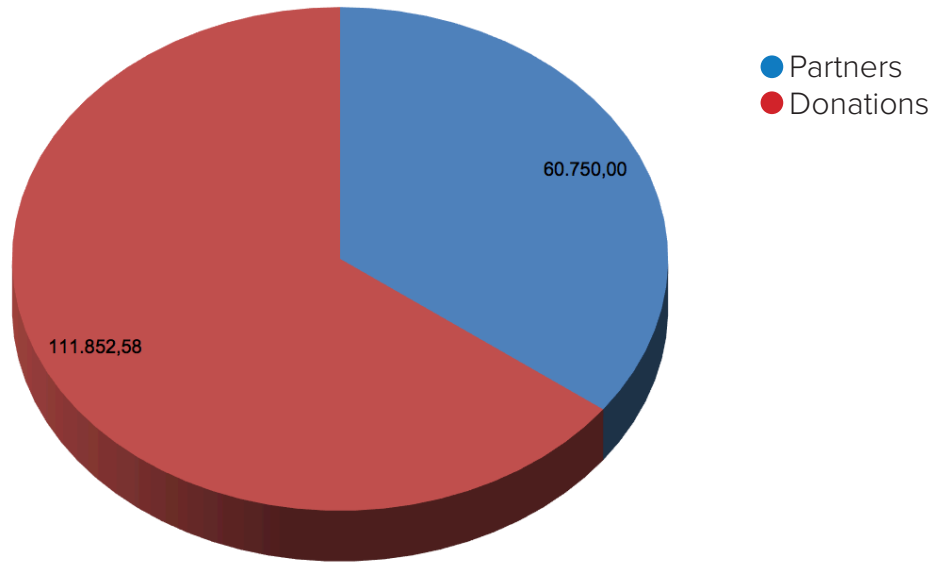
open to them. At this time, expenditure increases since in many cases besides matriculation and books, transport to a centre where they can obtain support in the different subjects is also an expense. The establishment of this studies centre offer students a space where they can meet other students also interested in studying and where they will also find the academic support they need. These young people are very keen to study and will be the first generation in their families to complete advanced studies, so giving them the possibility of obtaining good employment.



# 6 ORIGIN AND DESTINATION OF RESOURCES

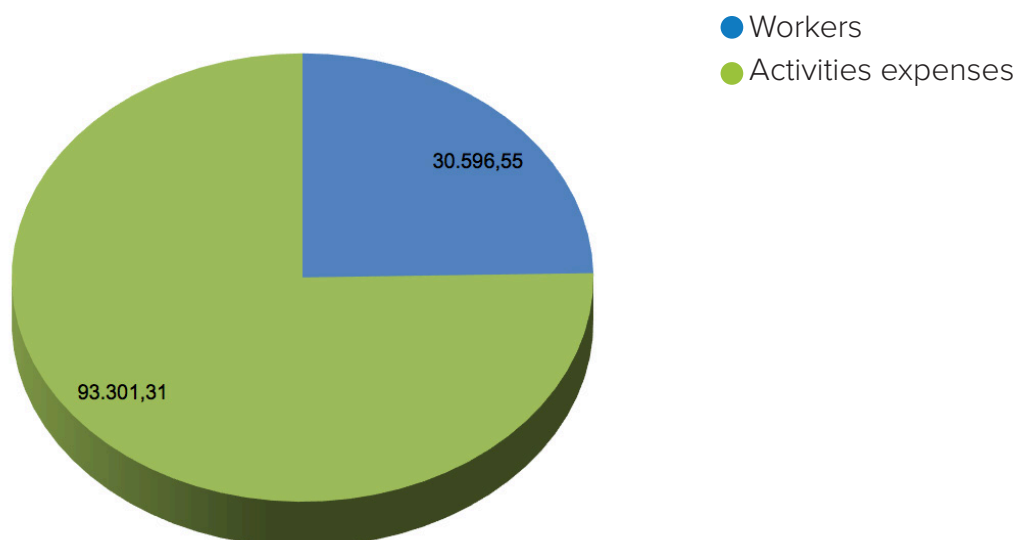
## Incomes

€172.602,58



## Expenses

€123.898,86





# 7 PUBLICITY AND AWARENESS



We carry out various promotional and awareness activities designed for different sectors of the public (both children and adults) to make them aware of the reality of life as lived by those who benefit from the projects we work on in India.

We propose alternative lines of thought on generosity, compassion and the social and human conscience by giving information on the historic and presentday situation in India and the special needs of the townships and communities where we work. We do this to make children and adults more aware of the importance of the most universal human values education and respect. In order to carry out this work of sensitization and information we organize presentations and talks in different scenarios (local councils, universities, companies, schools, etc.).

We arrange meetings, concerts and charity suppers, take part in fairs of a solidarity nature as well as interviews on different social media with the idea of making people aware of what is “there” for a better life “here”.



# 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The contents of this Annual Report reflect the effort and work put in during 2022 to carry out the projects we have ongoing in India and their significant results. However these pages would be empty if we were not able to count on the support and financial aid from all and everyone of you who have believed in AKSHY's objectives and values and have given us your collaboration. Thanks to "Las Hadas" with its solidarity market held on "Dia de Reyes" and to Sam from Taiwan for his individual donation, we were able to begin building the Kamal School. Thanks also to Facilisimo who made an importante donation at Christmas for educational materials for our schools. Also worthy of special note is the regular help given us by sponsors, members, helpers and companies which enables us to continue our projects. In addition we had volunteers both in the field and in Spain. Certain volunteers came to spend part of their time with us and hold some very interesting

workshops. When they returned to their own countries they continued to collaborate by spreading their news on the work we do in India.

In Spain we are fortunate enough to have a group of volunteers who are always ready to lend a hand when the need arises. Thanks to all and every one of those who contribute to improving the quality of life of the the most needy people in India and, in this way, give back to them the dignity denied to them, in many cases, merely by belonging to the "untouchable" class.

Thank you very much!



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