

September 2021

Dear Friends,

Finally! On September 22, Asha Deep completed the purchase of its own plot of land. As you know, this has not been an easy process. It has taken more than a year to research possible communities and sites. We seriously entered negotiations on three different plots. We had thought that the purchase of the final plot would be completed a month ago, but for a variety of reasons (partly due to the fact that the land was owned by two people), the date for the transfer of deed kept being put off. But the deal is now complete. Yesterday, we went out to our new site, hung our newly printed sign, and put a lock on the gate.



Our 1300 square meter (1/3 acre) property extends as far as the back corner of the adjacent house.



Photo shot from the front road, looking toward back.



Rear half of the property



The property, outlined in orange, is about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from the south edge of the city proper. It is adjacent to a community of 100 *dalit* (untouchable caste) families. Another two such communities are within a 1 kilometer (.6 mile) of this location.



Photo taken from front gate, showing a bit of the neighborhood

As soon as we were reasonably convinced that this plot would be ours, we contacted an architect that had been recommended to us by a supporter of the school. We sent her a brief describing our current space and explaining our vision for

the new location. Before the purchase was complete, she had drawn up a layout study, basically an initial plan that would give her an idea of how much space we would need for various rooms and how much space could be left over. If you'd like to take a look at this first draft, I've attached it here. She is planning to visit both our current and new locations in a week. Hopefully we will be able to settle on a final plan by mid-October. (To get an idea of her previous work, you may like to look at the slideshow on her homepage: [https://meetajain.com/.](https://meetajain.com/))

In other good news, our school is now open and running! Kindergartners are not allowed to attend on-site classes, but our 1st through 8th graders are now attending classes Monday-Friday. Only half of the school is allowed to attend at one time, so some classes are meeting in the morning and some in the afternoon. Everyone is happy to be back to proper studies.



6th graders in social studies class

Besides classes, we are so happy to be with each other again! We had a chance for a small celebration on Teacher's Day (September 5th). Normally the entire school sits together in a program to honor our teachers. This year, we had small celebrations in each individual classroom. Here our 7th graders are enjoying cake.



Yesterday, our 5th class teacher took his class out to the back field to play the traditional fast-moving Indian game of *khokho*. It was the first time in over a year that we've heard the sound of kids laughing and playing at school. I went to the balcony to watch for a while. Feeling emotional about the sight, I turned back to the office to resume work. Just then, a 3rd grade girl came running toward me, arms outstretched. I opened my arms too. "It's been so long since we could hug!" she said. I wish I could share a photo of her smile in that moment.

love,
Connie