

The Bridge Course Report 2010-2011

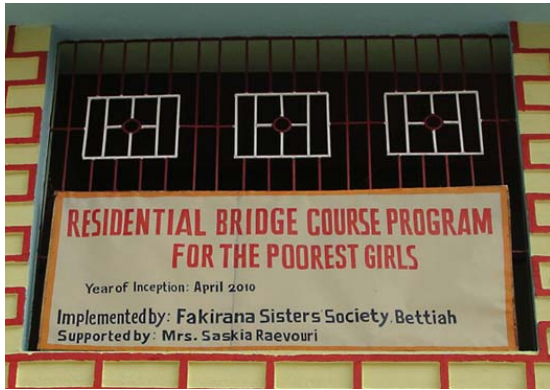
Compiled by
Saskia Raevouri

With thanks to
Geri Johnson
President, FreeSchools World Literacy-USA

October 27, 2011



Introduction by Saskia Raevouri



In 2006, together with FSWL president Sue Tennant, I visited the FreeSchools in Bihar, India, founded by Sr. Crescence of the Sacred Heart Sisters. While there, Sr. Crescence told me of her dream to convert a dilapidated building on the convent grounds into a dormitory for exceptional girls who came from the FreeSchool background.

Over the next few years, through the generosity of many friends, I raised the funds to complete the building, and in 2010 I returned with FSWL board members Geri Johnson and Dr. John Lange for the grand opening!

The program, giving 16 poor village girls a chance at an education, was to be known as Bridge Course.



Next came fundraising for scholarships, which amounted to \$7,500 for the first year including furniture for the dormitory, teaching staff salaries, school supplies, and room, board and other necessities for the girls. This campaign was successful, and what follows is a report of the first year, from the testing of the girls to their placement in regular schools and preparation for the next year.

I hope this will inspire you to contribute to the **2011-2012 Bridge Course Program**, already in session. Please visit www.ServiceToHumanity.org or www.FreeSchools.org.



Testing

June 8, 2010

Dear Aunt,

Enclosed please find the result of selection test and interview taken for Bridge Course program. The test and interview was quite ceremonious and for privacy and sanctity was preserved as if it was for some high command post.

Now the result will be send to the participating centers, whose job will be to interview the girls and their guardians. The selected candidates are required to reach Bettiah on 16th June for ceremonial opening of the program. In the meantime we are busy with making arrangements for boarding the students. The interview for selection of proper teacher and matron for the above program is in process.

The summer heat is on highest peak.

With much love

Amit Victor

Note: - The test and interview was conducted at Motihari and Bettiah by Sr. Crescence assisted by Amit. Three centres from Bettiah (Belwa and Auraiya, Sacred Heart) and 2 centers from Motihari. Center19A, 12A,01A, 3A, 3B) participated in entrance test, the tests included only main subjects (Hindi, Maths, History, Geography, Civics). The entire test was prepared scientifically in which the intellectual capacity of each child could be also measured.



The Test

June 8, 2010

Dear Aunt,

Loving greetings from Sr.Crescence & myself. I am sending question which we have taken test in Motihari and Bettiah students.

I translate question Hindi into English. Please see the attachment. On Tuesday I will send you result of the students.

Your son,

Amit. Victor



Amit Victor, Sr. Crescence's Assistant

FreeSchools World Literacy Program English Test

- (1) (a) What is your name? I write with a
- (b) What is your mother's name? I read my
- (c) What is the name of your village?
- (d) What is the No of your Center?
- (e) Who is your teacher?
- (2) (a) Write the name of 7 day of a week
- (b) Write in English the name of 12 months.
- (c) What is a hen? (a bird/ an animal)?
- (d) Give names of 4 animals?
- (3) (i) Write names of your 4 limbs?
- (ii) Give the names of 4 fruits?
- (4) Complete the sentence:-
- I like very much.
- I like to eat
- I sleep on a
- (5) Change singulars into plural:-
- Boy
- Man
- Pencil
- Fan
- Lady
- Baby
- Flower
- House
- (6) Please write in Hindi:-
- (i) My name is Raju.
- (ii) I am a student.
- (iii) I am very poor.
- (iv) My father is a teacher.

नागरिक Civics

- (1) (क) गान्धीजी को दुसरा नाम क्या था और क्यों ?
What was the second name of Gandhi?
- (ख) गान्धीजी का जन्म कहाँ हुआ था ?
Where was Gandhi born ?
- (ग) इन्दीरा गान्धी किसकी बेटी थी ?
Whose daughter was Indira Gandhi
- (घ) बिहार राज्य के सबसे बड़ा पदाधिकारी कौन होता है ?
Who is the Supreme authority in Bihar ?

- (ड) आज हमारे बिहार का मुख्य मंत्री कौन हैं ?
Who is the chief minister of Bihar?
- (2) (क) हमारा राष्ट्रीय गान कौन हैं ? उसकी पहली 2 पति लिखो ।
What is the National song? Write two lines of it.
- (ख) हमारा राष्ट्रीय झन्डे में कितने रंग हैं ? वो कौन – कौन है ?
How many colors are in our National Flag and what are they?
- (ग) 15 अगस्त देश के लिये महान दिन है उस दिन क्या हुआ था ?
Why 15th August is an important day in India?
- (घ) गान्धीजी का मुख्य मंत्रा क्या था ?
What is the main slogan of Gandhijee ?

भुगोल Geography

- (1) (क) दुनिया की सबसे ऊँची पर्वत कौन है और वो किस देश में हैं ?
Which is the highest enforceable in the World and that is in which country ?
- (ख) भारत की सबसे बडी नदी का नाम बताओ—गंगा कहाँ से निकलती हैं ?
Which is the longest river in India and from where it starts?
- (ग) संसार में कितने महादेश है ?
How many epirogenesis in the World ? Write the name.
- (घ) बिहार की मुख्य उपज क्या –क्या है ?
Which are the main crops of Bihar ?
- (ड) हमारे देश में कितने मौसम होते है और सबसे सुन्दर मौसम कौन है?
How many seasons are in our country and which is the most beautiful seasons?

इतिहास History

- (1) (क) राजा राम किसका बेटा था ? उसको कितने वर्ष का बनवास हुआ था ?
Whose son was king of Raja Ram? How many years he was in prison ?
- (ख) ताजमहल कहाँ है? ताजमहल किसने बनाया और किस के लिये बनाया ?
Where is the Taj Mahal? Who made the Taj Mahal and for whom ?
- (ग) सिता का अपहरण किसने किया था और उसे कहाँ ले गया था?
Who kidnapped Sita and where was she kept ?
- (घ) भारत हमारा देश किस वर्ष में अजाद हुआ ?
In which year our country became in independent?
-

हिन्दी
Hindi

- (1) पाठ्य पुस्तक की कोई कविता की दो कड़ी लिखो ?
Write the poem from text book ?
- (2) तुम्हारे घर में पालतु कुता हो तो उस पर 10 वाक्य शुद्ध लिखो या गाय पर लिखो?
Write the 10 sentence of dog or cow ?
- (3) नीचे दिय गये वाक्यों को सही बनाओ:-
Correct the sentences :-
- (क) कौआ की आवाज बहुत मीठी होती हैं ।
The crow voice is very sweet.
- (ख) रेलगाड़ी आसमान में दौड़ता है ।
The train fly in the sky.
- (ग) हवाई जहाज रेल की पटरी पर चलया जाता हैं ।
The aeroplane run on railway track.
- (घ) सुरज रात्रिा को प्रकाष देती हैं और चन्तमा दिन को रोषनी देता हैं ।
The sun gives light at night and moon gives light in day.
- (ङ) मेरा पिताजी 14 वर्ष के हैं और मेरी भाई 40 वर्ष की हैं ।
My father is 14 years old and my brother is 40 years old.
- (4) स्त्रीलिंग बनाओ :-
Change the gender
- | | | | | |
|-----|-------|---------|-------|--------|
| बैल | टोकरा | बकरा | चिंटा | धोबी |
| Ox | creel | He-goat | Ant | Fuller |
- (5) बहुवचन बनाओ :-
Change this word singular to plural :-
- | | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|----------|
| मिठाई | sweet | चीज | thing |
| टोकरी | creel | पुस्तक | book |
| महिला | lady | बच्चा | children |
| तस्वीर | picture | घड़ी | clock |
| घन्टा | bell | मोती | pearl |

गणित
Math

- (1) (क) बताओ कौन बड़ी सख्या है उसे पहले लिखे :-
Write the bigger number first and smaller number later
- | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| 2014—1112] | 98—99] | 3600—4600] |
| 139—145] | 2102—2107] | |

(2) गुणा करे :-

Multiply any five

$$3 \times 14 = [\quad] \quad 7 \times 12 = [\quad]$$

$$5 \times 13 = [\quad] \quad 9 \times 11 = [\quad]$$

$$6 \times 13 = [\quad] \quad 8 \times 9 = [\quad]$$

(4) भाग करे :-

Divide

$$495 \div 5 = \quad 639 \div 3 = \quad 715 \div 5 =$$

$$886 \div 2 = \quad 999 \div 9 =$$

(3) तुम्हारे पास 80 आम हैं और 5 गरीबों में बराबर- बराबर बाँटन है एक को कितना मिलेगा?

You have 80 mangos and you have to divided among 5 poor people. How much one will receive?

(4) तुम्हारे वर्ग 20 बच्चे हैं तुम्हारे शिक्षक की विदाई है। तुम 40 रु जमा करना चाहते हो तो हर बच्चे को कितना देना होगा ?

There are 20 students in your class. You are giving farewell to teacher, you have to collect Rs 40. How much you will ask from one student?

(5) तुम्हारे घर में एक महिला 6 दिन काम की है उसको 1 दिन में 50 रु देना है तो उसको 6 दिन के लिये कितना देना होगा ?

In your family a lady has worked 6 days. One day's wage is Rs 50 per day. How much you have to pay for 6 days ?

Results

The name of selected students are the following:-

S.No	Name of student	Father's name	Center	Hindi	Math	Social Studies	Total
1	Priyanka Kumari	Kisori Majhi	01	14	36	20	70
2	Sobha Kumari	Madan Ram	01	12	32	19	63
3	Reema Kumari	Kaderkha Ram	19	07	34	21	62
4	Madu Kumari	Jogindar Ram	19	20	13	18	51
5	Puja Kumari	Lalbabu Ray	3 A	35	20	24	79
6	Sarita Kumari	Herender	3 A	35	22	13	70
7	Juhi Kumari	Akilash Ray	3 A	40	43	20	103
8	Seema Kumari	Heriyar Mahoto	19	12	22	18	52
9	Priya Kumari	Ranit Takur	3 A	31	23	18	72
10	Mandipa Kumari	Lalbabu Mahoto	3 B	41	32	20	93
11	Rita Kumari	Yogander Kumar	3 B	22	40	22	84
12	Sonam Kumari	Salander Kumar	3 B	30	32	20	82
13	Chandani Kumari	Sikandar Mahoto	3 A	29	15	16	60
14	Surabhi Kumari	Dhanshayam	3 A	15	18	16	49
15	Tamana Kumari	Munshi Kuwar	3 B	27	10	15	52
16	Rani Kumari	Jetendar Mahoto	3 B	30	11	15	56

Updates

August 17, 2010

Dear Saskia,

Loving greetings from all of us. Finally I come to share with you in detail about Bridge Course Program. I hope you have been informed with some photos that our program started on July 2, 2010 in a very simple way. The parents brought the girls and a short welcome was given to them followed by some snacks and tea. The guardians signed the admission register and other document and left for their homes.



The first group of Bridge Course girls

Now started our mission that to introduce the girls with place and some important member of the convent, their daily schedules, their places in sleeping hall and in class. The day ended. Two teachers, Amit and myself had to be very close to the 16 girls, as their best friend, because they looked timid and homesick.

Next day was another ceremony. All were given everything of their need their mattress, pillow, their bed linens, their plates, glass, their bucket and mugs.

Every article was numbered and every girl had same number on each article of her use. They had simply to remember one number. Oh, what an exciting scene it was. My both teachers--Sristi and Ranju--& Amit played very good role at this time.

Choice of text books, was another tough task, but along with it we had some hurdles to cross which we were unaware of.

Drive the Demon away. One fine afternoon, one girl started acting strange. When questioned she answered some evil spirit was on her. When taken to the doctor she was declared having worms in her stomach. The girls were so much frightened of her that they refused to talk to her, to play with her to be near her. At last I had to hand her over to her mother. The first scene of the drama was over.

Why away from my mother???? Second scene started one girl in spite of all love would not cease crying, saying, "I can't live away from my mother." Four days passed. I feared for the therapy something serious may happen. Her mother was called, congratulation to the mother that she gave, she said

'Okay, I take you from here, but if you stay at home I will go to my mother's place or I stay at home, you go to any other place no staying with me. And the scene changed totally. Juhi changed and said I will stay here only and study. She stopped crying for her mother.

The ugly boils. Classes had begun. Carefree girls were brought in a controlled environment for serious studies and they had sacrificed their care-free roaming with goats chewing sugarcane, and eating fruits such as mangoes, guavas and blackberries. Nature did not like it and resulted in big – big heat boils on the faces and all over the body of the girls. Some boils needed to be operated. You know very well the reactions of the children how many kicks you and the doctor gets when a small cut is needed on a child. We did not get only the kicks but the threat "leave me or else I kill you today." But the surgeon's mild reply was, "Let me perform this first and you kill me later."

So one by one the battles are over and the teaching is in full speed. The first job of ours was to make them competitive (among themselves with other centers, other schools sometimes with teachers and some other elders). To be winners they needed to be over-confident and smart in all they learn. They are ever excited to ask questions. The whole tempo of their life is changed. Now they are waiting to ask jolly questions at anytime to anyone. Their time of recreation is full of life. Strange and cute are their performances.

Much love
Sister Crescence

November 10, 2010

Dear Saskia,

Great love from all of us. . . .

I guess, you must be working hard to raise fund for Bridge Course. Your last donation of 1,45000/- was given to me by Sue Tennant in Delhi, who got sick there and she could not come to Bettiah. I had to go to Delhi.

After my return from Delhi my days have been overcrowded. Do you recall, month of October and early half of November is full of festivals for Hindus and we have every Sunday Eucharistic procession in different places. Last year Sue and you and party attended Bettiah procession, one of the most impressive ones in whole North India. This year we took all our Bridge Program children with Srishi, their warden. Our children were also given banners to be with Christian's children. They really behaved well and were touched by the devotion.

Just after 2 days came the feast of Dipawali. Enclosed photographs will give you an idea how the children have enjoyed this festivals with some senior sisters. Now all 16 children have gone home for a week to celebrate Chhat with parents.

Enclosed, please find some photographs of these children. Really these children are very cute and all their innocent activities attract us. Our Bishop Victor came to see them. They talked to him with no fear, no hesitation. I know you will really enjoy to be with them.

Enough for now. With love.

Sr. Crescence



Bridge Course girls going to visit the Mala.



Bridge Course girls celebrating Dipawali with Sister Crescence & teacher.



Celebrating Dipawali, November 14, 2010

HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR 2010



Christmas 2010

Dear Friends and all the FreeSchool Donors,

On the behalf of the Free Schools (World Literacy Program), I send many many Happy Christmas & New Year 2011 heartfelt greetings and thanks to all our donors for the loving service to the children. Through your corporation children's abilities and skills are being increased day by day. Thank you for your patience and hard work.

In this holy season of Christmas & New Year we all staff and children wish you family member blessings and peace of infant Jesus.

All love with children,
 Sr Crescence
 FreeSchools Children

March 4, 2011

My dear Saskia ,

Warm regards to you, to dear Paula [Sutton] and [Fred] Harris from all of us our Bridge Programme children and staff and Amit. All of us are so grateful to you because of your loving support to us. Yes, wonderful things are happening through Bridge Programme and it is because of you all and your support.

During past 6 months (July- December 10) our girls (who had completed only class 2nd) covered successfully syllabus of class 3rd and class 4th . We kept them parallel to our formal Sacred Heart School by making them write same examination as that of Sacred Heart School, Bettiah. Now we are working to cover the syllabus of class 5th in the next 3-4 months.

Most amazing result is their affection and attachment with us. This December they went home for the winter holidays from 19th Dec-6th January. This year the cold reached to maximum. Temperature fell down to 3°, and we prolonged winter holidays. The children were informed to stay at home. It was surprising to receive from them phone calls, “When are you calling us back, Sister ? we are tired of staying at home. We are missing the classes.” Finally we had to call them on 17th January, 2011. And the classes began in full swing in spite of the severe cold.

The parents too reported us that the girls pestered them to reach them to us. No longer than they came here they (practically everyone of them) asked me , “Are you going to send us away in April?” We will not go from here. We will make room for new group, but stay here only and stay in some corner to study. They were really sad and to see them my heart was moved and eyes became wet. I felt lost, what can be done for them!

On other occasion I was out in Patna for a week on important business. As I reached our convent all girls came near me some holding me by hand, some my habit, some my bag. They all had one question to me, “Why are you out for such a long time?” (See the photograph attached.) They have developed towards us great affection.

Once Sr.Elise & her group had our D.I.G (District Inspector General of police) here as a visitor. She happened to come to Bridge Programme,



she met the girls for 5-10 minutes and told me, the girls are so affectionate you bring all of them to my residence I would love to spend some time with them.

This is all now about our dear children.

Now something about business: Enclosed please find tentative budget for April 2011-March 2012.

With lots of love
Sr. Crescence

BUDGET FOR 2011-2012 BRIDGE COURSE

S.No	Programme	Rs.Details	Rs.Amount
1.	Board	750x18x12	162000
2.	Study material	100x18 x12	21600
3.	Text book	Books 200x18	3600
4.	Stationery for examination expenses	Exam & test150x18x4	12000
5.	Toilet articles	50x18x12	10800
6.	Medical	30x18x12	6480
7.	Exposure	50x18x12	10800
8.	Games articles	50x18x12	10800
9.	Honorarium to 2 teachers	2700x2x12	64800
10.	Salary to Part time Clerk	1500x12	18000
11.	Telephone expense for staff	150x12	1800
12.	Monthly meeting & Office expense	100x12	1200
13.	Travel Allowance to Sr.Crescence	100x12	1200
14.	Telephone expense to Sr.Crescence	100x12	1200
15.	Audit Fee	3000	3000
16.	Maintainces (some repair)	150x12	1800
		[approx. US \$6,750.00]	TOTAL = Rs. 3,31,080

Easter, 2011

My dear friend,

We the Free school staff and students feel exceedingly happy to extend our greetings to you on Easter, feast of Victory of Christ. During lent, we have journey together with Him on the path of self denial and suffering. And now to share the joy of His victory on death we feel happy.

FreeSchool-centers are sailing along the normal course and now preparing to complete in the selection test for Bridge Program. One year's the marvelous progress in the students of Bridge Course has become an eye-opening for the students

and the parents. Bridge Course children have truly completed 3 years course in one year, the financial gain is a stimulant inspiration for all. The choice of 18-20 students for Bridge Course will be tough task not only for the children but for us. We are already in process of preparation.

Bridge Program children have written their final exam. The result comes as follows:-

# students	Fit for class	% obtained	Sent to
2	6 th standard	80%	S.H.School Bettiah
5	5 th class	60% & above	Vanhock Sadan Bettiah
2	4 th class	55%	Lalgarh Holy Cross,Bettiah
4	3 rd class		Detained here
Total =13			



Seventeen students joined in June after completing 1 & 2 class. Two drop in the beginning and two drop in the December month. These children have also written entrance test for their respective schools and the H.M.s (head mistresses) are too eager to take them in their schools.

The parents felt very proud at the results of their wards.

Now their willingness to co-operate for their further education is admirable. All these is done to your love and sacrifice for them. We have been only the instrument. So we congratulate all of you.

Enclosed see some photographs Rejoice with us and with the risen lord.

Much love.

Sr.Crescence



Sonam in June, 2010



Tamana in June, 2010



Surbhi in June, 2010



Sonam in April 2011



Tamana in April, 2011



Surbhi in April 2011

P.S. Dear Saskia,

You have reasons to rejoice at the great performance of scholarship children.

1. Deepshika completed B.Ed and secured 84.4% total marks. She comes in the topper list, and now she joins as teachers in Mt Carmel Convents School. We are proud of her.

2. Miss Pinki Kumari completed her T.T.C(Teachers Training) with good marks and started teaching at Holy cross convent Lalgarh. She is great support for her parents.

3. Suchita Novel underwent 2 major surgeries last year.

4. Amit Victor passed B.Com with 62% marks last year he did DCA+ in computer. He is trying to do B.Ed (Bachelor of education in 2011).

Let us be proud of these children. The bond of love between us and girls have become so thick that to be separated from us is rather difficult for the outgoing girls Bridge Program.

Exit Interviews

In June 2011 Geri Johnson had just returned from a field trip to Bihar where she had conducted, together with Sr. Crescence, exit interviews with ten of the thirteen students who completed the first Bridge Course program. Two girls were retained as their grades were borderline (passing through grade 3, and borderline for grade 4). These girls will also serve as “the helpers” for the girls entering the new class. [In the Indian system, a score of 35% is passing.]

Bridge Course Exit Interviews First Bridge Course Class July 2010 to June 2011

Sr. Mary Crescence, Geri Johnson and Ten of Thirteen Students Individual Interviews

<u>Girls Interviewed</u>	<u>Village</u>	<u>Entrance into Program</u>
Gunja Kumari	Harivatika	2 July 2010
Surbhi Kumari	Jokaha	2 July 2010
Jyoti Kumari	Yaduchapur	August 2010
Sarieta Kumari	Auraiya Kuratola	2 July 2010
Anjalee Kumari	Baritola	2 July 2010
Tamana Kumari	Baritola	2 July 2010
Mandipa Kumari	Auraiya Kuratola	2 July 2010
Antima Kumari	Auraiya Kuratola	2 July 2010
Shobha Kumari	Mojoliah	2 July 2010
Rita Kumari	Bellowah	2 July 2010

Questions Asked:

1. What made you the most happy during this year at the Bridge Course?
2. What did you find the most difficult this year?
3. What was your favorite subject?
4. What advice would you give a new girl entering the program?
5. If your parents say that standard 5 or 6 (5th-6th grade) was enough and you should stay in the village, what might you say to your parents?

While the girls replied in full sentences, their responses are condensed to their key points.

Question	GUNJA	SURBHI	JYOTI	SARETA	ANJALEE
What made you the most happy during this year at the Bridge Course	The routine—eat, sleep, study at a set time; At home there is no routine	The love we get here; the training we get	The routine; to eat at regular times; to eat together	The way they teach me; everything is on time	The routine life here
What did you find the most difficult this year?	English. [Question was rephrased to ask about life not just studies] Reply: Nothing	You could not eat anytime; at home I can eat at anytime. Here we eat at set times	To be on time; to be quiet at certain times	Sometimes I felt homesick	At home you could eat anytime when you were hungry; here we eat at set times

Question	GUNJA	SURBHI	JYOTI	SARETA	ANJALEE
What was your favorite subject?	Hindi	Hindi	Hindi and Math. (80% in all subjects, made the highest grades)	Social Studies	Science
What advice would you give a new girl?	Don't be sad; Sr. Crescence gives much love. Put your mind in your studies	Be clean. Listen to teacher. Don't cry. Put your mind in study	Do not cry. You will feel happy. Studies are good. The games are fun	Slowly you will feel good here; don't worry	You may feel scared but soon you will be happy and not want to leave
If your parents say that standard 5 or 6 is enough, what might you say to your parents?	"My mother would never say 'don't study'. She wants me to learn"	"My mother wants me to be educated."	Parents want her to return to village and marry soon. She asked to continue her studies	"I would 'hold on' and ask again."	"My mother would never say 'don't study'. She wants me to learn"
Placement for next year (scholarship students)	Sacred Heart Convent school; commute from home	Van Hoeck School; will live in hostel	Undetermined; Sr. Crescence trying to keep her in a school	Van Hoeck School; live in hostel	Sacred Heart School; will stay with a family
Question	RITA	TAMANA	MANDIPA	ANTIMA	SHOBHA
What made you the most happy during this year at the Bridge Course	Style of teaching; inspiration (praise)from teachers	The studies I will not get anywhere else; liked the projects and spirit of competition	The routine life; the way "you people taught us"	Love from the Sisters; routine life; style of teaching; "given needs" (things provided)	Everything; protect and care for us; I like to help and serve
What did you find the most difficult this year?	When the Sisters scold me	Nothing was difficult	To cope with all the demands (rules) and the amount of study	Leaving here is the hardest	Leaving here is the hardest
Favorite subject?	Science	Hindi	Hindi	Hindi	Hindi
What advice would you give a new girl?	Don't cry; "slowly, slowly" it will be nice	Stay here even if sad; you will benefit later	Would share her own experience of being homesick but then saw how good it was	I would teach as was taught us: Don't run away; you will get lost; always talk to Sr. Crescence	Stay here and you will feel happy because Sr. Crescence will love and help you
If your parents say that standard 5 or 6 is enough, what might you say to your parents?	I will ask to continue school	I will say no. I want to study until standard 8, then go to another school	I want to continue studying and become the Inspector of Police, to catch smugglers and thieves	My father said, "I am unable to educate my sons so I will educate my daughter. She will stay in school"	I will tell my parents I want to study and become something and earn money that I will give you. [Rita has 4 uneducated older sisters. She is the only one in her family who can read & write.]
Placement for next year (scholarship students)	Not definite though the plan is to attend Sacred Heart School and live with a family	Will bicycle to school and attend the Baba Mukti school relatively near her home	Will bicycle to school and attend the Baba Mukti school relatively near her home	Retained in Bridge Course for another year	Retained in Bridge Course for another year

Sr. Crescence's Report



Bridge Course program was a sweet dream, an imagination of one mind, a somewhat beautiful flower of FreeSchools. One year's experiment has given us unimagined results.

Various ways:-

(1) *Academic progress.* Village girls who knew only 3Rs (after class 2) have shown galloping progress in 9-10 months of a year. Their interest for learning was so awakened that they did complete syllabus of classes 3rd +4th +5th with good success to ensure their achievement they at the end of academic year were asked to write the annual exam of formal schools and they did well. Learning was no more a burden but a joy for them.

(2) Out of 18 girls enrolled in 2010, two dropped out in first two months and two at the end of 6 months. The rest (14) got results as follows:-

- 2 got admission in class 7th
- 2 got admission in class 6th
- 5 got admission in class 5th
- 2 got admission in class 4th
- 3 were detained to repeat.

(3) *Progress in socio-cultural life.* Village girls, lovers of free life, having no boundaries of time and hours exit, were brought to a life where time and hours has and discipline meant a lot. Beginning phase was tough for the girls as well as for us. Here everything has to be done in proper manner and at proper time. Slowly as the time passed the girls became adjusted to a life of routine.

At early stage these girls felt nervous in the

presence of anyone than their parents and village kinsmen. Now they not only feel comfortable with all of us, but they feel sentimentally attached to the sisters and teachers.

Credit goes to our hostel warden Miss Sristi Kumari, and to Amit Victor and Sunny, our office staff who have put their utmost efforts to helps the girls feel at home. Now for them to go home even for holidays is painful.

Angels at convent

Timid and shy girls of villages now move freely to like angels to study and to help any Sister in need. So much in holidays the nuns miss them and they miss us at home.

Easter Season these innocent girls looked like little angels witnessing Easter ceremonies washing of feet, the way of the cross displayed, and the night vigil of Good Friday with angelic devotional theirs heart were deeply touched at 4th 5th 6th and 7th stations they shared that in these house of your prayer we felt deep peace whereas in our prayers there is lot of noise then peace.

Climax reached

Every program is expected to give joy, joy completion, joy of the targeted result. One year Bridge Program has given us joy mixed with sorrow. The golden result at the end of the year gives us joy, but the breaking of such love relation with these angelic creative is painful. We are confronted with a question, "What will happen to them? Their question, 'How can we leave you?' echoes and re-echoes in our ears every day.

Gerri Johnson's Report from Bihar



[Gerri Johnson is president of FreeSchools World Literacy-USA. Below are excerpts from the report of her visit to the Free-Schools and Bridge Course Program in June, 2011]

Travelling to Delhi and Bihar was so easy, helped by the new Indira Gandhi Terminal 3. . . . The lunch on Air India flight was still tasty. And then you arrive in Patna! Of course Sr. Crescence was waiting, had made friends with everyone standing at the door waiting for their loved one and they all helped her when they saw the only westerner in the crowd emerge.

The weather was hot but not as scorching as I anticipated. The good thing about the heat was that the mosquitoes and flies were rare. Once the temps cooled down they returned with a vengeance or perhaps just ravenous hunger. . . .

We had lunch at the Provincialate and I was given a hearty welcome by the candidates. Sr. Madhu showed me the construction of the new early childhood center (preschool to kindergarten) that will be a source of income for the Provincialate. Sr. also said they will have a FreeSchools class after hours. Funds from the



Bishop began the project and now she needs several thousand dollars to complete it.

Dinner was at the Generalate house with Sr. Emma. They had eight priests as dinner guests. . . .

The travellers agreed to depart Patna by 6.00 AM and we were pulling out the front gate by 6.10 AM. (Can you believe that?) Most Bihar schools were on holiday. So given the early start, no school traffic, and the fact that the fly-over is completed, we reached the bridge in 30 minutes and then it took us an hour to cross. Amit and Ganesh (his driving was much slower and he has turned into a lovely person; full of smiles and very caring for Sister) discovered a new road from the bridge to Bettiah. It is a country road, winding through villages and lovely countryside. The road is 90% paved, with areas near Bettiah still being improved. About an hour out from the bridge, the traffic melted to ox-carts, horse-carts, bikes, tankas, local busses, cars and a few lorries etc. It felt sane (well . . . for India!).

* * *

In Motihari we pulled into St. Mary's before noon. Twenty Motihari teachers were waiting for a team meeting. This is when I learned that Hari Shankar is no longer with FreeSchools and instead Pankaj Kumar (tall, handsome young man, teacher (his sister runs the tailoring school) is now the Area Coordinator. I ran into Hari Shankar at Sr. Elise's building. He came over and shook my hand and let me know he was now working for Sr. Elise in the new "human trafficking" project. Sr. Elise was in Delhi so I was unable to learn more about the project. . . .

In the meeting with the teachers we asked what was working for them, how they could improve their program and what do they think they need. A general theme of 'more training' and 'books' prevailed. They asked how to use music, how to make class fun, how to engage the children more. I was delighted to hear their thoughts. And one teacher said 'We need books,' with which many then agreed. That was a good time to tell them about the bookmobile and plans for teacher training.

(And while in Delhi I visited the Pratham Book store/publishers. They have books geared just for children like our students, who have no background of literacy and come to school literally a

blank slate, as well as levelled readers for those who are learning to read. With funds raised in Singapore, I purchased 240 books (4 copies of 60 basic books, 3 in Hindi, 1 in English) and 80 sets of story cards (two sets per teacher/ each set has 10 illustrated and laminated stories). Including shipping to Patna the cost was INR 11,000.)

* * *

In Bettiah we only saw two of the five schools we had planned to visit. The rain cancelled the other 3 visits. We had the best time at one of the sewing centers. After the welcome songs, looking at the pieces the girls had done, asking them questions about the stitches they have learned and what they will do with this new skill, one of the mothers got the ball rolling. She had quite a twinkle in her eye and said she left her goats to see what was happening here, as she heard a “visitor was coming from far away” and just had to see what that meant. She then said if she had learned to read and write she would fly on the airplane with me. I don’t know what she was saying, but she had Sr. Crecence, the girls and other moms laughing. The translation didn’t come across but there was certainly levity and joy in the air. At one point the mothers turned serious asking Sr. if they could have a school and learn to read.

* * *

About [our usual driver] Manager. . . he was recently diagnosed. He is in the early stages of leukemia and will be treated with medication at this stage. Each tablet cost INR 400. He wants to work but Sr. Elise suggested he rest for a few weeks, in case there are side effects to the meds, and the comeback. His prognosis is good as they can control the growth for now. I asked who made the diagnosis and was told he went to the Cancer Center in Patna.

* * *

The Bridge Course girls were very special. This was a great idea. Sr. Crecence and I held individual exit interviews with ten of the girls



which I will type up and send to you. Their replies to our four simple questions were very interesting... such as, “What was the best thing about this year?” Almost unanimously they said, “the love they received” and “having a routine.” They like knowing what would happen next and the way they were taught.

11 of the 13 who finished the school year will go to a regular school next year, either at Sacred Heart Bettiah, Van Hoeck, or other private schools near their home. Several girls will commute from their own homes and Sr. has found lodging for the others in hostel or private homes. Two girls were retained. Their marks were borderline so they could use another year. But Sr. also wanted some continuity with having experienced girls show the new girls what to do.

The two girls not placed in a regular school was due to the students’ parents. The child with the highest marks is now thirteen years old and her parents want to begin the marriage process for her. Sr. is trying to keep her in any program.

Marks are based on 100% but with their curve 35 is passing -- so 55% is high. The girl mentioned above received 80% is all subjects at level 6 (6th grade).

There is so much more to share but that’s it for now...

TO OUR DONORS

We hope you have enjoyed this report of the first year of the Bridge Course Program.

Thanks to those of you who contributed to make it possible!

The 2011-2012 year has begun and the Bridge Course is in progress, so please donate again to give a bright girl a chance at a better future!

www.ServiceToHumanity.org or www.FreeSchools.org