

Bihar, March 2010—Visit to Bayria

by Geri Johnson

No journey to the same destination is ever the same. In Bihar we hope that will be the case. We want to see change and growth; children progressing in their learning, teachers deepening their skills and more parent involvement.

For reasons that are not clearly understood, the names of some schools change each time we return. Locations may alter too, though that is more understandable. FSWL's use of donated space lends itself to transient arrangements. Sometimes a better place is offered or a patron requires his/her field or courtyard back. Also, the spelling of a school varies with the speller. Putting Hindi names into English spelling reveals the confusing nature of English vowel.

Last year we visited Bairiya though this year the spelling was Bayria. Vowels aside, we immediately recognized the narrow, dusty lane, sized for one vehicle only that would lead to a village that has taken great pride in their children's learning.

Bayria is near the town of Motihari and has had a school in the same location for at least 5 years. A few years ago land was donated for a thatched building, which housed two classrooms. In January 2009 visit, the landowner donated more space. The villagers agreed to provide the labor and asked Sr. Crescence for the raw materials (bamboo and reeds) to construct another thatched hut. This involvement by the community for a stable and safe environment and the commitment of the teachers who now have several years of experience in this school, are positive measures that ensure continuity in the children's learning. As visitors, without command of the local language, we look for program success in various ways. We are dependent upon others to assess how much the children are learning. The involvement of the community and growing value of education are measures readily witnessed and need no translation.

2
0
0
9



2
0
1
0



The new three sided school serves as the kindergarten. In the March temperatures that were approaching 100° F / 38° C , this model seemed cooler and more practical than the 4 walled version.



Indal Kumar

We arrive in the midst of classes. Mr. Indal Kumar was teaching math to the oldest or most advanced students.. Ms. Rekha Kumari was teaching a “General Knowledge” class, which is a combination of Indian historical facts and government structure. Ms. Rinku Padey with the youngest children was teaching a Hindi alphabet lesson.



Rekha Kumari



Rinku Padey

Our arrival disrupts the class and all come outside to greet us. The children are eager to see the visitors and yet quite orderly. They also know a toffee candy treat is coming their way, a small custom that is part of our visits.

Bayria Students



Saskia Raevouri and Bayria Students



After smiles, songs, waving and hugging, we climb back into an SUV-type vehicle, and return to the dusty path, large enough for one vehicle and immediately meet an ox cart full of hay. Kindly the driver pulls his oxen and cart as far left as possible, hugging the path’s edge which drops into a small creek. With only a hairs breadth between us, we pass and soon blend back into the hectic traffic on the main road. From ox cart to SUV, dirt path to paved highway, we have jumped a few centuries in seconds. We are off to another village, another school and another group of precious children.