



ANNUAL BRIDGE COURSE REPORT



April 2022-March 2023



“Preparing girls to fit in tomorrow’s advanced world through Bridge Course training”

[Based on the report prepared by Sr. Crescence’s staff, revised and reformatted by Saskia Raevouri]

General Information of the Organization

Title of the Project	Bridge Course Program
Name of the organization	Fakirana Sisters Society
Address of the organization	Fakirana Sisters' Society Banuchappar, Bettiah, West Champaran - 845438 Bihar, India.
Phone	91-8862844435,9661447535
Email	sr.crescence@gmail.com niteshsingh75@gmail.com
Fax	Not available
Contact Person	Sr. Crescence, Nitesh Kumar
Location of the project	Bridge Course Sacred Heart Convent, Bettiah of West Champaran districts of Bihar
Project Duration	Ongoing
Reporting Period	1 st April 2022 to 31 st March 2023

Location of the project



The Bridge Course program is operated in a separate building and offices on the grounds of the Sacred Heart Convent in Bettiah, Bihar.

Introduction and Background

The Bridge Course is a free residential program for poor girls with inborn talents and capacity for leadership. A survey of the FreeSchools World Literacy program (www.freeschools.org) carried out by us in 2010 showed that after class 4th or 5th 95% of the female students were deprived of further education. One reason was that the schools were at a great distance from their villages, but more was the society thinking: “Girls do not need education more than class five.” The Bridge Course is a one- or two-year remedial program to counteract the wrong thinking of society. It is a unique type of education conducted in Bettiah; there is no program similar to it in Bihar.

Only intellectual young and poor girls can be candidates for this program. These girls are chosen after class five. In a very short period of two years they are given quality of education up to class 7th with modern meth-

ods and techniques. The Bridge Course focuses on developing their inborn talents and preparing them as confident, responsible, knowledgeable and vocal female leaders in today's society. Its aim is not only to prepare them for exams but also to develop their all-round personalities.

Each year, members of the Bridge Course staff travel to the various villages where FreeSchools operate, and from those students girls are selected through intellectual testing. After obtaining their parents' written permission, the girls are admitted into the Bridge Course program where they live in a dormitory with a maximum capacity of 18-21. All the necessities, such as bedding, food, books and study materials, are provided free of charge.

The designed and developed process of identification, selection and enrollment to find the right girls has enhanced the authenticity of the candidates. Parents and their daughters are also oriented and counseled at every stage about the Bridge Course Program—its rules, regulations, its objectives and mission.

After completing one year of Bridge Course, the girls find positive changes within themselves and feel inspired to be active instruments for the change of their society. Bridge Course completes in one year the requirements of class 7th. Girls who would go for normal education are sent home to continue their studies through local schools, and definitely 99% pass 10th in 1st division. Girls having extraordinary talents and capabilities are screened and kept for a second year of Bridge Course, being given class 8th and 9th courses and leadership training.

Summary of 2022-2023

Twenty-one girls altogether successfully completed this year's Bridge Course program. Four girls passing from Bridge Course joined class 9th, six girls took admission in class 8th, and the rest went for class 7th. At the end of the year the girls were amazed to see the change in themselves. Naturally they are grateful to God, to the benefactors for the financial support, and to the staff members for their hard work.

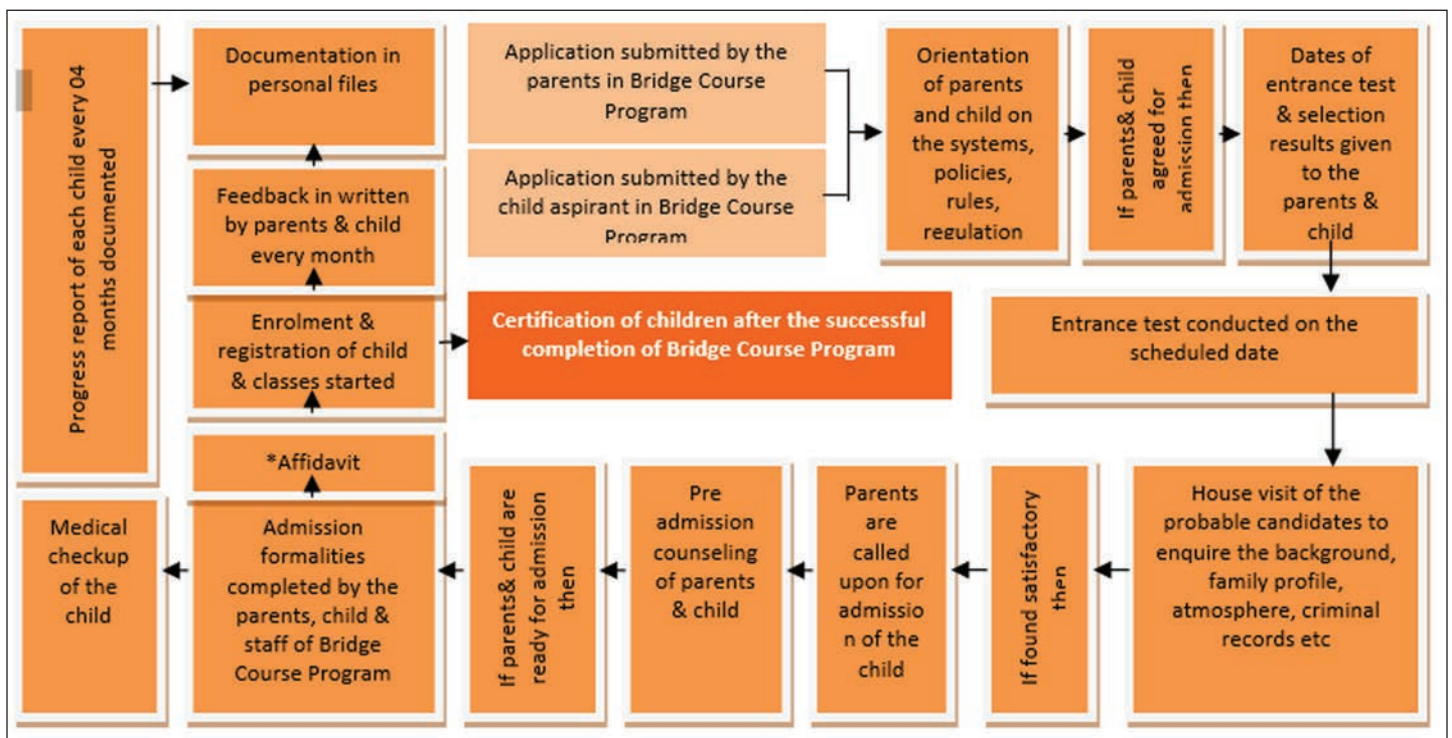


No	Name	Parent's Name	Address	Current status
1	Babita Kumari	Hariendra Sahni	Dachini Teluwa	Studying in class 9 th
2	Bipasa Kumari	Rakesh Baitha	Gonauli	Studying in class 8 th
3	Ishika Kumari	Subash Sahni	Teluwa	Studying in class 8 th
4	Nisha Kumari	Jitendra Kumar	Bawariya	Studying in class 8 th
5	Ramita Kumari	Harindera Sahni	Bhanachak	Studying in class 7 th
6	Simran Kumari	Santosh Bitha	Busstand Bettiah	Studying in class 7 th
7	Roshni Kumari	Satynaryan Choudhari	Paharpur	Studying in class 8 th
8	Karina Kumari	Ramuna Choudhry	Parswani	Studying in class 7 th
9	Samiksha Kumari	Bindeshwari Kushwaha	Gora Sanichari	Studying in class 9 th
10	Sabita Kumari	Mishri Mahto	Gora Tola	Studying in class 7 th
11	Saloni Kumari	Manoj Parsad	Basopati	Studying in class 7 th
12	Baby Kumari	Ajay Sah	Dularpati	Studying in class 7 th
13	Khusi Kumari	Santosh Sah	Lauriya	Studying in class 7 th
14	Khusboo Kumari	Sujeet Sah	Awriya Belwa	Studying in class 7 th
15	Anshu Kumari	Ramesh Sharma	Belwa	Studying in class 8 th
16	Karuna Kumari	Binay Sharma	Belwa	Studying in class 8 th
17	Soniya Kumari	Mahendra Choudhry	Dubwaliya	Studying in class 7 th
18	Karishma Kumari	Densaran Baitha	Lakhnipur	Studying in class 9 th
19	Rima Kumari	Bharat Ram	Lakhnipur	Studying in class 9 th
20	Gitanjali Kumari	Papu Sharma	Badhi Tola	Studying in class 7 th
21	Suhani Kumari	Chandeshkar Parsad	Kathrwatola	Studying in class 7 th

Selection of the Candidates



Twenty-one girls, identified from different villages, underwent the structured selection process and enrolled in the Bridge Course program for their studies during the year 2022-23. This year we designed and worked out a better system which enhanced the authenticity of the candidates. Parents and children were oriented and counseled at every stage to understand the program, its rules and regulations, its objectives and its mission. The following diagram illustrates the process of identification, selection and enrollment of the candidates:



Teaching



Cultural Program by Bridge Course girls



Certificate and prize distribution by guest CBI officer



SE RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM
W. A. SOCIETY
BANUCHHAPAR, BETTIAH
Welcomes All
Annual day Celebrations
- Sr. Crescence Bridge Course Program

Annual Day Celebration 2023



This year Bridge Course students celebrated Annual Day on April 12, 2023. It was a joint occasion of sending off the old students and welcoming in the new ones. While a happy event, it was also a painful day for the old girls who were leaving.

The chief guest of the day was Mr. Saurabh Kumar, an officer of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). It was an honor for us to have not only the CBI officer as our chief guest, but also Fr. Fenton, director of the diocesan social center. The audience were our FreeSchool teachers, parents, novices



Departing student Rima says goodbye to Sr. Crescence

and all of our Sisters. The program was short and simple but rich in messages, and much appreciated because it was performed by the young girls with confidence. The last number, sung in English by the girls, was “I will sing of the mercy of the Lord; forever I will sing.” The most admired was the dialogue of two little girls telling a story of a lion and a mouse entirely in English.

At the end of the program came a beautiful and unexpected message by the CBI officer: “My idea of social work done by foreign money was completely different but today it is totally reversed.

I see here what the work of charity can do and is doing. It is purely done for the love of God, not for selfishness. In Sr. Crescence I see God's presence, otherwise such change cannot take place in the downtrodden, unloved children. I am very, very happy.”



Sr. Crescence with the new girls for the year 2023-2024

Overseas Visitors



Gerri Johnson, Alice Wood, and Rob Mastroianni (not shown) from FreeSchools visited the girls in November, 2022.

Seven Wonders of the Bridge Course Program



RITA KUMARI comes from a very poor family in Belwa village of Chanpatiya block of the West Champaran district of Bihar. After completing two years of the Bridge Course program, Rita's parents denied her the opportunity for further education. Her strict mother handed over a goat to Rita and said, "No more studies. Go with the goat. You have to earn your bread." Full of ambition to study and become something, Rita has to obey her mother. She goes to big meadow and ties her goat to a small tree from where, with greedy eyes, she can see children studying in a nearby government school. Slowly, slowly she leaves her goat and stands beside the window of a class to listen to the teacher. This became her daily routine—no books, no study materials. After a month, the master questioned Rita: "Why don't you come into the classroom?" Rita replied, "I have no books, no pencil, no materials, and my mother will

not give me these things. I have to look after my goat." The teacher, out of compassion, said, "I will give you everything. You sit in the class." Without her mother's knowledge, Rita attended the class every day. At the end of the school year, she wrote 10th class exam and came up with 1st division. Her parents were shocked to see their daughter's outstanding result. From then on Rita is allowed to continue her education as a private student. Again she surprises her parents and others with her glorious result 1st division with distinction. This is the wonder of Bridge Course.

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MAUSAM AND MUSKAN come from Belwa village of the Chanpatiya block of West Champaran district of Bihar. They studied in Bridge Course. Both were extraordinarily bright in all subjects. Their father wanted them



to become police officers. The Bridge Course staff also expected that these two girls would one day become officers. After completing class 8th in the Bridge Course the girls returned home. They came the shocking news that their father, working for a private company in Delhi, died in a road accident. All their dreams collapsed, because with no earning member in the family, their mother a widow, no property, only one brother eight years old, little to eat even, their education could not continue. In this misery Saskia Raevouri came forward with scholarship funds for them, saying, “Have courage. Your studies will continue.” The brokenhearted sisters never gave up hope. They obtained 1st division

in 10th exam and are now preparing for class 10+2 (inter). Surely they will come through with bright results.

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CHULBUL KUMARI comes from Teluwa village of the Nautan block of West Champaran district of Bihar. When she was three years old, her mother left, leaving her with her brokenhearted father and eighty-year-old grandmother. We can only imagine what her experience would have been. Somehow she grew under the care of her grandmother. At nine years of age, Chulbul had no schooling and was looking after her grandmother’s goats. Her father worked as a labourer in Darjeeling, a great distance from Bihar, so she was deprived of her father’s love also. In 2019 a group of eight girls from Chulbul’s village attended the Bridge Course. When they returned home for their first holidays, Chulbul’s father saw these girls and was very impressed with the positive changes in them. He came to the Bridge Course and pleaded with the director, Sr. Crescence, “Please take my child also. It is



my humble request to you as my child has no mother.” The Bridge Course opened the door for Chulbul. She was a bright child but we could see in her face the missing of a mother and it touched our hearts. Chulbul was given extra care and extra love by all of us. She grew. She completed all her studies along with her companions. She was also good in singing, dancing, stage appearance, and cooking. After gloriously completing Bridge Course class 8th, she returned home with no money to study further. At this helplessness, Mr. Robert Coenraads from Australia said, “I will help you,” and provided scholarship funds for

her. She was admitted to class 9th in GAHRI Modern School, a good private school, where she has become famous due to her excellence in singing, dancing, stage performance, and studies. The teachers love her. Definitely she will pass class 10th in 1st division. Today Chulbul is her father’s pride and a strong pillar for him. He counts on her!

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SABITA KUMARI belongs to a poor family in Bhaurrwa village of the Sugauli block of East Champaran district of Bihar. Sabita was unfortunate in many ways. She has no mother, and her father is a polio patient. Her only brother is married with three children, and his wife does not like Sabita. Sabita never went to school. When she was eight years old, her father, having no way to help Sabita, brought her to the convent in Suguali. He said to the Superior, Sr. Ambrose, “Please take this child and keeps her here. Give her some work or else she will die in my house.” Sr. Ambrose was moved with pity and she kept the child at the convent for one year. Sabita received everything but could not attend school anywhere nearby. One day Sr. Ambrose brought Sabita to the Sr. Crescence and said, “Sister, please take this unfortunate girl and give her a chance to study. This will be the biggest charity.”



Sabita was then admitted to the Bridge Course where she lived and studied for three years, completing class 8th. There was a big question where to send her for further education, when Sr. Crescence had the idea that Sabita could possibly attend the Hindi Medium School run by Sisters in Bettiah. She took Sabita to that convent school and requested the Superior to allow her to complete her 10th, with the Bridge Course paying the class fee, and this was granted. Sabita completed her 10th in second division. Again the same big question arose: Where will Sabita go now? Once more, another generous person—a Sacred Heart Sister high in authority—came forward. After hearing Sabita's sad story, the Sister offered to send her to our convent in Patna where she will stay until she completes her 10+2

(inter). Sabita is now doing her study and is given 2000 rupees (around \$25) a month for pocket expenses. This is how the sad story of Sabita has become a wonder of the Bridge Course.



RUBY was the one of the most unfortunate girls in the world. An only child, and adopted, she lost both her parents when she was an infant. Originally a resident of Bettiah, she had to move to Darjeeling, West Bengal, to live with her maternal uncle, Mr. Benedict. It can only be imagined what a turn life takes without parents, and that is what happened with this child. She had no access to school for two reasons: 1) Education in English medium school was expensive and beyond Mr. Benedict's capacity; and 2) There was no Hindi medium school within her vicinity. Her only hope in life was to become a domestic



helper. Somehow her uncle came to know about the Bridge Course in Bettiah, and one bright morning Ruby was brought by a nun to Sr. Crescence and the Bridge Course in Bettiah. After formalities, Ruby was admitted into the program. Ruby's mind was all the time pondering, "I have no parents; even my uncle is not my own because I was adopted." She remained in the Bridge Course and completed class 10th with the help of private tutoring. She returned to Kolkata full of spirit for the poor children. With the help of a nun, a social worker, today Ruby herself is a social worker.

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TAMANA KUMARI belongs to a poor family in Auraiya village of Bettiah block of West Champaran district of Bihar. At the age of eight she lost her father. Her mother was uneducated but found work as a domestic servant in two or three houses. With no true earning member in the family, she somehow managed to feed her three children. Tamana's education was out of question. One day, though a caring person, she was brought to the Bridge Course and was admitted. At the end of class 8th she returned home where she did some tuition of small children, collecting enough money to complete her private study of class 10th. She graduated and passed in 1st division. Then tragedy struck when her younger sister got burned. Tamana's mother came to Sr. Crescence

in tears, saying, "Please save us and save my daughter. Please give some work to Tamana else we all will die." Sr. Crescence decided to take a chance and appoint Tamana as a FreeSchool World Literacy teacher. Today Tamana is one of the best teachers in the FreeSchools program.

Director: Sr. Crescence /FreeSchools WLP & Bridge Course Program
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