Dear Hermine,

Greetings from Patna

It is quite some time since we have communicated to you. The school is going on quite well with more children coming and some leaving each year. Many more are being enrolled in Government school as this is our primary aim at the end of 3 or 4 years. Of course some leave Patna altogether for domestic reasons especially the older girls who are not able to continue the education because of household and other concerns

This year the monsoon has played havoc from June onwards. Monsoon should arrive in Bihar somewhere in the middle of July or early July. Global, climatic change has become so unpredictable nowadays. Bihar is hit by heavy rains from June 08. The Govt. ordered the closure of school for more than 10 days in the cities where the water logging was beyond control, also due to the negligence of the city administration. Roads have become terrible for any vehicles to run. Some how or other because of natural and more of man made disasters Bihar state and and its people bear the brunt of lack of development, illiteracy and other disadvantages.

This week the river Kosi known as the "sorrow of Bihar" overflowed to such an extent that it brought untold misery and loss people and property.(You must have seen it on T.V during these days) As usual the authorities were not prepared as they should have been. I must say that people have such enduring capacity, may be they need to vent their feelings more often. River Kosi area is about 18 hours from Patna. We are close to R.Ganga. Most of our children are affected when R.Ganga gets filled as it did this year in June for 10/12 days. We asked them to remain at home until water receded. Those whose homes were inundated with water took shelter in Govt school buildings or with some relatives in the village while others, those who could manage to remain in their own homes sat on wooden beds inside their homes. These wooden beds are known as 'chouwkees'. They are very useful in all seasons mostly used by poor people and small roadside tea shops in the villages too. However some children wanted to come to school as the school provided classroom for them to sit and enjoy also toilets were available to them. Some of our school toilets too were unusable as the water level went on rising in surrounding areas. I did open the school after 5/6 days when the water started receding so that the children can come to school and spent 3 hours. They used to carry drinking water in bottles to their homes and were happy to be in the school premises for a while. Now Patna roads are almost dry and by September we hope the rain gods will go away.

In Aug. 08 we celebrated the school day, choose a rainless day, The children, about 280 of them turned up on that day, put up some songs, action song and dances all in Hindi of course. We gave them a bun each with some typical Indian sweets which they enjoyed very much. Some oft hem brought their younger siblings with them to the school

November 14th will be celebrated as Children's Day. We are planning to have sports day for them when all the children will be provided with some small gifts. They are all looking forward to that day of celebration. We also have a big Hindu feast in October –Durga Pooja- (Durga is a Hindu goddess for the North Indians) and November Feast of Deewali (festival of lights) followed by Christmas in December.

As I write this letter the weather outside is cloudy, threatening us with more rain. I hope and pray that the rain gods will relent and spare the people from more rains and destruction. People in our area too could not get out of the house for several days in the month of July. We had to wade through knee-deep water to go to the nearby shops.

Wishing you and remembering you all in our prayer with gratitude
From all of us at Sophia Centre-Patna

Sr. Mary Varghese
For Sophia Centre -Patna

Dated. 28-8-08

Note. Later on I shall send some photos.