

## Faith Group Report

2<sup>nd</sup> Term - October 2012 - March 2013



Faith group has the oldest children in the school. They are between 10 and 12 years old. There are ten children in the group - two boys and eight girls. Six of them stay in school while the rest go home every evening and return the next morning. The overall attendance has been better this session.

**General behavior:** All the children are always keen to try out new activities and projects. They are very attached to their tribal culture and often treat us to songs and dances from their village. They attend most of the major festivals in their village and sometimes take the teachers along as well. However most of them also recognize the problems in their society such as the rampant alcoholism.

They enjoy taking long walks in the jungles, collecting fruit and dry grass to make brooms. We try to go on such excursions at least a few times a month.



Being the oldest children in the school, they also recognize their responsibility towards the younger ones. Often they spend time with the youngest children in our school, the Rainbow group, and teach them songs and rhymes.

**Areas for improvement:** For most children in Faith, the biggest problem has been a lack of confidence. Though they are very intelligent and certainly the most mature children in the

school, their fear of speaking in English around others has been, and continues to be, our biggest challenge.

For this reason the attempt over the last few months was to help them overcome these difficulties. Apart from encouraging the children to speak in English at all times, we played many games that involve talking and listening. We began with phonics games to help the children distinguish between different sounds in English, many of which don't exist in their native tongue, for example the 'sh' in sheep. We then played games where the children were encouraged to make full descriptive sentences. For example, a child will think of any object or person and say one line describing the object. If he is thinking about a tree he can say 'It is tall and brown'. The other children will then ask questions about the object.

Performing plays and singing songs was also something we did a lot. The children are currently working on a musical titled Fish Friends Three.





It has been reassuring to see that the children have made progress. Most of them have begun speaking in English, though they have to be reminded often as they easily slip back into Hindi whenever possible.

One of the areas we have been working on is their sense of personal hygiene and aesthetics.

Through discussions and stories, we tried to make the children think about beauty and how they too can be beautiful. What are the things they must or must not do when it comes to their daily work, toilet habits, eating habits, and even cooperation and a friendly attitude towards others.

Most of the children are very particular about their personal hygiene. They keep their rooms neat and tidy, and are always dressed in clean clothes. Apart from a few, particularly Sukru, the others are quite responsible about hygiene.







**Projects:** During the last session, we took up three projects.

**Post Office:** The children have been writing letters to their pen pals in Jammu over the last six months and so they were keen to find out more about how their letters actually reach their friends. That is why they chose to work on this topic.

We took the children on a field trip to the head post office in Koraput and spoke to the postmaster there. The children were able to observe first-hand how it all works.

The children also learnt interesting trivia about how messages were sent before the postal system was set up, such as by carrier pigeons and smoke signals.

**Skill work** – The children set up their own post office in school, calling it the Auro Mira Post office. They made a letter box using waste paper. They also made stamps, postcards, inland letter cards and envelopes to 'sell' to the other children in the school. Our postmen and women also made little origami Nehru caps to wear.

The children were told about money transactions and were encouraged to conduct their own using Monopoly money.

**Observations** – Many of the children felt shy about speaking in front of the others in English despite having practiced quite a bit. Despite that, they were very enthusiastic about sorting the letters, delivering them and running the post office.



**Project First Aid:** Following a visit by Dr. Pradhan from The Mother's Integral Health Centre accompanied by her friend Dr. Raj, the children expressed eagerness to learn about ailments and cures. So, we took up First Aid as our next project.



The children were told by the Doctors about what first aid is and why it is necessary in certain situations such as burns, snake bites etc.

The children also investigated various medicinal plants which grow in and around the villages. They collected a few saplings and set up their own nursery in our garden.

They were also given an introduction to Reiki, a Japanese healing technique.

**Skill work** – After learning about the first aid procedures for different problems, the children made a diary where they noted down what they had learnt. We also let the children handle the school's first aid box for those 2-3 weeks. Whoever required medical assistance would go to the Faith group child on duty. The child would be responsible for cleaning wounds and **tying** bandages etc.

The project ended with a Hindi play on first aid titled 'Prevention is better than Cure'. The children performed this play before the school.

### **Project Flowers:**

The final project for the session was taken up following discussions with the children about different types of flowers that grow in our garden and their spiritual significance as interpreted by the Mother.

Besides learning how to recognize different flower varieties, the children also learnt about the parts of flowers, how seeds travel and about germination of seeds.

**Skill work** – The children participated in many art and craft activities such as drawing and colouring different flowers, block painting on bedsheets, making origami flowers and leaves



and making seating mats with flower motifs using discarded sacks.

The children went for walks in the ashram gardens where they learnt to distinguish between various types of flowers, identifying their physical characteristics.

We did a lot of reflective exercises in Hindi and English. The children were asked to imagine themselves as a flower. Each of them then described the flower as they would describe themselves.



Faith Group



Project - Flowers



Another exercise we did asked the children to imagine a conversation between a flower and a child who was just about to pluck that flower. In their imagined conversations, the children talked about things like whether it was right to end a flower's life just because we wished to make our rooms and our homes look prettier.

The children also made a Hindi poem titled '*Hamara Phool Bagiyaan.*'

The project culminated in an exhibition where the children collected twenty different varieties of flowers and put up charts about the parts of flowers and how seeds germinate etc. They also prepared a puppet show based on a story they made themselves.

In September 2012, we learnt of a village school in Breswana, Jammu that wanted to introduce their children to the joy of having pen pals. They were looking for children in similar schools in other parts of the country to write to. The children here in Kechla were very excited to participate in such an exercise. It would be the first time they would ever write letters. After orienting them to where exactly their pen pals were located on a map of India we initiated the letter writing. By the end of September we sent out our first batch of letters where the children had written about their home, their school, things they like to do etc. They also made a small drawing and attached it with their letter.

We received replies with a few weeks. The children were very excited to see that their new friends had written to them. There were some interesting things mentioned in the letters such as that it snows for 2-3 months in the year, and that they pray to different gods. Since then the children have exchanged letters two more times after which the Jammu school



closed for the winter. In the last batch of letters they sent us, the children also sent pictures of themselves.

Our children are also keen to send pictures of themselves when we reply to them next which should be any time now as the winter in Jammu is over.

