



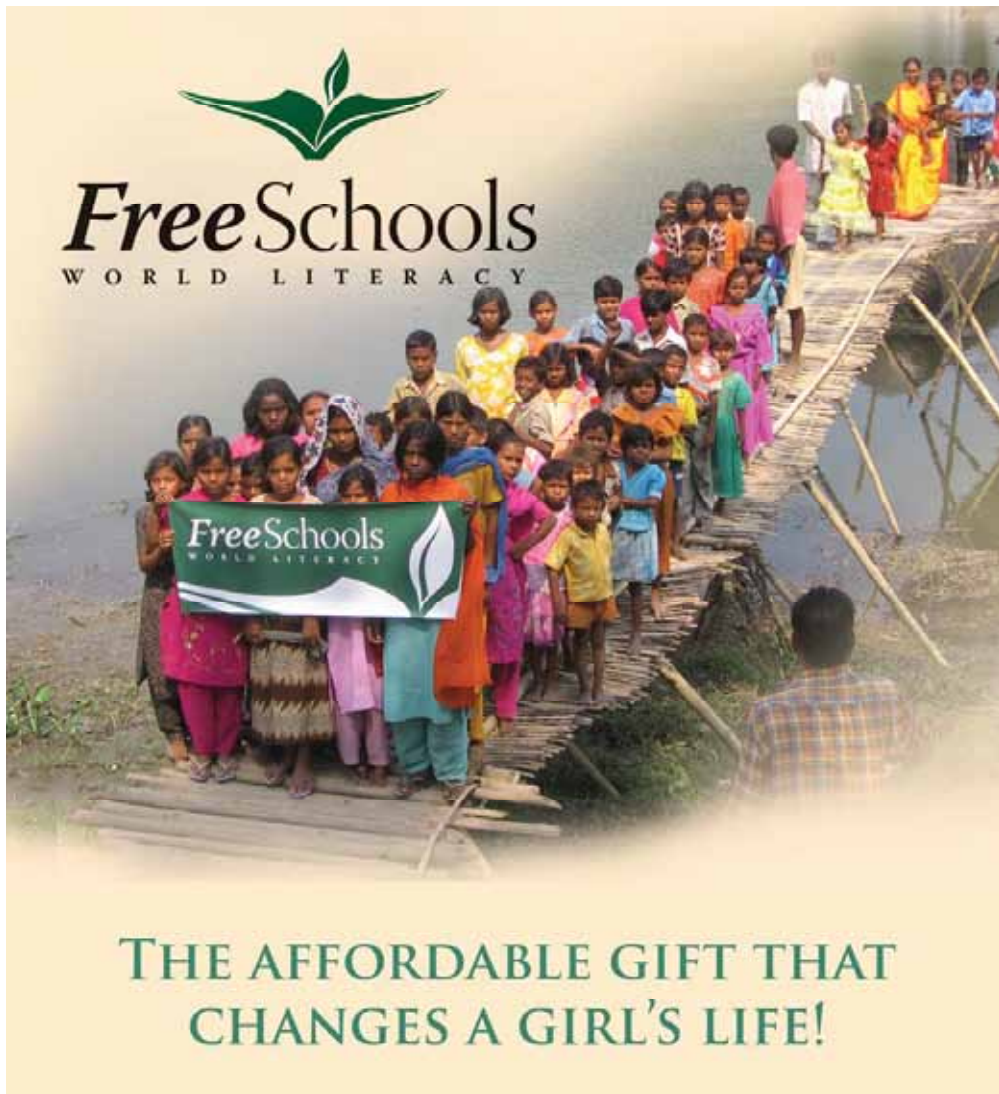
Welcome to **FreeSchools** **World Literacy — AUS** **Newsletter!**

It has been a while since we have sent out a newsletter and we wanted to update all our generous donors and supporters on *FreeSchools*'s activities and progress. Currently, we have 980 students being taught by 27 teachers at 23 *FreeSchools World Literacy* funded centres in India with 87 on staff teaching over 3000 students. The students are being taught the basics—reading, writing, arithmetic, health issues, civic awareness and crafts and other income generating skills such as sewing. The purpose of *FreeSchools World Literacy* is to provide free education in order to break the cycle of ignorance and poverty that leaves millions in hopeless despair. The organisation provides free literacy programs; teacher employment and training; income producing skills; health education; food and clothing and is documenting changes in the wellbeing of the community as a result of its programs. By providing ongoing funds and scholarships for the existing and planned new schools; *FreeSchools World Literacy* hopes to replicate its model throughout India, and other Developing Countries of the World.

We do this with the help of our overseas field partners: Sister Crescence and the Fakirana Sisters Society in Bihar State, India; Rev. Ashish Amos and ISPCK in New Delhi. Thanks to their continuing selfless work we are seeing the real benefits of this education flow back in the local community.



Buildings and grounds of the Sacred Hearts Convent.



**THE AFFORDABLE GIFT THAT
CHANGES A GIRL'S LIFE!**

President's Message to FreeSchools Members and Friends

It seems a child's fortunes in life are dealt out with the same randomness as a poker hand from a shuffled deck. The cards are dealt to each at birth - however the deck is definitely stacked, with gender and nationality playing a significant role. The disadvantages faced by third-world children, particularly girls, are horrendous.

This discrepancy was highlighted in National Geographic's January 2017 Special Edition on Gender.

Nine-year olds from around the world were interviewed for their direct and candid responses on gender and other issues they will face in life — in their answers you can see straightaway the cards they have been dealt.

Mikayla McDonald, sitting on the haystack in her overalls, lays her answer out straight, the way it should be for everyone. "There isn't anything I can't do because I'm a girl. Everyone is equal. There is always the same amount of opportunities for everyone."

Girls like Mikayla from Canada and Tomee from South Dakota are lucky — their hands always come up kings,



"A 'mixed hand' of nine-year-olds from around the world"



Some of the children and young adults being helped by FreeSchools World Literacy to attain their goals.

Unfortunately it is still not all aces, kings and queens for these children, but at least FreeSchools World Literacy has given them a start along their life's journey. Even if only a hand of tens – because life's problems for girls in India's rural Bihar State are always going to be hard to beat no matter what. - But perhaps these 'four of a kind' now stand a good chance of going a long way.

queens and aces, their lives laid out like bold and shining paths before them — although it does “kind of bother” Tomee, “how there was not one girl president.” We recognise, and encourage, Mikayla’s can-do attitude in our own children, guiding them with great care into a fruitful adulthood.

Fang Wang from China feels stifled by her mother’s old fashioned attitudes: “Sometimes I secretly help my brother on the farm. Mom whacks me when she finds out. She says that girls who do these things will grow calluses on their hands; then they become ugly.” China is rapidly advancing nowadays, buying membership of that exclusive club of lucky countries whose children are privileged.

Unfortunately for the other girls, the fateful hands they are dealt often fold, mostly runs of useless twos threes or fours, laid flat on the operating table of outdated religious and cultural practices, exposed to the leering men sitting around that table who call the cards. We in the west have little experience with the terrors these girls face

Alfia Ansari of Mumbai, India, says: “We won’t get education in school, but boys will be educated, and therefore they can travel anywhere, but girls can’t.” Nawar Kagete of Kaputir, Kenya, has even worse to say: “You are seduced wherever you go. You are chased by men, If you go to fetch water, you are chased; you go to collect firewood you are chased.”

From time to time it is important for us lucky-ones to listen to these stories. It enables us to affirm why education for children, especially girls, is so important in today’s world, and the vital role played by organizations such as *FreeSchools World Literacy* in providing this much-needed education in countries like India, Thailand and Zambia.

You, as members and friends, of *FreeSchools World Literacy* have the privilege of being in a position to help such unfortunate children, just like Nawar and Alfia, knowing that your efforts, however insignificant – perhaps the cost of a cup of coffee a week - will make a vast impact on the these children’s lives.

Dr. Robert Coenraads
President

FreeSchools World Literacy - Australia

Significant milestone reached in Thailand

The Thai schools that *FreeSchools World Literacy* has maintained and improved over the past nine years, will now run without our help under the supervision of the Mirror Foundation. The Thai government continues playing its part - taking on funding of those schools that demonstrate their importance to the local community by maintaining full enrollment for a period of 3 consecutive years.

Completion of the Zambia Project

Immanuel Mercy’s Kantalomba School is now self-sufficient. The Zambian government will now manage the teacher’s salary previously covered by *FreeSchools World Literacy*. We acknowledge Committee Member, Donna Cervantes, for her single-handed support of the project, and echo the sentiments of Raymond Hockley of Swan Christian College, Perth, “...my heartfelt gratitude on behalf of myself and the people of Kantolomba for Donna’s support over all these years. We have been fortunate to have the faithful support of Donna to cover this teacher’s salary up until this time where the government is prepared to step in. Thank you again and may the Lord Jesus bless you in all that you do.” The *FreeSchools* Committee of Management again congratulate Donna on achieving this important milestone.

We have done our job; *FreeSchools* has completed its mission in Thailand and Zambia. We are now able to turn our resources to the Indian schools and the great need of the children there through the selfless work of our field partner; Sister Crescence and the Fakirana Sisters Society in Bihar State, India; where we are seeing the real benefits of this education flow back into the local community.

Special Thanks

I would like to thank the *FreeSchools World Literacy* Committee, many of whom have been members since the Committee’s inception for their tireless and ongoing support.

A total of \$5,226 was raised for

FreeSchools World Literacy aid projects during the 2017 reporting period for the Free Schools in Bihar, India, thanks to the fundraising efforts of a dedicated group of regular donors including Isabel Abraham, Melissa Alldis, Donna Cervantes, Catherine Hoffmann, Marion Lesaffre, Bob Mills, Che Stapleton, Kathleen & Trevor Swadling, Andrew & Delphine Swadling, Ken Morley, Margaret Walls, the Coenraads Family’s Francis C. Nieves Memorial Fund, the Forest Kirk Women’s Fellowship. This also includes student scholarships raised by the Forest Kirk KidzChurch (for Shilpi), Warrick & Lorna Brady (for Lalmuni), the Forest Kirk Men’s Group (for Subhash) and Francheska Coenraads (for Ruby). The *FreeSchools World Literacy* annual registration fees of \$55.80 were donated and paid directly by Secretary Ian Esmore, and we thank Bob Mills (CPA) for auditing our annual accounts free of charge.

And, finally a special mention to Vern Verass of Design Direction for helping with the design and production of this newsletter.

The rewards of literacy

- Literacy empowers girls with income-producing skills
It keeps them from early marriage and reduces birth and infant mortality rates.
- When able to read and write, add and subtract girls are less likely to be cheated, sold into bonded labor or tricked into human trafficking.
- The study of Health and Hygiene helps protect against HIV AIDS.
- Literacy finds expression in music, dance, drama and humor—liberating natural talents that have been submerged for generations.
- The brightest are scholarshiped into formal schools and will become leaders.
- Village women initially partner with *FreeSchools*, but the whole village discovers the benefits of cooperation and grassroots democracy.
- *FreeSchools* demonstrates caring respect for the individual and has no religious discrimination.



Yes I would like to support *FreeSchools* or sponsor a student

Please find enclosed my gift of:

\$ (your choice) to support the operations of *FreeSchools*

\$ 25 to support a child to attend a *FreeSchool* in India

\$ 120 to provide a scholarship for one student to attend regular school for a year

There are two methods to make your donation.

1. You can pay by cheque

My cheque is enclosed and crossed “Not Negotiable” and made payable to *FreeSchools World Literacy*

or

2. You can make a deposit directly into the *FreeSchools* Westpac bank account

Account name: *FreeSchools World Literacy* Inc.

Account BSB: 032 196

Account Number: 266 690.

or

You might like to set up a regular small monthly donation.

Please complete your contact details below.

Name Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/Dr:

Name of supporting organization (if applicable):

Address:

State: Postcode:

Telephone: Email:

or

Go directly to the [FreeSchools website](http://www.freeschools.org.au) and conveniently make your donation online.

Send your donation to:

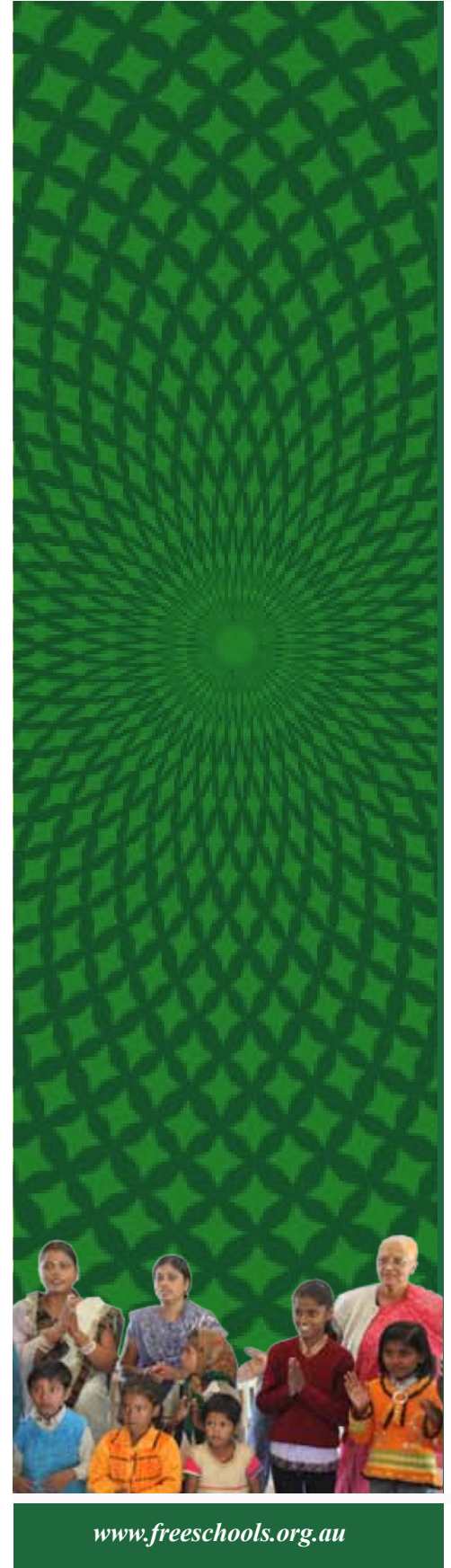
FreeSchools World Literacy—Australia

Attn: Dr. Robert Coenraads—President

8 Trigalana Place, Frenchs Forest, New South Wales 2086.

More information

For more information and photos, please see our website <http://www.freeschools.org.au> You can contact the President directly—Robert Coenraads mobile 0408 419 632 or email the Editor, Robert Coenraads, at freeschools@robertcoenraads.com.au Or perhaps you might like one of us to give a presentation about *FreeSchools* to your group or organization.



www.freeschools.org.au