



## The Bihar Project

Awakening the Sleeping Giant through Creative Solutions for Development and Poverty Alleviation (a 2009 project of the Vihara Foundation)

MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT - OCTOBER 2009

### Message from Honorable Ambassador Byron Blake

*Chief Information Officer, The Vihara Foundation*

*Senior Adviser to the 63rd President of the General Assembly of the United Nations (2009), and, former Senior Adviser to the Chair of the Group of 77 and China (2008)*

Dear Colleagues:

It is with distinct pleasure that I take this opportunity to update you on the developments of the Bihar Project (a project of the Vihara Foundation). I know (having worked over the last 35 years with United Nations and related programs on issues involving development and poverty reduction), that we are steadily confronted with the need to find solutions for some of our most challenging global problems.

In my last two years as Senior Advisors to the 63<sup>rd</sup> President of the UN General Assembly, and to the Chair of the Group of 77 and China, the issues of food security, poverty and climate change continues to escalate. The Bihar Project was introduced to me as an opportunity to address these matters innovatively. Today, I am pleased to be part of this promising project, as I see "light at the end of the tunnel" and hope for millions that are destitute.

Please find below a statement of achievements for the month of October and other initiatives going forward:

1. The Vihara Foundation (VF) continues to advance negotiations with Fordham University's Center for International Policy Studies (CIPS), to conduct field research for implementation of the Bihar Project (TBP)
2. VF is now collaborating with Engineers Without Borders, Quebec, and began research and understanding of critical groundwater aspects of the Bihar region
3. The legal and institutional arrangements for TBP continue to progress. An increasing number of farmers, youths, and women are coming together with cooperative intent. There is overall community buy-in and ownership of TBP at the root level, including the migratory laborers and youth who normally leave the villages for job opportunities
4. A school for women's education has been opened
5. Scoping and data collection of the 500 hectares for the beta phase continues
6. Initial discussions are ongoing between TBP and the Food Agricultural Organization (FAO)
7. New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) has recently exhibited interest in TBP
8. VF has initiated exploratory discussions with the Millennium Promise Project
9. VF has been invited to assist the Global University System (GUS) in development of the Indian Global Early Warning System Modeling

A main constraint, especially to the data gathering phase, is funding. This will be a major focus of our November activities.

Thank you for your attention. I welcome your continued interests and support.

Yours Respectfully,

Byron Blake