Meeting Minutes for Asha Chennai on 20th Nov 2022

Minutes of the meeting held via GoogleMeet on Sunday 20 November 2022 at 10.00 AM

Following were present

Bhaskar

Kasturi

Madan

Rajaraman (Coordinator)

Shiva

Stalin

Sujatha

Sundaram R

Venkat

0. Ratification

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2022 were ratified unanimously.

1. Staff Matters

   Staff Loans 4 applications for loans from 3 Asha teachers and one staff member all from Sangamam were considered. Two were for house construction, one for scooter and another as personal loan, loan amount requested being Rs 50,000 each. The proposal for granting these individuals loans of Rs 50,000 was unanimously approved.

   Hiring and Onboarding

   Four more teachers have joined recently. A Computer Teacher has been hired under the newly launched Project Cauvery at Tiruvarur. Sevanthi who joined recently as assistant has resigned, Serious efforts are being made to hire a suitably qualified person, such as MSW, to take care of most of the office support work at a higher level are being pursued.

2. Campaign For Fund Raising

Rajaraman pointed out that Asha Chennai was steadily expanding and consequently needed a stable funding resource. End of the calendar year is the most appropriate time for soliciting funds from friends and relatives in the US, UK etc since they could get tax exemptions. He informed that he had campaigned with some of his friends in the US for commitment of annual donations for at least 3 years. He exhorted the volunteers to get in touch with their friends and relatives likewise.

To disseminate the message, he also stated, that updated publicity materials to suit different kinds of audiences in addition to the lovely video from Amazon had already been circulated to Asha friends and volunteers.

Although funds for Asha Kanini are drying up he felt that there should be not much difficulty in sustaining the RTCs under aegis of IIT -M Pravartak.

3. Asha Trust Meeting At Kaithi Varanasi

Rajaraman stated that the annual meeting of Asha Trust would be held later this year. This meeting served the purpose of clearing some common regulatory and accounting issues common to all chapters. Further there will always be interesting discussions around the goals of Asha, and give an opportunity for volunteers to understand the work done by all chapters of Asha India. He said he would be attending the same and requested other volunteers to also join if convenient. 2nd Class Train fare and local accommodation would be provided.

4. Assessments

Rajaraman informed that annual Assessments for 2023 have begun with the launching of Oral Assesments from 15th November and concluded successfully. This year improvements have been incorporated in gathering data and also the basic files relating to name , age ,gender etc. This year assessments were also done simultaneously in Rajatalab schools at Varanasi. Further we have extended the assessments to middle schools as well.

5. Training of Teachers at all projects

Rajaraman and Venkat briefed the meeting on the training carried out by Meena Suresh for Mathematics and Purva Bhatter in Science. These were held in Thiruvallur, Kayathar and Seeyapoondi on various dates from Oct 2nd to Oct 15th.

Practical science experiments demonstrated by Purva Bhattar at the schools in Pearl where she had an extra day generated tremendous enthusiasm among children.

Rajaraman informed that computer training for all teachers is scheduled to be held from December 20th to 22nd at Tituvallur.

6. Amazon Projects

Rajaraman and Bhaskar gave a detailed account of computer education activities undertaken in Sangamam and Pearl such as number of computer teachers, their deployment and also material distribution as budgeted under Amazon.

Rajaraman mentioned that six teachers, 3 from Sangamam, 1 from Pearl, 1 from Thulasi and 1 from Poorna Vidhya attended the Code.org Training in Bengaluru organised by Amazon. The training was well received by everyone and the grand manner in which the training was organised generated lot of excitement among the teachers. The good knowledge that Asha teachers possessed on the Code.org curriculum was appreciated by people from Amazon and others at the meeting.

7. Amazon New Opportunities

As we continue the work with Amazon and during the training in Bengaluru, more opportunities came up. The Amazon Explore programme that Asha also implements should be expanded to cover Digital Literacy as well to be relevant in India. Asha is in a good position to take the lead in this extension of the programme. Further Asha may also move more into training government teachers with support from Amazon as part of their Future Engineers. We have a great opportunity to play an important role in the spreading of technology learning through Amazon.

8. RTC Updates

It was informed that the latest addition is the newly inaugurated RTC at Kayatar in Pearl Project. The four RTCs started earlier at Seethanjeri, Kanakamma Chathiram, Kannigaiper and Poondi continue to receive enthusiastic response from schools students in their area. Further expansion would depend on fund flow under the aegis of IITM Pravartak .

9. Project Explore: Semmanchery/Thiruvaroor

Madan stated that he was unable to make further headway since he was tied up with his own office duties regarding Semmanchery. However, efforts would continue as this area appeared to be much neglected in terms of primary school education. Komalavali has hired a computer teacher and deployed her at Irulneeki, Panaiyur and Kamalapettai in Tiruvarur district. Tiruvarur project would be known as Project Cauvery. We hope to add one more teacher there this year.

10. Excursion to Thiruvanathapuram

Venkat stated that all arrangements had been made in hostels and chartered buses had been booked for sight seeing. Teachers from Pearl would be joining a day later.

11. Conclusion and Appeal

At the end Rajraman thought aloud about Asha Chennai and how it could envisage its expansion in the next few years. He stressed the need of the hour was capacity building. We are looking to hire an admin coordinator to help with this and also enhance our strength in terms of system admins, accountants and software engineers.

But that said, Asha is a volunteer based organisation, and it is imperative that we should seek and add educated youngsters, public spirited and service minded people as volunteers. Since volunteering is not a profession and obviously HR consultancies cannot provide leads, existing volunteers and friends of Asha should spread the message though word of mouth regarding the tremendous opportunities available to do public service at Asha Chennai in the field of primary and computer education to school children and thereby in nation building. .

- R.Sundaram