

Meeting Minutes for Asha Chennai on 22nd Jan, 2023

Minutes of the meeting held via GoogleMeet and in person on Sunday 22 January 2023 at 9.30 AM

Following were present

- Bhaskar
- Kasturi online
- Komalavalli
- Paripooranam online
- Rajaraman
- Shiva
- Sujatha
- Sundaram online
- Venkat
- Venkataraman online

0 Ratification of the minutes

The record of the minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2022 was ratified unanimously.

1. Staff Matters

a. Loans

Proposals were placed for staff loans to be granted to

1. a teacher from Rajatalab of Rs 75000 for house repair/construction,
2. a teacher from Sangamam of Rs 50000 for the purchase of a scooter
3. a teacher from Thulasi of Rs 15000 to support preparation for the UPSC exam and
4. two teachers from Pearl of Rs 50000 each for the purchase of scooters

All the proposals were unanimously approved with the usual terms and conditions being applicable.

a. Appointment of Admin Coordinator

It was noted that Sandeep had joined as Admin Coordinator and is now in the process of getting acquainted with the operations and has traveled to Sangamam. He would be making trips to Thulasi (he hails from that area) soon followed thereafter by a visit to Pearl and Cauvery,

2. Volunteer Work Required

Item b) Redistribution of work done by Mr Ramakrishnan former volunteer

Agenda

item b) relating to the redistribution of roles and activities directly handled by Shri Ramakrishnan was taken up first.

- a. Komalavalli and Sujata have volunteered to jointly steward Rajatalab (Varanasi) project. Both know Hindi well.
- b. Bhaskar has come forward to take on the task of certifying vouchers of expenditure received from project stewards and field coordinators after their scrutiny.
- c. Venkat has volunteered to take over the final processing of monthly staff pay roll to be passed on to Jhansi for disbursement online.
- d. Financials that are required to be prepared before submission of annual accounts to the external auditors were handled by Ramakrishnan. In the past, they were prepared by the auditors themselves. It is proposed to hire an accounts assistant which will free up Jhansi's time to do this work failing which to request the auditor to carry out this task also with suitable enhancement of fees, if need be.
- e. While registering Asha Trust a couple of years ago Ramakrishnan's name was added This will have to be annulled. The process takes long. Asha India has to be informed of the changes.

Item a) Updated List of work items

Rajaraman referred to the comprehensive list of items of work that demand augmentation of volunteer resources. It was felt that there was a great need to utilise paid staff resources like the Admin Coordinator, Office Executive, Accounts Assistant, etc as the institution grows. If some more young volunteers who can travel between project sites, and take on the stewardship of projects in rural areas, can be roped in that would help divvy up the school coverage of large areas for example like sangamam or Pearl and Thulasi where too, expansion is taking place.

3. Growth of Asha Chennai and its Implications on Centralisation of directions, Delineation of duties, and Role of volunteers.

Rajaraman presented the current picture of geographical areas of activity and functions as carried out and as envisioned in the foreseeable future. It was observed that it was necessary to administratively handle matters relating to staff in a decentralised manner while functions such as in-service teacher training programmes in Computer Science, Maths, English, Science, the introduction of innovative pedagogical methods like Karadipath and teaching Science concepts, drawing up SOPs for setting up RTCs and running them, and introducing Kanini in projects other than Sangamam will have to be coordinated centrally.

Projects like Arogyam (provision of Child Nutrition) Sugadaram (Construction of Toilets) setting up Libraries or study centres and running them would be carried out more effectively in a decentralised manner catering to the local needs depending on the availability of local resources. However, they may also need some coordination at the centre to draw up guidelines and lay down a minimum threshold of standards.

Scholarship project has to continue as a centrally administered function.

There was considerable discussion when various probable future scenarios were explored. It was generally agreed that the paper presented by Rajaraman in this matter should guide our operations.

4. Fundraising IIT Pravartak and Amazon

IITM has assured that funds for setting up more RTCs would be forthcoming as they are rolled out. Bhaskar mentioned that the next RTC in the Pearl project would be set up in Kazhugumalai.

Rajaraman felt that funds from Amazon too would be forthcoming as of now, since it would appear that CSR managers of the company are satisfied with our activities under Explore. and [Code.org](#) initiative.

5. Assessments

Rajaraman informed that all master files would be submitted after removing all bugs by mid-February and written assessments would begin by the end of February'23 and be completed by the first week of March'23. They will be graded in March and we should be able to give the report to schools by early March.

6. Items to be discussed during meetings.

Paripoornam felt that monthly meetings as held now deal with the bolts and nuts of conducting activities leaving the participants very little time for discussing abstract topics like educating society, the future of pedagogy in a digital world, gender equality, etc. Rajaraman stated that we had, a couple of years back, decided to hold invited talks by experts on specific or general subjects relevant to us during our meetings, but regrettably could not do so. After some discussion, it was decided to give Paripoornam's proposal a shot this year by holding a meeting on a selected topic.