

Meeting Minutes for Asha Chennai on 16th Aug, 2020

Minutes of the meeting held via Google Meet on Sunday the 16th August 2020 at 9.30 AM

Following were logged in and participated

Bhaskar

Lokesh

Kasturi Easwaran

Paripoornam K

Rajaraman Krishnan (Co-ordinator)

Ramakrishnan

Sriram VS

Saraswathi P

Sundaram R

Venkataraman Muthukrishnan

Usha Bhaskar

Note: Decisions are highlighted in blue.

0. Ratification

- a. The minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2020 were ratified by a unanimous vote.
- b. Also unanimously ratified the grant of loan of Rs 50,000 to Murugan of Pearl Project

1. Update on CSR Funding By Glovis and Trimble

It was noted with dismay that because of the pandemic, Glovis has abruptly stopped its CSR funding to us with the legal minimum one month notice. The last tranche is also yet to be received. It is a bit of a body blow in terms of sustaining Asha Chennai operations. In the case of Trimble it was known for some time they would stop their CSR funding. With these two resources of funds choked off it was imperative for Asha Chennai to restrict its spending to about Rs 1.4 to Rs 1.5 Crores during 2020-21 in addition to taking some unpleasant measures until the situation regarding funding improves.

2. Financial Report 2019-2020

Rajaram presented the Financial Report of 2019 -2020. Here are some highlights.

- We raised Rs 2.69 Crores and spent Rs 2.4 Crores in 2019-20.
- Our balance at the end of FY 2019-20 was 2.37 Crores and as of end of July it was approximately 2.2 Crores.

3. Fundraising

In view of the developments arising out of Glovis and Trimble pulling out it was felt absolutely necessary to leave no stone unturned in exploring every avenue for fund raising for our activities.

a) WAH (Work an Hour) This was the concept of contributing an hour's wages which was initiated by the founders of Asha Worldwide in the USA. Our mini-schools efforts during these Covid times is being projected as one of the projects for WAH 2020. Asha for Education/PR Team has also offered to organise an exclusive fund-raiser for Asha Chennai.

b) We must reach out to various chapters in the US and other places in Europe like Germany to seek financial support from them.

c) We must vigorously seek individual donations. Venkataraman is in the process of mailing existing donors, All volunteers should chip in by messaging their contacts among their circle of friends and family. With a view to make the process hassle free, donating through credit /debit cards EventTurbo portal will be made use of. Receipt would be given to enable claim exemption under Sec 80 G of Income Tax Act.

d) This is the hard part. Approaching companies for CSR Donations. Volunteers are requested to pull out all the stops to find possible steady sources of corporate funding. Rubini who was with Glovis and had helped Asha Chennai a lot in the past has promised to extend her full cooperation and help in this quest.

e) Big corporates like Adobe, Infosys, HCL have foundations and trusts which invite proposals for grants for fieldwork in education among other things. Venkat is busily looking into that. Ramakrishnan has also volunteered to assist in this and in approaching corporates for CSR funding. Other volunteers may also pool their information on the availability of grants so that we could apply.

4. Project Funding Consequent to Restricted Fund Flow

Going forward various options in steps to be taken for cutting the coat according to the cloth were discussed in detail. It was quite obvious that expenditure relating to frills like excursions for teachers, annual day expenses, purchases of additional dresses and chappal for children etc. should not be taken up. Further any plan for expansion of projects should also be kept pending for this year. Also presenting materials like mats, sports items, uniform dresses for teachers etc should be curtailed. The core expenditure should be on salaries of teachers and staff engaged in software development and computer maintenance and accessories and unavoidable minimum in administrative expenditure. All project stewards were requested to pare their budgets accordingly and rework their figures for making allocations to and from buffer. It was noted that the "essential" expenses for all projects came to between Rs 1.4 and 1.5 Crores. If you added some of the non-essential expenses also, that came to about Rs 2 Crores.

We considered two possibilities.

1. Only allow essential expenses for all projects.
2. Allow a certain percentage of the essential and non-essential expenses (about 70% to bring it to about the same amount).

Volunteers unanimously agreed to go with 70% of expenses as the limit for the expenses for the projects. Ramakrishnan was requested to vet the reworked figures to ensure that same norms were followed in figuring out the extravagant and expansion related expenses. The intention will be to approve 70% of the remaining expenses in a subsequent meeting or poll.

Following important decisions regarding salaries were unanimously approved.

1. There will be a salary freeze of all teachers and will be at the same stage as was drawn in April 2020.
2. Conveyance reimbursement will be granted when the schools reopen.
3. Deepavali bonus in November 2020 will, however, be disbursed as per existing norms.
4. No fresh hiring of teachers will be carried out. Even replacement of teachers who leave should be done after approval at a meeting.
5. Teachers proceeding on maternity leave will have a lien on their positions. I.e. Maternity benefits will not be affected in any ways.
6. Salaries of Muthu (Hardware Engineer), Ponkumar and Rajkumar (Software developers) will be increased by Rs 1000, 3000, and 2000 per month with effect from 1 August 2020.
7. Requirement of Mallga's services as well as her availability have considerably reduced due to changed circumstances and so it was decided to reduce her salary to Rs 8600 per month which will be borne by projects as follows Rs 4300 Scholarship Project and Rs 2150 each Poorna Vidhya and Sangamam
8. Arputharaj (Poorna Vidhya) will be fixed at Rs 13000 per month an increase of Rs 2100 to come into effect as soon as the schools reopen.
9. Loan outstanding should not exceed 5 per cent of Rs 1.5 Crores and so the limit will now stand at Rs 7.5 Lakhs
10. No new laptops will be purchased during 2020-21
11. Stock taking of existing laptops should be carried out and spare laptops will be utilised across projects to eliminate the need for fresh laptops.

Situation arising out of fund crunch was traversed many times during the meeting and it was decided that stewards should be extra vigilant and carefully monitor the expenditure for their projects.

5. ARC Resolutions on Code of Conduct

Bhaskar presented the resolutions received from ARC for 1H20-21 on promulgation of Code of Conduct for Asha Volunteers and Implementing the Code of Conduct. It was decided to forward our agreement to the proposals while expressing reservations on the overarching powers being vested with BOD for "debaring volunteers"

6. Teachers' Training

- a) Feedback on Online English Training held between 6 June 2020 till 30 July 2020 by Lavanya Srinivas and Shyamala Krishnamurthi was given by Venkat, Ramakrishnan, Sundaram and Kasturi. The general impression was that this intense training was well received by the teachers and largely beneficial. It was decided that if the training was in the normal working hours it should be mandatory.
- b) Venkat informed that Shyamala Krishnamurthy has graciously offered to hold English Training in batches 45 minutes per week per teacher without any fees. It was decided to accept the same and schedule it from week beginning 24th.
- c) Paripornam apprised the participants regarding the training programme on Gender Equity. In her estimate the Training would last till end September. She was requested to coordinate with Venkat in the best interests of teachers who want to avail both English training and Gender Equity training.
- d) IIT Bombay training, for teacher development one on GeoGebra and another on Html and Python were also proceeding apace and these too should take till September to complete.
- e) The proposal to have Vedic Maths Training by Madura Sugumar will be followed up and duration would be for about 90 minutes. It was decided to pay an honorarium of Rs 2000 to him if required.
- f) It is noted that Maths Training by Meena Suresh has been and still is an invaluable input to Asha Teachers. Since she has resigned from Ramanujam Museum Asha Chennai looked forward to greater interaction with her.

7. Updates on Minischools

Rajaram mentioned that considerable progress had been made in minischool program with 23 functioning schools. Rajkumar and Ponkumar have made a short video on the activities covered by these schools.

He also mentioned that the possibility of WhatsApp based instruction was being explored. Lead teachers Radhika, Nathiya, Sophya and Jayalakshmi were on the job.

8. Progress of Accounts and Audit 2019-20

Ramakrishnan stated that the processing of records for accounting and audit of 2019-20 were in progress. Reconciliation had been completed.

9. The Meeting ended with a vote of thanks to all the volunteers who had logged in.