

Meeting minutes for Asha Chennai on 10th Apr 2022

Minutes of the Hybrid meeting held via GoogleMeet and in person on Sunday 10 thApril 2022 at 9.30 AM

Following were present in Asha Chennai Office	Following Logged in Google Meet
Anitha	Ramakrishnan
Kalyan Vaidyanathan	Sundaram R
Komalavalli (New)	Usha Rao
Madan Sudarman	Venkataraman
Rajaraman	
Sriram	
Sujatha	
Venkat	
Stalin Anbazhagan	

Prior to the start of the formal meeting Rajaraman welcomed Mr Stalin Anbazhagan who has had a long association with Asha Chennai. Stalin Anbazhagan was a recipient of Asha Chennai Scholarship years ago who studied diligently and is now pursuing a successful career overseas. He has kept in touch with us and has remained a friend of Asha Chennai. In his reply Anbazhagan thanked Rajaraman and others for inviting him to meet the volunteers of Asha Chennai and expressed great satisfaction in seeing its growth and expanded activities.

0. Ratification of the minutes of the meeting

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 27th February 2002 via google meet and in person were ratified unanimously.

1. Updates on Various Registrations, Authorisation of Signatories, and Operationalisation of Asha South India Trust

Rajaraman recalled the earlier decision to operationalise Asha South India Trust. It has secured clearances under 80G for Tax Exemption and under Sec 12 A to operationalise the bank account and all transactions through the newly opened Savings Account. Ramakrishnan stated that there should be no difficulty in transferring the balance in Asha Chennai Account to the new account.

Ramakrishnan has been added as an authorised signatory for the Asha Chennai accounts. Along with Rajaraman and Bhaskar, he is also an authorised signatory for the new Asha South India account. His ENET account has been activated. However he is still not able to authorise transactions. He is looking into that. ENET facilities for the new Asha South India account should shortly be granted by the bank to Rajaraman and himself.

Ramakrishnan drew the attention of project stewards to the situation where a lot of vouchers are pending with them for submission. He reiterated that the vouchering should be as follows,

- Amount over 2000. Receipt required and transfer to be to the account of of the shop/vendor or its owner.
- Amount between 1000 and 2000. Receipt required and amount may be reimbursed to Asha staff or volunteer.
- Amount less than 1000. It is still good to get the receipt. But may be waived. Amount may be reimbursed to Asha staff or volunteer. Cash payment may also be possible,

2. Staff Loans

Proposals to grant Rs 50,000 to a teacher in Pearl Project and Rs 35,000 to a teacher (she has an outstanding balance of Rs 15000 from an earlier loan) in Sangamam for house building were unanimously approved. It appeared that loan Of Rs 40000 granted and disbursed to a Teacher in Poorna Vidya Project for repair/purchase of scooter could not be utilised. However the teacher had now requested permission to use the same for house repair. After some discussion it was approved with the proviso that the applicant should make a request in writing explaining her case for repurposing the already disbursed loan.

3. Assessments

Although the agenda item as mentioned was Oral assessments, in fact both oral and written assessments would be carried out in a compressed time frame between 18th and 27th April. Rajaram has been and would be holding meetings to explain the details of procedures to be followed, how the data should be entered and the standards of invigilation during written tests etc. Project stewards may kindly ensure that instructions and guidelines issued are strictly followed.

4. Teacher Excursion

Teacher Excursion is being organised this year after a gap of three years. Teachers from Sangamam, Poorna Vidhya, Manigal and admin staff in Chennai will go to Ooty and Coonoor between 23rd May and 27th May. Venkat laid out the details of journeys and accommodation for the trip. He requested volunteers also to join. As far as Pearl and Thulasi projects details were being worked to go on excursion to Kodaikanal and communicated. Attempt will be made to raise funds specifically for sponsoring the excursion. Otherwise it will be borne from the general budget for the respective projects.

5. Right Start

This is a much looked forward to programme by teachers when they undergo refresher training and listen to guest lectures on relevant topics. Due to Covid it was also not held for the last two years. Rajaraman stated that it would be held between 7th June and 11th June 2022. Details of Venue, Accommodation and messing and also details of training programmes were being worked out. Usually it used to be held at IIT M which provided both conference hall and hostel rooms. We are trying to host it in IITM this year too but if that is not possible due to Covid related restrictions, the possibility of holding it in Tiruvallur was being considered since the bulk of Asha teachers reside there. It was gratifying to note that teachers from Tiruvallur District were willing to accommodate outstation teachers in their own homes during the period. Meena Suresh would be handling Maths training. Venkat and Sundaram would work out details of English Training.

As was customary teachers who have rendered long service of 5, 10 and 15 years would be recognised and honoured with a certificate and awarded a cash gift.

Rajaraman requested volunteers to actively participate in this activity and contribute in whichever way they can.

6. Other Funding Opportunities.

Amazon

Rajaraman explained in detail the proposal submitted to Amazon for enhancing the Asha rural school support for existing 50 schools and expanding the outreach to 50 new schools. under the LEARN category of Amazon for which the funding requirement would be around Rs. 1.1 Crores. An additional proposal under the EXPLORE category of Amazon had also been proposed requiring approx Rs 38 Lakhs for a larger reach in expanding digital tech education for the middle, high and higher secondary schools. Proposals are comprehensive covering salaries of teachers, coordinators, PCs, Laptops and tablets. During their field visits of Amazon executives they were exposed to what we were doing at present including teaching programming by code.org. Rajaraman stated that we should be hearing soon from Amazon.

Asha SV for Sugadharam

Asha SV has assured us funds for the construction of a new toilet at Gandhigramam, and the renovation of toilets at 3 schools. Rajaraman stated that the renovation of the toilet at Kovoochipatti in Pearl Project had been completed. It was expected all of the proposed construction in other schools would be completed by the end of the summer holidays.

GiveIndia

Rajaraman once again explained the advantages of donating through GiveIndia portal especially those donors who live in India, the UK and USA. During campaigns like the one in Feb/Mar, GiveIndia adds a percentage from its coffers to the donated sum and transmits the same to Asha Account. He requested the volunteers to inform the potential donors the advantages of donating through GiveIndia. Sec 80G Certificate for exemption would be given by GiveIndia promptly.

7. Project Proposals to be got ready

Rajaraman urged the project stewards to prepare and forward project proposals to meet the dateline of discussion and approval during the meeting next month, i.e., May 2022.

8. Scholarship Update

Venkataraman stated that arrangements for printing and issuing application forms from both continuing scholars and fresh applicants had been initiated. 77 Scholars would be continuing and he expected that the fresh intake would be around 30. Eligibility criteria and scope of scholarship (classes 10,11,12 and college other than Engg and Med).and scholarship award amounts would be maintained as per the previous year 21-22.

9. Takeaway from Asha Worldwide and Asha India conference.

Venkat and Rajaraman gave a low down on the well attended conference held on March 25th to 27th in Puducherry at the Gandhiji School originally run by Mala India Foundation. Overlapping conferences of Asha US (at Atlanta) and Europe (virtual) also took place at the same time. There was a great deal of discussion of both organisational matters and abstract topics like alternative education and how to engage with the government. Invited speakers Simintini Dhuru, Arun/Poornima from Marutham farm school, noted Carnatic musician TM Krishna and Prema Rangachary from Vidhya Vanam school were well received by the members present. Being held after a three year hiatus it was a great success. Volunteers who attended felt very good accommodation, messing and Conference facilities were provided.

- R.Sundaram