

Meeting Minutes for Asha Chennai on 16 April, 2023

Minutes of the meeting held via GoogleMeet and in person on Sunday 16 April 2023 at 9.30 AM

Following were present

- Bhaskar
- Komalavalli
- Paripooranam online
- Rajaraman
- Shiva
- Sujatha
- Sundaram online
- Venkat
- Vidhya Arun online

0. Ratification of the minutes

The record of the minutes of the meeting held on Sunday, 5th March 2023 was ratified unanimously.

1. Staff Matters

a) Loans

Bhaskar's proposal for the grant of a loan of Rs 1,00,000 to a staff member in Pearl Project to purchase a two-wheeler, Rajaraman's proposal to grant a loan of Rs 75,000 to a teacher for house repair and another loan of Rs 50,000 to a teacher (both in Sangamam Project) and Paripooranam's proposal for the grant of a loan of Rs 50,000 to a teacher in Thulasi project for the purchase of vehicles were unanimously approved subject to the usual terms and conditions. .

b) Changes

Priyanka has joined as an Admin Executive (Part-time) in the Asha Chennai office. She is well-versed in English. She may not be able to travel and also she does not know Tamil. Nevertheless, it is hoped she will partly fill the need for an officer to handle the back office operations like donor communication, collating reports, etc.

2. Proposal for distributing uniforms to school children

In the previous meeting when the distribution of dresses after nearly four years was discussed. [Rajaraman proposed an expenditure of Rs 20,00,000 to give uniforms to 5500 children in Sangamam and Bhaskar proposed an expenditure of Rs 10,64,000 to give uniforms to 2900 children in the Pearl Project. Both proposals were approved unanimously.](#)

3. Parameters for pay rise of staff for 2023-24

Rajaraman presented full details of proposals for salary increases of all positions in the organisation and also future positions to be created consequent on the expansion of activities.

Following are the important decision taken.

a. The differential between Computer/KaradiPath Teachers and Regular Teacher

Computer Teachers will continue to get a base salary of Rs 750 more than regular teachers. We will be creating a new role for KaradiPath teachers who will be doing the KaradiPath program in multiple schools. They will also receive Rs 750 more than regular teachers.

b. Norms for Annual Increases

After considerable discussion, it was unanimously decided to give a base increase of Rs 1000 plus a performance-based increase of 8 percent on the basic salary.

c. Lead and Senior Teacher Increases

Besides specific pay for coordinators and system engineers, the following generic decisions were made:

- Lead teachers will have a minimum Rs 3500 excess salary over regular teachers. This is being increased from Rs 2500 to bridge the gap with RTC teachers and trainers.
- Lead teachers who were already getting more than this in excess of regular teachers will get an additional Rs 500 added to their salary.

Senior and Senior Computer teachers will get Rs 750 more than regular/computer teachers.

d. Salaries for RTC teacher and CS trainers

RTC teachers and CS trainers were getting Rs 3500 more than regular teachers. They will get Rs 4000 more from June 2023.

e. Salaries for people in unique roles

Extensive discussions were held on salary position by position such as Coordinators, accountants, system engineers etc and unanimous decisions were arrived at. They are being notified for further action.

4. Project Metrics Required by Asha and Amazon

When a variety of projects are involved, presenting a consolidated picture of the work being done is always a challenge. Asha Chennai has been working with Amazon as well as Asha central team itself in providing and also shaping the project metrics. Understanding how bigger organizations look at input, output, and outcome metrics helps us in shaping our own work, proposals etc.

5. Update on Meeting with Commissioner of Education Tamilnadu.

While on this topic Rajaraman gave an account of what transpired in his recent meeting with Mr Nanthakumar Commissioner of School Education, Tamilnadu. The discussion was mainly around how the strength of Asha in teaching Computer Science and digital literacy could be fitted into the plans of the Tamilnadu Government in this field. Rajaraman shared his ideas how progressively Asha Chennai could contribute to the plan of introducing digital literacy education in primary schools throughout Tamilnadu.

This will involve training of Government Teachers from 50 to 60 schools in Computer Science. They will then teach one class of student (30 to 40) for one hour per week. The Amazon explore trainers will be used to support the government teachers as well.

6. Discussion on achieving scales, Monitoring Projects and Logical Framework Analysis.

Rajaraman introduced the basics of one of the important tools of project management called Logical Framework Analysis (LFA). It is an analytical process for structuring and systematizing the analysis of a project or programme idea. The main components of LFA are Input, output, outcome, Impact analysis etc. Even within Asha Chennai, stewards, coordinators and other leads focus excessively in improving the inputs (money and time are accounted for, materials/services are purchased for right price etc.) and output (teachers are going to school and materials are being distributed) but not pay attention to outcome (are the children really learning and learning well, are we progressing in terms of curriculum etc.) or impact (is this taking us close to the mission of social change to a more equal/equitable society). Understanding these and consciously focussing on them will improve our operations as well. LFA analysis not only tries to determine the efficiency of operations but also presents a global picture, of say, of how good is the contribution of the project in terms of societal objectives,

7. Updates

a. Written Assessments

Rajaraman stated that written assessments and grading of answer papers was nearly complete. This year over 15000 students took our written assessments across 150+ schools. We also successfully expanded the assessments to cover 6th to 8th std students as well. There were a few malpractices in some schools where Asha Teachers or the Govt teachers violated invigilation norms. Prompt disciplinary action was taken in the case of Asha teachers.

The schools which did well in the past continue to do so and so also poorly performing schools are not showing much improvement. On the positive note, the learning levels were returning back to the pre-Corona normal. This improvement is visible in both TN and UP. However, on a negative note, the schools in TN are continuing to perform poorly in Tamil.

b. Asha Impressions

Asha Impressions, this year, is being hosted by Amazon in their office at Perungudi. It is on the 5th of May 23. Teams from Sangamam, Thulasi, and Poorna Vidhya will participate in this. For Pearl schools, we will separately evaluate the projects and give the best teams prizes.

Over 350 presentations and over 80 programs have been submitted as projects by the teams of children. Lead teachers are currently selecting the best ones to give to Venkat and Rajaram who will select the top 15 presentations and 10 programs to come to Amazon facility for the final competition.

c. RightStart

Right Start, Annual Teacher refresher training, is to be held as announced from May 8th to 12th and schedules have been drawn to cover Maths Training by Meena Suresh, Karadi Path by Arokia, and Science by Purva. Venue will be the Vanavani school auditorium and accomodation for outstation teachers will be in the IIT hostels. There is still some doubt hanging over the IIT hostel accomodation. We hope it will be sorted out soon.

d. CS Teachers' content work during the next fortnight

It has been decided to gainfully employ CS Teachers in Content work during the next fortnight when the schools will be busy with annual examinations. Some important works being taken up are,

1. Create some contents so that we support the Ennum Ezhuthum textbooks (Foundational Literacy and Numeracy). It looks like govt is likely to persist with this and even expand this to class 4 and beyond.
2. Create the curriculum and lesson plans for the new 1 year curriculum as well as Asha's collection of Digital Literacy 1-hour activities.
3. Convert all the CS lesson plans to a new format which makes it possible to display the lesson plans both in Asha Kanini as well as in a website. It will also make for easy customization of the look and feel.

e. Progress on Approved Proposals in Arogyam, Sugadaram and Office Construction at Sangamam.

Rajaraman stated that work has begun in all the projects mentioned above and gave an account of their status. In respect of Pearl, Bhaskar gave an update.