

Meeting Minutes for Asha Chennai on 26th, Nov 2023

Minutes of the meeting held in person & via GoogleMeet on Sunday 26th November 2023 at 9.30 AM

Following were present

1. Kalyan
2. Komalavalli
3. Rajaraman
4. Shiva
5. Sundaram
6. Venkat
7. Venkataraman
8. Maruthu Pandian

0.0 Ratification of minutes of meeting 8th October, 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th October were ratified unanimously

0.1 Ratification of Poll

The poll held to approve the Grant of a loan to a teacher in Pearl for emergency repairs of the roof of her house blown away in a storm.

Votes Polled 9

Yes 9

No Nil

1.0 Staff Matters

1.1 Loans

It was clarified that teachers whose children study under RTE quota in private schools without paying fees would also be eligible for the grant of loans. The extant eligibility criteria and terms and conditions for grant of loans were traversed. Stewards were requested to put in place safeguards against possible default like taking original certificates and keeping them in safe custody.

A Grant of Rs 50,000 each to two teachers from Thulasi project was approved unanimously as proposed by Paripoornam

A Grant of Rs 50,000 each to three teachers from Sangamam was approved unanimously as proposed by Rajaraman.

1.2 Untimely demise of RTC Teacher Ms Dhatchayani

The meeting placed on record its appreciation of devotion, loyalty, and sincerity of Asha teacher, the late Ms Datchayani who was in charge of RTC at Poondi. It was decided to grant a solatium of 12 Months' salary to her bereaved parents. Volunteers were requested to make special contributions to make up this amount.

Since Ms Datchayani died at a young age, concern was expressed about the physical fitness of our teachers in general. It was decided to explore the basic minimum medical screening followed by a clinical examination by a Doctor who could act as a signpost to indicate if further follow-up was needed and also advise them on diet and other lifestyle changes.

2.0 Update on Fund Flow' Donor Communications and Responses

Rajaraman made a comprehensive presentation on the funds required for carrying out the tasks on hand in FY23-24 and the likely **shortfall** after taking into account committed funds from Amazon and expected funds from other donors. Asha Chennai needed to mount a vigorous donation-seeking drive. Volunteers were urged to contact potential donors among their contacts, friends, and relatives. To aid this, Videos and Flyers to get the message across will be shared. It was decided to hold a meeting with others like Mentors both in India and abroad (English and CS) and others interested in taking the message across to their friends and relatives and solicit funds.

3.0 Strategies to get free laptops from corporates and institutions

Rajaraman stated that we are hoping that Amazon will continue to provide us some 200 used laptops a year. Recently, Asha Chennai has received 50 High-end PCs from Ford. Incidentally, Ford, which has been donating computers to us regularly, may not be able to do so in the future. It has switched to leasing the systems required by them. Volunteers were requested to locate more donors who would be ready to donate in kind in the form of PCs, laptops, accessories, battery chargers etc.

4.0 Funding decisions on used computers and new laptops for teachers.

For the 50 desktop workstations we have received from Ford, these were received without display, keyboard, mouse etc. We need to purchase these. We would like to allocate Rs 7500 per computer. For now we can add this budget to the Asha Kanini project. This would add to a maximum total of Rs 3,75,000/- All volunteers unanimously approved this additional budget.

Rajaraman stated that as a rule teachers should be provided with new laptops. Arrangements would be made to place orders for laptops within the project fund allocation. We are planning on some purchases in the next week or two. He also clarified that used computers are not borne in the Assets Register and their value of acquisition is treated as zero.

5.0 Update on ACE to TN Govt Teachers and Schools

Rajaraman informed that there was a great enthusiasm among Government teachers for this new initiative launched last month under the MOU with Tamilnadu. On the whole, this is progressing well and these schools have completed 6 sessions so far.

6.0 A broader strategy for the Library programme.

Asha Chennai has 10 Libraries in various projects like Pearl (4), Sangamam(2), and Thulasi(4). There are also two evening centres at Sangamam and a tuition centre at Thulasi. Paid part-time staff (librarians) look after the opening, and closing, and care for the children who come there after school hours. Many kids use the library space to complete their homework. Libraries under the aegis of Asha Chennai have come up organically wherever someone came forward to give space near an Asha-supported school and where we were able to find part-time staff. More importantly, these were opened where the concerned steward took the initiative. In Thulasi project this was also helped along by a donor from Boston in the US by the name Gershwin. He visits Thiruvannamali periodically. Recently he met our volunteer Paripoornam and they had discussions about drafting a strategy which would guide Asha Chennai as a whole in establishing and maintaining libraries. After some discussions, it was decided to request Paripoornam to present a draft of the strategy and guidelines for establishing and maintaining libraries for Asha Chennai as a whole.

7.0 Asha India Conference Feb 24 25

Rajaraman gave some details of the forthcoming Asha India Conference and stated that he would be attending. He requested other volunteers also to do so, subject to their convenience. 2nd Class Train fare will be provided and free boarding and lodging.

8.0 Asha Chennai Progress as of Now and scalable ideas

Rajaraman presented an informative and comprehensive set of ppt slides prepared earlier for a group of friends. This gave a picture of where we are and what our future course should be.

Volunteers were requested to use this material while seeking support from their friends and relatives.

9.0 Career Counselling for Scholarship students

Kalyan gave a brief introduction of the role of the Dheya Foundation in career counseling and how we can utilise the opportunity to counsel our Scholarship students. The idea was welcomed. Kalyan was requested to explore this idea further after discussions with members of the Focus group so that we can decide on concrete steps that can be taken.

10.0 Introduction to Maruthu Pandian

Rajaraman invited Maruthu Pandian, who lived in the US to share his background and experience in working with schools in rural Tamilnadu. Maruthu Pandian stated that he and a few friends of his who hail from the Ramanathapuram district of Tamilnadu had been working with some remote government schools that cater to the deprived areas and explained the successes and obstacles. Rajaraman lauded Maruthu Pandian's efforts and thanked him for briefing Asha volunteers on the work done by him. Maruthu Pandian, in reply, informed that he would explore the possibility of aligning his efforts with the established norms of Asha Chennai.

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