Asha Chennai Administrative Policies v4.4
(Based on decisions during meeting on 27th Aug 2023)

Code of Conduct for Volunteers

- Asha Chennai volunteers should not indulge in illegal activities pertaining to the activities of Asha. Highest ethical standards will be maintained. Asha Chennai volunteers should follow the democratic practices detailed below for smooth functioning of the chapter.
- All volunteers will constantly behave in a manner that will not bring ill-repute to Asha.

Asha Chennai Guidelines

1. Introduction

The purposes for the document are as follows -
- Serve as an introduction to the functioning of Asha Chennai for new volunteers.
- Clarify several of the processes we have been following and functions we have been performing.
- Set a direction for how to make the functioning of Asha Chennai smoother.
- Provide a set of basic guidelines for volunteers to follow for smoother functioning of the chapter.

2. Process Guidelines

This section attempts to capture the processes being followed by Asha Chennai to enable new volunteers to understand the functioning of this organization. Note that each section cross-references other sections.

a) Mailing lists

At Asha Chennai we maintain two mailing lists.

Asha-chennai-core	Mailing list for just the volunteers.
Asha-chennai-friends	Mailing list for all donors, friends, well-wishers and anyone who wishes to be kept up to date of what is happening at Asha Chennai.

The mailing list is maintained by the coordinator or the webmaster.

b) Meetings and General Decision making

1. Asha Chennai normally has general meeting every month where the decisions pertaining to Asha Chennai are taken. This usually happens on the morning of a Sunday of every month but may be moved as per the convenience of the volunteers.

2. The venue, date and time of the meeting is sent out on asha-chennai-core and asha-chennai-friends mailing lists about a week in advance, along with the rough agenda, inviting further agenda items.
3. Agenda items of the general meeting usually includes (but is not limited to) – approving new projects, updates on existing projects, funding status, important organizational matters. Routine project updates and financial updates are also presented at these meetings as time permits.
4. The quorum for the meeting to take any decisions is six.
5. All the material necessary for making the decision is available at the meeting for discussion. Materials that can be shared electronically (like project proposal, ARC decisions etc.) should be shared ahead of the meeting.
6. Volunteers can decide to abstain in the decision making process. Volunteers with conflicts of interest – meaning if they are involved in other capacities outside of Asha with the project are routinely requested to abstain.
7. Decisions are then made by simple majority of those who are participating (i.e. those who are present and haven't abstained). Project approval and funding decisions need to be approved by a two thirds majority. Decisions regarding the salaries for all teachers (typically taken once a year before the project proposals are reviewed) will also require two thirds majority.
8. Meeting may be attended by people who wish to become new volunteers as well as existing volunteers. Typically all people attending the meeting will be allowed to participate in the decisions. New volunteers would be requested to abstain from administrative decisions like changes to policies, recognition of volunteers, election of volunteers to roles, etc. Any already recognized volunteer present in the meeting may request that the vote for a decision be made online. In this case the decision should be taken based on an online poll.
9. Agenda and the minutes of the meeting are posted on the mailing list and on the webpage. In particular decisions made during the meeting are highlighted in the minutes.
10. Once decisions are made, we would as a convention not bring up the same point for discussion for at least 6 more months.

Besides these there would be meetings for project specific discussions (not decisions). These are organized by the project stewards and typically involve volunteers who are active with that project.

c) *Decisions by Electronic Polls.*

There would be several occasions where online polls are required including,

- Any decision explicitly referred for online poll from a meeting.
- Decisions that need to be made urgently.

- A new proposal that needs to be made to a donor agency and is in line with our existing focus areas.
- Administrative decisions as described in the previous section.

For these kinds of decisions the coordinator may set up an online poll. The online poll will be sent to asha-chennai-core mailing list and only the volunteers in the mailing list will be able to participate in the poll. Just like decisions taken during meetings, the quorum for decisions is six and two-thirds of those participating should approve the proposal. These decisions should be ratified in the subsequent monthly meeting.

d) *Recognising as Volunteer*

These are guidelines for recognizing people as Asha-Chennai volunteers, after which they can participate in decision-making processes.

1. Once somebody expresses interest in working **for** Asha Chennai, any volunteer provides details about Asha Chennai activities.
2. This person, if interested, is then invited to attend an Asha-Chennai meetings and activities.
3. The moderator(s) of the mailing list should be informed to add this person to the asha-chennai-friends mailing list.
4. Once the person has attended at least 3 meetings over a period of one year and visited at least one project, he/she would be added to the asha-chennai-core list and recognized as an Asha Chennai volunteer.
5. An additional criteria for people running specific projects - they will be Asha-Chennai volunteers if they are involved in at-least one other project/activity unrelated to their own project.
6. Volunteers who have not participated in any meetings or in any specific Asha administrative or project activity for more than six months would be requested to participate in Asha Chennai activities over the next three months. If they further do not participated during these three months, they will be removed from the Chennai Core volunteers list (i.e. asha-chennai-core mailing list).

e) *Selection of Volunteers for various roles.*

1. The default term for any role identified in Section 3 below is 2 years. Any volunteer may add an item to the agenda of a general meeting to discuss the election to any of

the roles. These suggestions before the end of the default term should be done only under extreme conditions.

2. Once this is discussed, if the new volunteer is unopposed for the role, they can be ratified in the meeting. If they are opposed, then the volunteers in the meeting may decide to have an election either by electronic poll giving a minimum of 2 weeks time or in the next meeting. In these elections, only the core volunteers will be eligible to vote.

3. Elections may be done by simple majority. If there are more than 2 candidates and no one gets 50% vote a second round with just the top two candidates may be held immediately after the first round.

f) Project Selection and Approval

1. Once someone approaches Asha Chennai for project funding, meet this person to understand the proposal in detail. Work with the partnering agencies to understand and define the project.

2. A volunteer may themselves identify a need and work to understand and define the project.

3. Write detailed proposal for the project. The proposal should consist of background for the proposal, proposed plan of action and activities, milestones and evaluations, and detailed itemized budget.

4. Visiting the organization/agencies (whose activities are being considered for funding) to understand and evaluate the feasibility, necessity and appropriateness of the project is necessary before bringing up the proposal for discussion. If possible a written report on this should be prepared (Initial site visit report) by an Asha volunteer.

5. Identify Asha Chennai volunteer(s) who will take up responsibilities of the steward for this project. This would likely be the volunteer who brought this project to Asha Chennai.

6. The project steward or another Asha volunteer should propose the project proposal to the Asha team at one of the meetings. Answer any questions that may arise. Arrive at a decision at the meeting. The proposal could be approved as it is or with modifications.

7. Once approved, this becomes an Asha Chennai approved project and may be put up on our website, funds may be seeked from donors for this project.

8. Decisions related to approval of project, major budget revisions, time wise extension of financial support need to follow the decision making process mentioned above. During project execution, the project stewards can make minor modifications within

the budgetary allocations. These shall not exceed 5% of the project budget or Rs 30,000 whichever is lower.

Important: Please note the approval of a project does not guarantee funding for the project. At this point only funds donated specifically for the project can be assumed to be available for the project. See below for how funds will be allocated for the project from the buffers.

g) Funding

1. Note these decisions are independent of project approval. Project activities can be taken up only after funding is also provided for the project.

2. Priority will be given to continue funding of existing projects over providing funding for new projects. Current projects may continue paying salaries as per the old scales till a new proposal is approved and funding made available for the project.

3. Steward should ensure that the funding for the project does not exceed the sanctioned amount.

4. Funding for administrative expenses also need to be made unless these are already available. Interest income is automatically treated as allocated for the administration expenses. Salaries of administrative staff would also be continued till decision to change that is effected.

h) Administrative Expenses

1. Efforts should be made to keep administrative expenses to a minimum.
2. Expenses incurred for the administration of specific projects (eg., salary for project coordinator, travel expense for monitoring the project, etc.) should be covered in the specific project proposal.
3. Chapter-wide, project unrelated administrative expenses (eg. Audit costs, accounts staff salary) are treated for funding purposes as a separate project. Interest income from our bank accounts is allocated for this project.
4. Funds will be allocated to Project Admin like we allocate for other projects.
5. Travel expenses for projects that are not yet approved or for things like Asha India conference will be treated as Admin expenses or part of a specific Project Explore. These may be approved by the treasurer or coordinator if these meet the expense guidelines listed below. Otherwise these have to be explicitly approved in a meeting.
    - Travel – by non A/C busses, trains and share autos.
    - Food and refreshments – Rs 400 per day.
    - Stay – Basic non-AC accommodation.
6. Outstation volunteers may be paid money for travel and food for attending meetings as specified in point 5. These may be approved by the coordinator or treasurer.

i) Expenses Handling

Effort shall be made to make electronic payments for all transactions. Cash expenses or even cheque expenses shall be kept to a minimum. Here is the process for electronic payments.

1. Project coordinators or any other employee may undertake an expense after approval from the project steward. These staff will send a request for reimbursement or payment of the expense.
2. Project steward will approve the expense and forward it to the treasurer and accountant. If the steward is also the treasurer, the treasurer will get further approval from the coordinator.
3. The treasurer will approve this expense and request the accountant to process the payment.
4. The treasurer and accountant will decide from which account the funds are to be processed and coordinate to ensure that funds are available in the various accounts.
5. For expenses above Rs 2000, we should directly pay the vendor. For payments about Rs 50000, the payment should be made only to the account in the name of the vendor as identified by the bill.

Here is the process for cash payment.
1. Cash imprest accounts may be held by any volunteer or staff as required for the running of the project.
2. Imprest account holders are guaranteeing the money they have received until the expenses incurred has been accounted to the satisfaction of the treasurer. Treasurer may require formal communication of the same and/or guarantees from additional people for an imprest account.
3. An Imprest Account register shall be maintained by the treasurer for tracking cash disbursed to the imprest account holders and the vouchers that have been submitted by them.

Salary payments are a special type of expense. Here is the process for that.

1. There will be a spreadsheet where the current pay of the teachers and other staff is maintained. It will be updated everytime any staff joins or leaves the job.

2. Treasurer will share a spreadsheet with all the stewards, coordinators and lead teachers getting their inputs on the following:

   - Confirmation of the leave for the teacher. Also any additional leave or non-credit of the 1 day a month leave for the teacher.

   - Any additions to salary – in particular conveyance, additional salary for library/mini-school etc.

- Add deductions to the salary – in particular loan deduction, other expenses (like during teacher tour) etc.

3. For each teacher/staff this will need to be approved by the steward.

4. Treasure will then calculate the salary for the month and share it with the accountant. Treasurer and accountant will also determine which salary should come from which account and then process the payment of the salary.

j) *Staff Policies*

Policies related to the hiring, salaries, leave etc. for our staff is captured in a separate document – staff guidelines.txt. The current version of this is v6.

k) *Scholarships*

Asha Chennai Scholarships is different from other projects since the project involves many separate decisions for every individual student that is supported. For this purpose the following rules are followed.

1. A separate scholarship focus group may be constituted with a minimum of 4 volunteers by the steward of the Asha Scholarships project.
2. Any Asha Chennai volunteer may be a part of the scholarship focus group.
3. Decisions regarding approval or rejection of individual scholarship applicant will be taken by the scholarship focus group based on the rules and guidelines that are in force at that time.
4. These decisions should be made in meetings of the scholarship focus group. The minimum quorum for such meetings is 5 and decisions may be taken by simple majority. Meeting announcement, agenda and minutes requirements for these meetings will be similar to those for the general meetings.
5. Any change to the rules and guidelines or broader approval of the project proposal etc. should be broader volunteer group at a general meeting.

Current rules and guidelines for selection of scholarship students are documented in the attached document SCHOLARSHIP PROJECT R&G.docx.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Here we describe the different roles within the organization and the responsibility for those roles. These roles may be fulfilled by multiple volunteers.

a. *Coordinator(s)*

1. Be the primary stable contact person for the chapter during the term and respond to queries related to project proposals and becoming asha-chennai volunteers, with the help of other Asha-Chennai volunteers.

2. Facilitate mentoring of new volunteers so they can take up responsibilities according to their interests and time availability.

3. Follow-up with volunteers who have taken up various responsibilities to ensure project selection, approval, execution and fundraising does not slip by and make alternate arrangements if needed.

4. Ensure that chapter meetings are conducted regularly and important issues are brought up for decision-making.

5. Provide an overall direction with the help of the core team to the chapter's functioning.

6. Participate in Asha India discussions and conferences to ensure proper functioning and compliance of the chapter.

7. Monitor the performance of general Asha staff if any.

8. Be the focal point for interacting with Media.

9. Participate in Asha for Education discussions in the ARC decision making process if a separate AfE Coordinator is not identified.

10. Be the focal point for identifying fund raising opportunities and taking the actions to bring funds for the chapter unless a separate Fundraising Coordinator has been identified.

b. Treasurer

1. Release money to the projects on request from the project stewards. The treasurer will approve and issue funds to stewards only after being shown the team approval for such requests.
2. Maintain the imprest register. Obtain and maintain vouchers and bills for all expenses. Verify that these expenses are in line with those sanctioned in the project proposal. Ensure that the vouchers and bills are proper (i.e. assigned to the correct project, accounting category etc.).
3. Track donations in the pipeline and ensure they are assigned to the correct projects when it is received.
4. Issue receipts promptly to the donors.
5. Get accounts audited and coordinate FCRA and IT Dept responsibilities with Asha India.
6. Manage the bank accounts.
7. Make quarterly reports with the funding positions of each project and projections on when the funding would be required for the different projects.

c. Authorized Signatory

1. The authorized signatory will report to the core team and will sign requested documents once they have been approved/authorized by the core team.

2. All vouchers need to be signed by the authorized signatory. He/she will ensure that the expenses are in line with those sanctioned in the project proposal.

d. Project Steward(s)

1. Keep in constant contact with the project via phone, email, post or visits to
   - understand the issues being faced by the project
   - understand the general social context and the social problems that the project is trying to address.

2. Communicate with the treasurer to ensure that funds are sent out to the projects in a timely manner. Provide the bills and receipts to the treasurer for maintenance of accounts.

3. Requirements of project change with time, so keep the proposal up to date and in case of major changes bring it up to the chapter for decision.

4. If you are about to move and the project is going to stay with the chapter, ensure that volunteer(s) at the chapter takes up stewardship of the project. Introduce the new steward(s) to the coordinators of project so that the project does not suffer due to lack of communication.

5. Ensure that the project is visited periodically (recommended at least once in 3 months).

6. Write frequent report for the project as required by donors. At a minimum there should be one report about the project at the end of the project year.

7. Attend the chapter meetings and give updates to the chapter about the project regularly.

8. Provide inputs to the web master to maintain the project web page up to date. This input includes information about the project obtained through calls, visits, reports and correspondence, photos and project reports.

9. Raise funds for the project from personal sources. Work with fund raising coordinator when an external opportunity comes up.

10. Keep the coordinator updated, so he/she can answer questions about the project, in case of non-availability of steward(s).

11. If possible, prepare/maintain the project posters/publicity material for the project to present it at any fundraising events.

12. Steward(s) can join asha-projects and other asha for education groups that help them network and learn about how they can work better with their projects, funding schemes that can be utilized, etc.

13. If there is support required from the general Asha staff, communicate this to the coordinator(s).

e. Webmaster

1. Maintain and update the web site for Asha-Chennai.
2. Update project pages with input from project stewards.
3. Administer the mailing lists.
4. Maintain the Asha Wiki pages for the chapter.

f. AfE Coordinator/Treasurer

1. Be a member of relevant AfE mailing lists and follow broader discussions within AfE which are relevant to Asha Chennai.
2. Ensure compliance of ARC and any other requirements that comes from AfE.
3. Communicate with US based donors and ensure their donations are handled properly (assigned to our chapter, matching donations also assigned, assigned to a project, receipts sent etc.)
4. Periodically send donation/donor information to all volunteers.
5. Create and follow through on check lists to ensure that funds get transferred from AfE to Asha India.

f. Fundraising Coordinator

1. Identify and be aware of fund raising opportunities including ones within Asha for Education.
2. Identify suitable projects for proposing for these opportunities without bias.
3. Follow through with the proposals, meeting etc. with the potential donors and the project stewards.

g. General Volunteer Responsibilities

The responsibilities mentioned below are applicable to all Asha Chennai volunteers.

1. Participate in meetings and be informed on the activities of Asha Chennai.
2. Participate in the decision making process of Asha.
3. Participate in one or more project activities. Attempt to visit various Asha Chennai projects and also projects supported by sister AfE chapters.
4. Spread information about Asha to other potential donors, potential volunteers and people at large.
5. Support people in their roles and responsibilities
6. Encourage and mentor volunteers to take up one of the roles when the need arises.
7. Be aware of broader Asha India and Asha for Education activities and participate in the relevant forums, and conferences.