Meeting Minutes for Asha Chennai on 30th, Mar 2025

Minutes of Asha Chennai Meeting held in person and Google Meet on Sunday 30th March, 2025 at 9.30 AM

Following were present

Akshay

Kalyan

Kasturi

Komalavalli

Murali

Rajaraman

Shiva

Sujatha

Sundaram

Sukumar (Spl.Invitee)

0. Ratification of minutes of the meeting held on Sunday, 23rd February 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 23rd February, 2025 were ratified unanimously.

1. Homage to Asha Teacher Rose Vanitha

Rajaraman recalled Rose Vanitha's   association with Asha Chennai as a teacher in Sangamam project.. for over more than 10 years.She exhibited great potential to grow with the organisation however she was beset with many challenges in her personal life.

Asha Chennai placed on record its sincere regret on her demise and offered condolences to the family.

2. Staff Matters

    1. Loans

Rajatalab: Grant of loans of Rs 50,000 each to two teachers was unanimously approved

Cauvery: Grant of loan of Rs 50, 000 to one teacher was approved for house construction

Sangamam: Also grant of loans to 3 teachers of Rs 60, 000 in one case and Rs 50,000 in two other cases was approved for construction/vehicle purchase

    1. Decision to grant an ex-gratia payment of Rs 36000 to the deceased Teacher vanitha's family was unanimously approved.

3. Update on Govt Discussions.

- Namma School Namma Ooru Palli (NSNOP) proposal.

Murali explained how NSNOP had been launched for wider participation of the public in school education. He mentioned that it was highly appreciative of Asha Chennai's efforts in this endeavour. In this connection Rajaram presented plans showing how Asha could transition from the existing activities into putting in place a full fledged CS teaching in all the government schools in the entire Tiruvallur District. This would of course involve making adjustments to other programs like SPRINT, RTC ACE etc. Murali would submit a list of NSNOP Proposals to authorities shortly.

-Impact, if any, Calls from Kalvithurai to School HMs

It was noticed during last month that HMs of Govt.schools were being asked by the Education Dept to find out the details of NGOs working in these schools. The HMs had given very positive feedback about the work being done by Asha. Further, the stature of Asha in the eyes of the HMs seems to have risen since we are now seen as doing things formally with

- Discussions with Archana, Nandhakumar and Sudhan.

Rajaraman explained that it appeared the officials wanted the plan for imparting CS training to Govt school teachers could be tried taking all the govt schools in the entire Tiruvallur district as a prototype. Rajaraman outlined the geography of Tiruvallur District and said that Asha Chennai was already operating in almost all the blocks except Minjur and Villivakkam. Of course it might mean addition of two or three CS Trainers. Although commuting long distances in some cases the project was doable. It was observed that the SCERT also was talking to Microsoft TEALS to chalk out a plan of action to spread CS education in the State from 6th class onwards.

4. Amazon funding updates:

Rajaraman presented the budget proposals made to Amazon for 24-25 under the various heads, viz.,   Learn, Explore, RTC,ACE and Impressions. Amazon has indicated that the funding might be trimmed as it had not included Tamilnadu as one of the states where it would want to focus on during 25-26. This may not be much of an impact if we continue at the same level of activity but would require additional funds if we move forward with the planned expansion for CS education in all schools in Thiruvallur district.

5. Decisions on excess funds

The plans presented for expenditure of excess funds by Rajaraman. There was broad concurrence on all the points in the plan. The following specific items were approved during the meeting.

- Uniforms for all TN projects.

An expenditure of Rs 45,00,000 to provide uniforms to school children to coincide with the start of the new academic year was approved.

- Funding of RTCs.

CAMS funds for the RTCs (through Pravartak) has lapsed and we are currently without funding. These and the funding for the 3 new RTCs will be covered from our excess funds.

It was proposed to set up two more RTCs one in Cauvery Project and another in Poorna Vidya Project. These will be taken up later based on funds availability.

- Funding of Asha Kanini.

Funding Asha Kanini at the current level will be continued with the Amazon Innovation Grant. It was decided to expand the team in the coming months to improve and keep Asha Kanini as well as all the other products up to date.

6a. Updates on 3 new RTCs in Thiruvallur

The three new RTCs at Tiruttani, Thirupatchur and Uthukottai are functioning well. All of these have good enrollment. Triuttani and Uthukottai are functioning as single teacher RTCs. The enrollment at Thirupatchur is approaching 100 and we are running it as a two teacher RTC.

6b Updates on the following

-KYC formalities with the bank.

        This is completed and we are not anticipating any further problems.

-Provident Fund, ESIC etc. for our staff. i.e. Making them formal employees of Asha.

        Rajaraman stated that it was time that Asha Chennai employing as it did about 180 personnel should formalise their status by enrolling them in EPF and ESIC etc. We have started looking into the same.

-12A, 80G renewal.

        This was expected to be received very soon.

-FCRA application.

        The process has started and we hope to submit the application for this soon.

-Wrapping up accounts for 2024-25.

Thanks to Jhansi and Sathish, our accounts are being maintained with just a one month lag. Gomathy's team assisted them in migrating their online transactions to MS Money which made this possible. Further another tool they developed recently helps migrate the MS money data to Tally. With this, we expect the accounts for 24-25 to be ready to give to the auditor by the end of April.

7a. Review of ACE Impressions

It may be recalled ACE - Asha Computer Education was inaugurated in October 2023, marking a significant step in integrating computer science education into government schools. Under this initiative, Asha Chennai has been training 52 government school teachers in Thiruvallur in the first batch. A second batch was started in August 2024 with another 53 teachers from schools in Thiruvallur, Thiruvannamalai, Villupuram and Thoothukudi.

As the first batch of 52 schools completed its first year, school students trained by these government teachers were required to submit projects as part of their coursework. On March 19, 2025, projects after rigorous scrutiny and selection were presented by these children at the first-ever ACE IMPRESSIONS event hosted by the Amazon at their Perungudi Office in Chennai.

The program was a tremendous success. The students' presentations left a lasting impression on the judges and attendees. Their confidence, creativity, and grasp of technology were evident in the quality of their work. Government teachers expressed their gratitude for being part of both the ACE program and this event, recognizing the transformative impact it has had on their students.

The winning teams were awarded funds to be used to set up computer labs or support other needs in their schools, ensuring that the impact of ACE extends beyond this event.

7b Laptop donations

-Status of the 500 laptops currently distributed.

        The initial lot of 500 laptops from Amazon came with the condition that they should be allotted only to amazon supported schools. This had been done.

-New 200 laptops received

        Rajaram stated that on his request Amazon had waived the condition on end user and data on planned requirements along with specific requests are being collated and the distribution will start shortly.

8a Some funding updates.

-Asha Sweden funding Mirzapur.

Asha Sweden had promised a donation of Rs 1,00,000

-Funds from PoshVine.

Poshvine a fintech Start up had offered to donate Rs 5,00,000

-Moving forward with SBI General Insurance.

SBI General Insurance has been evaluating Asha Chennai to onboard it for its CSR support.

8b . Review of completion of the following activities during the year 24-25.

The present progress or completion of the following activities as presented by Rajaraman for Sangamam and Komalavalli for Cauvery were noted. Rajaraman stated that Stationery and material distribution was complete for the year 24-25 across projects. Additionally all coordinators were being asked to enter the details of the number of children, schools covered etc in a shared spreadsheet.

-School Excursions – Completed for now. More than 2000 4th and 5th std children benefitted.

- School Annual Day Functions – Completed for now. This time close to 150 of our total 170 schools were supported in some or other for the annual day celebrations.

- Teacher Excursions – Cauvery and Pearl plan to have theirs in April/May timeframe. Rest of the projects have completed this.

- Stationery and other Material Distribution – This was completed a while back before December.

- Blackboard Painting – This has been completed in Pearl and Sangamam. Thulasi intends to take that up shortly.

9. Assessments

- Correction of Written Assessments

Master files were ready. Meetings were being held by Radhika and Nathiya/Sasikala with all teachers to give guidelines for correction. The process of correction and data entry should be over by the last week of April

- CS Assessments at SPRINT.

This was expected to be completed by 4th April,25

- CS Assessments at ACE.

ACE v1 assessments are already complete. ACE v2 assessments have started and would be completed by early April.

9. Update on AuxoHub Impact assessment.

Auxohub has talked to all the state holders in both the ACE and the RTC projects. Reports from Axohub are awaited for both the projects.

10 CS Assessment and other activities in Mirzapur

It was decided to sanction an expenditure of Rs 20,000 to enable the project steward to travel by air to oversee the activities in person. Presentation projects have been submitted and there will be a mini-Asha Impressions when the steward visits.

11 Update on Code.org discussions.

The discussions with Code.org are continuing. They would like us to conduct a pilot for them with a set of schools implementing their CSF-Express curriculum. We are considering implementing this in half the ACE schools that proceed to do programming in the upcoming academic year. They also wanted a survey of the infrastructure availability at the government schools. We felt it is in our best interest to do the same. We have asked all our teachers and trainers going to middle, high and higher secondary schools to collect such information.

12. Upcoming events.

12a Right Start May 15th to 19th

This annual Refresher Training Meeting for all Asha Chennai teachers would be held from May 15th to May 19th. Purva Bhattar and Meena Suresh and Karadi Path Guide would comprise the main faculty.

12b Asha Impressions April 28th.

Asha Impressions are scheduled to be held on 28th April at either Vanavani auditorium or the Ragasudha hall.

12c Training teachers in Mumbai, Pondy and Kolkata on our curriculum and Asha Kanini.

There have been several expressions of interest in implementing our CS curriculum. In particular Asha Mumbai wants to implement this in their own tuition centre and also in some BMC schools that they are starting this work at. Couple of our teachers (Kumari and Poonkodi) along with Rohit will be travelling there. The Gandhiji school in Pondichery, run by Asha, is also keen to introduce a CS curriculum for classes 6 to 9. They will be sending their teachers to Asha Impressions and RightStart. We will be looking at training them following that. A group of volunteers in Kolkata wish to introduce our curriculum at a centre run by an NGO. We are in discussions with them.

12d Asha India - AfE Quarterly meeting on April 19th.

As suggested by Rajaraman to the AfE USA, the latter had organised the first of Quarterly meeting to be held on 19th April Such meetings would enable Asha Chapters in India to present their activities (regret date was wrongly indicated in the agenda point)

13. Broad Plans or Guidelines for 25-26 Budget Proposals

Rajaraman had envisaged holding two or three meetings in quick succession in April and or May to finalise and approve the budgets for 25-26. It was essential that parameters for pay matrix were discussed in the next meeting to guide the budget preparations by the project stewards.

Mr B. Sukumar, a new volunteer, made a brief introduction about himself highlighting his pro bono teaching of Maths to students of higher classes near Guduvanchery where he resided. He wished to associate himself with Asha Chennai in supplementing teaching resources. Rajaraman requested him to stay on till the end of the meeting so that he could assess for himself the role he could play in Asha Chennai.