

Asha Meeting

Date: Saturday, 7th December 2007

Venue: ETH HG G50.1

Time: 14.00 - 16.45

People attended: Agomoni, Srinjoy, Mahua, Mr. Chattopadhaya, Kisholaya, Shagnik Chattopadhaya, Indraneel, Rohit Jain, Deepa, Mr. Kamlesh, Chidu, Priyanka, Vishwa, Ashwini, Shyam, Mr. Raja Rao and Vishwa

Overview of Jananee/ Ma: (Agomoni)

Agomoni presented an overview of the finances for the project Jananee and Ma. Following was the proposed budget:

Non-recurring 197,200 INR

Recurring 90,000 INR

Total: 287,200 INR

Total Sent till now (since Jan 2007) : 2,76,757 INR

All the money sent was used for the building construction and to pay for the teachers salary etc. No money has been spent on food and medicines as the centers were able to organize this with the community help.

So she mentioned that there is about 10,433 INR missing. The reason for this could be the fluctuations in the exchange rate. She also mentioned that the Bank in India cuts about 6,000 INR (about 200 CHF) for various charges. Many members expressed concern towards this, but Mr.Chattopadhaya said that he talked with the bank officials and they say that about 6000 INR will be deducted for the admin costs. It was also mentioned in the meeting that a new centre Dhathree will come up soon in the area to cater the needs of another locality.

Talk by Mr. Chattopadhyay:

A summary:

1. Samatat Sanstha is an NGO based in Kolkotta since 1962 with a valid FCRA
 2. Samagra Uttarbanga Loka Kalyan Kendra (SULKK) is an offshoot of Samatat and started in Jalpaiguri in March 1995.
 3. Jananee and Ma are two day care centers run by SULKK
 4. Apart from this they have sanitation projects, self-employment training centers, health awareness programs etc
 5. A seven member core committee of SULKK every monday morning meets to note down the proposed financial transactions and other activities.
 6. Independent auditing of the organization started from 2005
 7. SULKK runs there day care centers Jananee, Ma and Dhatri. Jananee and Ma are sponsored by Asha Zurich.
 8. Children from migrant laborers come to the day care centers in the morning (7.30- 8.00) when parents go to work (usually parents drop them off). Then they learn some prayers, some rhymes, and some physical movements. Between 10.30 and 11.00 usually they get puffed rice or khichadi (about 300ml). After that kids play wither indoor or outdoor till 12.30 and then one of the parents pick them up from the centre. Regular health checkup is also done for the kids.
 8. Asha Zurich is sponsoring the teachers salaries and other needs for the two centers. Furthermore, for the centre Ma, Asha Zurich also helped in purchasing the land and constructing the building.
- TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN BENEFITTED: aprox 100

Some Questions and Answers:

- How many of these kids from your centre went to (or going to) regular schools.

Mr. Chattopadhyay, told that about 45 kids have been put up in the regular schools. For a question whether they monitor these kids he replied NO as its extra work for them and they don't have enough volunteers for that.

- So then what is the benefit of these centers? Do you feel sad about the fact that the kids then end up as child laborers?

Yes, we do feel sad about that, but thats the least we can do for these kids. Their financial situation makes their parents not to send them to schools but take them to their professions to earn money. But he said that by making the small kids to learn the alphabets, some songs, some cleanliness etc, helps them to create an interest in education and sometimes they force the parents to send them to schools.

- Members asked about having a night school for the kids who have to work as child laborers. To this Mr. Chattopadhyay replied that in Jananne they once had a night school, but as the children are very tired after a hard day of work they used to sleep there. hence this was discontinued.

- Why can't you teach some vocational courses for the children?

For this Mr. Chattopadhyay mentioned that its actually illegal to teach any vocational training course to kids under the age of 14 according to Indian laws. He also mentioned to start a centre like this for older kids one needs enoaromous amounts of money and it would be better if this is taken up with Govt help.

Mr. Chattopadhyay and few requests:

1. If possible to provide a swing and some other outdoor playing equipments costing about 15.000 INR. HE mentioned that kids usually play a lot and then are so tired that they sleep happily at home.

2. Some provisions for the health check up of the kids.

He mentioned that a year ago there was a doctor who used to come and do the health check up for the kids for free. But that doctor is transferred and the new doctor asks some fees to come to the centre. Hence for many months there has been no health check up. He says it would cost 250 INR per visit per centre (once a month). That mens a total cost of 500 INR per month. (aprox 6000 INR, 200 CHF)

3. Toys for the kids:

Mr. Chattopadhyay requested to send toys to the kids. he said it will be difficult if we send the toys by post but would be great if we make a drive to collect the toys and drop them wither in Delhi or Calcutta. For this Kisholaya made a suggestion that since he will start working again in Calcutta he will try to organise a toy collection drive at his office and will make arrnagements to send the toys to Jananee and Ma.

Since members saw a video of the centers, the kids being benefited and the dedication of Mr. Chattopadhyay, they asked him to give a wish list so that we can help to fulfill that. For this Mr. Chattopadhyay said NO, as he wanted to build many things there with the local help so that locals feel involved in the project.

Issue of FCRA:

Mr. Chattopadhyay told us that they have applied for FCRA but due to political sensitive nature of the region (Jalpayguri, Siliguri, etc) it will take some time to get the FCRA. Indraneel told him that he will send the documents regarding the FCRA to Mr. Chattopadhaya.

Issue of Asha Presidentship:

Vishwa told the members that as he moved now to Basel it will be difficult for him to engage more actively with asha. He has tried to find other people to replace him but was not sucessful. Hence it was decided that he will remain the president for the name and Srinjoy/Shyam will help to run the organisation.

A deadline of 15th December was set to send the greeting cards, annual report and ZO to donors.

Discussion of PALAS project (ashwini)

This is a project run by Fr. Godfrey in Nadurbar area. Mr. Navin Kashyap has made a site visit and gave very positive feedback. Ashwini has become the steward for this project and will review, analyse the project before submitting it to Asha Silicone valley for funding as Asha ZH has no funds. The idea of the project is to run 25-30 learning centers for the Bhil community kids (600) who go to regular Zilla Parishad schools. Since they don't speak Marathi these kids need extra help to cope up with the subjects in the schools. The centre will run for 2hrs before the schools start in the Zilla Parishad classes it self. The teachers will be from the same community and they will teach regular school subjects as well as organic farming and other issues to keep their community tradition intact.

Total Budget :
Recurring 270,000 INR
One time: DVD/CD/ media unit : 150,000 INR
OR
Mobile media unit : 120,000 INR

People were concerned about the media unit.
Vishwa: As the classes will be run in the zilla parishad schools they have to keep the media unit in these classes. That means people/other teachers may misuse them
Kisholaya: Who will take the responsibility if some one misuses the media unit and does some nasty thing?

Indraneel/Chidu: It seems that Fr. Godfrey is running these classes already, where is the getting the funds from
Ashwini: At the monet he is getting funds from individual donors and form Friends of Mumbai society etc.

Indraneel: It was mentioned as 30 classes but only 25 classes are listed in the project proposal.
Ashwini: I will clarify with Fr. Godfrey

Rohit Jain: What are the kinds of educational CDs shown to the kids? Do they have their own curriculum or do they use some UN or other NGO's CDs
Ashwini: Will confirm with Fr. Godfrey

Most of the members had concerns with using the audio visual equipment in Zilla Parishad classes. Also Chidu mentioned that 5000 INR for a DVD player is a lot money as one can buy these DVD players for as low as 2000 INR in India. Many were of the opinion that a mobile audio visual unit is worth to sponsor than sponsoring individual units for each class. Chidu pointed out that with a mobile unit they can also use it Shirpur area as well.

Ashwini will ask Fr. Godfrey to make a new proposal for the boarding school project. As this involves about 100 children.

Vishwa was concerned with the salaries of the teachers, as the teachers only teach for 2hrs per day. But many members were of the opinion that that was a reasonable salary. Vishwa also asked Ashwini to find out the duties of the 2-3 paid staffs.

Ashwini will make a list of all these questions and will send it to Fr. Godfrey by tuesday 11.12.2007

Minutes prepared by Vishwa on 11.12.2007