

Conference call on April 13th, 2007

Attendees: Siddamma, Sanjeev, Anita, Arvind Rao and Santhosh.

1. Resource center:

- Anita will work with Suganthi in getting us the expense report from last year
- Deadlines on each item in the budget proposal needs to be determined
- Anita to type up her site visit report
- Santhosh will follow up with Asha Austin, AID and other chapters once we get updates and proposal ready.

2. Project Freedom:

(<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=591>)

- Background
 - Started in Oct 2004. Integral part of Siddamma's work with bonded laborers. More than 300 families have been rescued from bonded labor in the Thiruvallur region. Few families left to their native village. The rest stayed back in S.K.Nagar (near Palavakkam village).
 - As per the last survey the total number of Irula bonded labor families residing in Pallavakkam village was 213 families. Presently, however, 70 families have temporarily moved to nearby towns for seasonal work, but their houses still exist in the village. These 70 families comprise of 156 children below fifteen years of age and 148 men and women. The remaining 143 families in Pallavakkam village have 212 children below fifteen yrs of age.
 - The government has so far allotted land and housing for 70 families released from bonded labor (land with 'patta'). After a PIL in the supreme court was filed, the supreme court directed the state government to utilize the central government funds allocated for tribal welfare.
 - In addition to providing rehabilitation for the adults, Bharathi Trust aims at mainstreaming the children (175 till date, projected total number is around 2700) of these families. Asha in collaboration with Bharathi Trust intends to create a 'Child Friendly Center' wherein children will be trained with basic skills and education like counting numbers, reading alphabets, craft work, drawing etc.
- Asha Toledo and Freedom
 - Siddamma's vision was quite different from Asha Toledo's vision. Siddamma would like the government to be involved in the responsibility of maintaining the schools. This means government has to allocate land, provide support, hiring of teachers, and finally maintain the school. Since there is going to be lot of government involvement, the progress is bound to be slow.
 - Asha Toledo chapter faced pressure to show steady progress in the project. This was partly because of the specific interest of the donor in the 'building' of the school.
- Updates/More information

- The current construction will house the children of the balwadi (currently in a temporary shed) and the primary school.
- Government School has 73 children from the community. The plan is to utilize the existing system in the local level. We hope to support these children who have been mainstreamed into the school – Ist to Xth Std.
- Hostel Facility has 10 children. These are young girls who are studying in the XI and XII classes. They go to government school in the city. The parents are migrant laborers and hence can't provide for a reliable location for the children to stay and study. The children had to initially stay in the Bharathi Trust office. Finally, with support from the tribal department the children were admitted to hostels. The food is not good and work needs to be done.
- Balwadi has 79 children. The government supports the teacher, supplies nutrition and also provides for a helper ('aayah'). The kids who come to this school have both parents going to work as laborers. The control is transitioning from Bharathi trust to the government. During the transition, the teacher does not change.
- EGS (Education Guarantee Scheme) has 50 children. The government employs a person who is paid a salary of around Rs. 800. Its similar to a NFE (Non-Formal Education) center. Only education is provided and nutrition is not provided. This caters mainly to slow learners or children who are not yet able to ramp up to government school level – reasons may include late joining date because of work related 'migration' of parents etc. The EGS scheme helps these children join the government school.
- Action items
 - Sanjeev to follow up with Asha Toledo and Sridhar
 - Siddamma/Sanjeev to work on getting budget proposal to be supported
 - Santhosh to start preparing presentation/proposal for Asha Austin

3. Tsunami Relief & Rehabilitation:

<https://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=663>

(More detailed updates sent by Sanjeev to Arvind by email)

- North Pichavaram – Labor cost comes to Rs. 85/sft. April 20th – construction in all 3 villages for about 22 families. Initially there were problems with land due to the government not acting in due time. Encroachments on the government allotted land came up in large numbers. After a long struggle they were removed and the community regained access to land. The communities have put up huts in the land for now. It will take about 4 months for the construction to complete.
- MGR Nagar – Government refused to help and did not recognize the irulas as beneficiaries because they had no ration card/record. Thanks to efforts of an Asha volunteer from boston land was obtained. The plan is to register land in the name of the families and create a record for them. This will help them avail benefits from the tribal department. 19th April is the bhoomi pooja.
- Cuddalore – Thanks to efforts of volunteer from Belgium(Muriel), land was bought for bharathi nagar. Ppl have hutments in that land.

- Action AID and schools – In the first year after the tsunami 98% of the children from the affected communities didn't go to school. Action AID and Save the Children had both supported the motivational centers and other education efforts. But, their goal was to provide for livelihood options and not education. Save the children had stopped support long time back. ActionAID continued support and has now decided to stop. We have 6 months time to find support for these schools.
- Action items
 - Anita to follow up on specific budget proposals for Tsunami R&R funds.
 - Arvind to update the appropriate project page with all current information and work on ARC proposal

4. US Visit:

- Siddamma will be visiting in the June/July time frame.
- Limit no. of chapters – restrict to chapters she has worked with before.
- Need to arrange travel itinerary with more time at each chapter
- ActionAID director has expressed desire to accompany Siddamma on trips to Asha chapters – he will take care of his own travel – Siddamma to confirm on his accommodation
- Sanjeev to investigate VUSA (Visit USA pass) and send information.
- Sanjeev to send chapter contact list.
- Santhosh to work with Sridhar and other chapter contacts in planning itinerary.