

**Asha for Education  
Fellowship Application Form**

<b>SECTION I: Personal Contact Information</b>	
Name: Meenakshi Umesh	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Nominator:	
Have you applied to Asha Fellowship Program before? If yes, when?	
Do you or your organization receive or has received any other form of financial support from Asha? If yes, please give details	

<b>SECTION II: Summary of Work</b>			
Name of Project (if any):			
Location: Village/City/District/State			
Which communities will your work serve? Gounder communities who are considered MBC (Most Backward Classes and Dalits). Most are small land holders (½ acre to 2 acres).			
Socio-economic background Description of the land from website. Most of the people live off the seasonal cultivation on their land. For additional income there are not many opportunities. They work as daily labor employed by big farmers. Even if both members of the family are able to get work on all days (which is very rare) the income would be 1000-1200 and 1500-2000. However, in the last 8 yrs because of the change in climate(drought) patterns there is a lot of migration towards Bangalore, Coimbatore and other big cities nearby. Their land is lying fallow and getting fast denuded. The children and the old are being left behind. Children's education and care is effected. While immediate needs of the children is being addressed by the Puvudham school the bigger issue of migration still needs to be resolved. The education in the local area is 20% of the children drop out before grade V. Many children have lot of learning difficulties and many others are unable to benefit due to the environment of the schools.			
Type of work (Select 3 maximum)			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Curriculum Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching Methods	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health and Nutrition
<input type="checkbox"/>	Educational Reform	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Income Generation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Computer Based Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Food and Agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adult Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Land Reform
			Appropriate Technology
			Right to Information
			People's Struggles
			Civic and Human Rights
			Other (Please specify)

<b>SECTION II: Education</b>		
Degree, Certification or Training Year	Institution	Location
B.Arch	J.J.College of Architecture	Mumbai
Permaculture Course	Auroville	Pondicherry

**SECTION III: Experience**

Please describe the top 3 most relevant experiences.

Land regeneration – 12 acres of completely degraded land has been planted with 60-70 different species of trees, shrubs, fodder grasses. Additionally, organic farming has been practiced over the last 15 yrs on the same land.

Puvidham Learning Center – Over the last 8 yrs we have run a full time learning center and more recently a hostel for the children of migrant laborers. We have had great success with children who had learning disabilities and behavioral disorders. We have worked to build capacity of the local youth to take up active role in the learning center.

Women Literacy/Knowledge – Worked with the literacy of the women (night school) helping them to read and write. Address their nutrition and health problems and superstitious beliefs. We also provided exposure and training in use of herbal plants as common home remedies.

**SECTION IV: Organizational Affiliations & Memberships**

Organization	Your Role	Dates
Puvidham Rural Development Trust	Managing Trustee	2002-present
FRLHT (Federation for Rural ...)	Partner in creating rural herb nursery	Sep 2007-present

**SECTION V: References**

Name	Organization	Address/Phone/Email
Jayashree Janardhan	Learning Network	
Anu and Krishna	Asha-fellows	

**SECTION Vi: Proposal**

Please answer the following questions in the space provided. Please attach any additional documents for clarity and better understanding of your work.

Name of Project (if any):

Objective:

To address migration around Nagarkuddal.

Clearly describe the need for your work:

There is mass migration in the villages around Nagarkuddal (10 villages) due to harsh climatic conditions. There are small patches of land available, but no viable occupations to keep the people gainfully employed the entire year.

The results of migration are well documented. One side effect is the impact it has on the children and elderly left behind.

Clearly describe your proposed approach/solution:

The first step is water and soil conservation on the land that is presently lying fallow. This will be done through creating awareness (exhibitions, street plays, community meetings). A model plantation to demonstrate these techniques is being worked on. This is based on our earlier work with land regeneration. Once the land is regenerated to some extent we are looking at providing income generation through doing plantations on their land with bamboo, agave and other timber and hardy fruit trees. Bamboo takes about 5 yrs to be ready for harvest. There after value add is done by making furniture and other bamboo products locally thereby providing employment to the community. The community will be made aware of these opportunities to encourage to put to use their otherwise fallow land.

Hand-in-hand to provide short term incentives (and to avoid mono-culture of a few tree varieties)

<p>we will be encouraging planting varieties of herbal plants/trees that grow well in these areas. These herbal plants are sought after within the communities to venture to the forest to collect and should provide the short term incentives in mind.</p>
<p>Clearly describe any background work done so far in the location of your work that will help towards your work.</p> <p>Please look at relevant experience in this area question.</p>
<p>What activities will be undertaken for your work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness</li> <li>- Work camps through school children for soil and water conservation</li> <li>- Making material available (nursery)</li> <li>- Creating model plantation</li> <li>- Training and guidance</li> <li>- Value addition in products made from bamboo or agave</li> </ul>
<p>Clearly describe the expected impact of your work:</p> <p>Green cover/land regeneration and higher water table. People staying back and families remaining together. Improvement in quality of life of communities around. Craft development of bamboo and fiber.</p>
<p>Describe any innovative ideas &amp; approach:</p> <p>The focus on bamboo (5 yrs) as a base of plantation is a good compromise between the long term trees (teak, rosewood – 20 yrs+) and short term plants (amala, drumstick) and could get people interested in land regeneration. It could also help them create local opportunities of employment which are presently non-existent.</p>
<p>Clearly describe why you will succeed:</p> <p>There is a lot of good will and faith of the local community in our work and our efforts in bringing this 12 acre land to life from nothing. They are well aware of our commitment and have often asked us to participate in community activities. The organic experiment that we have been running has in itself been observed by the people as very successful. Without any canvassing from our side people have approached us for advice and have been trying to minimize their fertilizer and pesticide inputs.</p> <p>Since organic farming is one of the medium of learning at the school and the children have taking back these experiences and learnings back to their families. Based on the reactions of the families we believe we will have good support from the community. We also have a very active participation from the community in our annual day functions and science fairs.</p> <p>We also do not plan to give away the saplings for free (at least Rs.1)and would expect the farmers to put in some minimal investment and correspondingly take care of their investment. The other factors like climatic conditions or rains can have quite an impact on this effort and are beyond our control.</p>
<p>How do you propose to track the impact of your work (data collection, interviews, etc)</p> <p>We have collected data as part of what we do at school e.g. census data collection. Recently, we also did data collection on potter communities on the present state of affairs and reasons thereof. And what kind of help the potters would need to be competitive.</p> <p>Survival rate of saplings, maintenance of soil and water conservation structures, water table by measurement of water levels in various wells, number of months the families spend in the neighborhood compared to the city.</p>
<p>What are the intermediate milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Awareness campaigns.</li> <li>● Soil and water conservation.</li> <li>● Fencing/protection of saplings.</li> <li>● Nursery and saplings</li> <li>● Planting of saplings.</li> <li>● Drip Irrigation (for those who have access to water).</li> <li>● Skill development</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Registration of cooperative</li> </ul>
<p>What learning from this work can be applied elsewhere &amp; where: The soil and water conservation should work in many other districts in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.</p>
<p>List the current financial resources, including any other grants or fellowships, available for the project/work:</p>
<p>List any organizations, including universities, international agencies, NGOs, etc., involved in the work:</p>
<p>What level of funding are you requesting from Asha for Education (stipend, project funds, etc.). Please give details about amount requested per month and duration. Rs.10,000/month</p>

<p><b>SECTION VIII: Declaration</b></p>	
<p>I am 18 years of age or older. I am prepared to commit at least 60% of my working time to the proposed work I am prepared to commit to a minimum of 5 years to the proposed project starting _____ I am not proposing an academic research project. I am not a prior recipient of Asha for Education Fellowship Program funding. The proposed project/work is not affiliated with any religious or political organizations. The proposed project/work is an independent and autonomous project. The idea proposed is my original idea. I have attached a resume and other pertinent information to this application.</p>	
<p>I certify that I have answered all questions truthfully. I understand that if I have misrepresented myself or my proposed work, Asha for Education may disqualify my eligibility.</p>	

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_