Asha Kanini Report (Oct – Dec 2021)

Asha Kanini project of Pravartak has been launched in April 2021 with funding from John Crane. While efforts for this was already underway internally in Asha, the project by Pravartak enables it to be scaled up to support all of Tamilnadu's government schools.

Staffing

The first two trainers were onboarded on Oct 1st and five more were onboarded on Nov 1st. By the end of the quarter we were operating with the 7 trainers and 2 content developers. Eleven of the fourteen blocks in Thiruvallur Districts are being covered by these 7 trainers. We are continuing to lookout for hiring additional trainers to cover Villivakkam, Puzhal and Minjur blocks of Thiruvallur Dist. One of the content developers Ms. Nathiya, is also coordinating the over training programme. She coordinates the training of the trainers as well as visits schools with one of the trainers for a day every week to check and provide feedback on their work.

The two software engineers who have been working for this project for close to two years resigned in November. While this is a situation we have to deal with, it comes at not too bad a time. Both the Windows and Android versions of Asha Kanini are available and fairly stable. We have identified another software engineer for the project but that engineer will be able to start only by Feb 1st. Till that time, the two engineers who have moved on are continuing to help out on a voluntary basis.

Software Development

The following important things were completed during this quarter,

1. Completion of Usage Data collection from Android and Windows, its processing on the server to generate the views and likes data, and finally the update and display of the views and likes data on the Windows client. The Android client still does not display the Views and Likes data.
2. Codesigning of the Windows installer. Code signed installers will not generate a warning that the user is installing an executable from an unknown source.
3. We completed the remaining problems in the Android version and released a version to Google PlayStore. There was a problem running our version on the latest Android 11 version. That was also fixed and it work well on Android now.
4. As larger number of registrations and installations were happening, there were a few problems in this space (i.e. registration, initial download, installation of contents etc.) We fixed these problems and made the overall system a lot more stable.
5. Enhancement to the lesson plans display to also be able to display a description of every content.

With the staff exits etc. we couldn't address the following features in the last quarter:

1. Display of views and likes in the Android client.
2. Bug reporting.
3. Auto-update of software in Windows.
4. Library view in Android.
5. Caching of contents in both Windows and Android.

Content Development

We got all the packages ready for Android. We needed to make some changes to the way some of the packages were structured to make them work for Android. The work on lesson plans continued. In particular including stories and activities as well as adding short descriptions for all the contents.

Training the Trainers

We had hired two new trainers on Oct 1st. We had also identified 5 computer teachers whom we were going to promote to trainers. We started training all these teachers by October. Schools reopened on Nov 1st. This made a huge difference to the work under this project. We could start sending our teachers to the schools. However, the next challenge came in the form of weather. The schools were closed for almost half the days in November and December because of the heavy rains in Thiruvallur area. Here is a report on the starting of our training work written by the end of Nov. As mentioned there a good part of our work was focussed on training the trainers.

While many of the trainers knew how to use Asha Kanini, they needed to understand how to present Asha Kanini as well as understand all its intricacies. They also need to be thorough in how to install it and how to onboard new teachers on to the system.

Another important aspect of their training was on how to do basic maintenance of hardware. Many of the computers in the schools are typically not working. Just cleaning the connectors (for memory, SATA, etc.) and reconnecting the computer and then reinstalling the OS will usually fix most of the problems. The teachers learnt these things thoroughly so that they can do most of the maintenance work on the computers on their own.

We also organised a training session for all our computer teachers and Kanini trainer from Dec 27th to 29th. One day was exclusively devoted to the features of Asha Kanini. The Kanini trainers did this training and this also served as a practice session for them. See the report here.

Trainers Work at the Schools

As the schools reopened on Nov 1st, the trainers also started visiting the schools. As we started doing this without formal permission from the education officials, we had to rely on references from the HMs and other teachers who knew Asha well. Finally on Dec 29th we got the proper permissions that we needed from the Chief Educational Officer of Thiruvallur District. We received the formal permission to train teachers in primary and middle schools all across Thiruvallur District to use Asha Kanini. This would enable us to be much more effective in the coming quarters.

However they did visit schools during this quarter and were doing various things at these schools like,

- Training the government teachers.
- Servicing and repairing computers.
- Teaching sample classes that the government teachers can also see.
- Installing Asha Kanini and its contents of the school computers.

Here are some photos of our teachers at these schools.

Plan for the Next Quarter

From Dec 24th the schools once again closed for Christmas/New year holidays but it was becoming clear that the schools may not open again on Jan 2nd because of the latest Omicron wave. The teachers are being given training at block and cluster level. This gives us a good opportunity to reach out to a large number of schools/teachers in one shot. As we are also in possession of the necessary permission from the Chief Educational Officer, we will be establishing connections with the Block Educational Officers of the various blocks and giving our training in all the blocks.

Our trainers will also continue visiting the schools and helping propagate information about Asha Kanini to all the teachers and schools.

The software is in a maintenance mode with just bug fixes. We hope to get the new developer(s) onboard and up to speed soon during the quarter. Content work will also continue.