

CAF India-Oracle supported Program Reporting Format

1. GENERAL PPROJECT/PROGRAM INFORMATION

Project/Program Name	Sangamam Kanini
Implementing Partner Name & contact details	Asha (Chennai chapter)
Location of Project/Program	Chennai, Thiruvallur Dist.
Total beneficiaries of Project/Program	1500
Total beneficiaries benefited in reporting period	1400
Sectoral Focus (e.g. Education, Community Development, Environment etc.) Schedule VII of CSR Act 2013	Education
Date Project/Program Commenced	Jan 2015
Expected date of Project/Program Completion	Ongoing. Initial phase complete by April 2016.
Total Project/Program Budget	Rs 1365030
Budget for the reporting period (year)	Approx 857000.
Reporting Period - Report covers activities implemented in the period:	April 2015 to Dec 2015.

2. PROJECT/ROGRAM BRIEF

2.1Project/program Background (100 words)

Asha Chennai has been supporting government schools for a number of years. We are currently supporting 20+ government schools spread across Tamilnadu. At these schools we have been providing teachers and some materials to the school/students to improve the quality of education at these schools.

Through this Sangamam Kanini project we intend to have a more direct impact on the education processes in the classrooms through the use of computers. The mechanisms used include,

1. Provide laptop and internet connections to the teachers. These would be used for the things mentioned in point 3 below.
2. Maintain the computer labs at the schools and provide these internet connections and enable these computers to also be used for things mentioned in point 3.
3. Provide contents for the teachers to use for teaching including - lesson plans and other teacher aids, passive contents they can show to a class, active contents like educational games that the students can play.
4. Conduct assessments to track the performance of the children.
5. Enable the tracking of assessment scores and do analytics on these.
6. Provide regular training to the teachers and align this training to the materials provided to the schools so that they can be done in the classes. (Note this is covered under the other projects that support our government school efforts.)

2.2Activity Reporting (in brief) 250 words

2.2.1 Project/Program Progress Activity Table

- Instructions & Examples -

Planned Activities Per results (As per the proposal and based on thematic areas)	Result Please include numbers of program participants reached per output. Please list men, women, children and people with disabilities separately. If the indicator is quantifiable, use numeric measures. <i>What did we deliver as a result of the activities?</i>	Remarks (if there is specific remark on on result or activity)
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Infrastructure

Give laptop, Wifi hotspot and network access to teachers at about 4 per month. Total of 25 laptops (22 from this project funds).	We purchased all the 22 laptops as planned. The last seven were purchased in October and November. One of these is being retained for testing the software being developed for the teachers. The rest have been distributed to the teachers. Only one teacher at Poorna Vidhya project hasn't received the laptop yet. All of these teachers at places where there is network connectivity have been provided Wifi hotspots with network connection as well.	This work has been completed. The teachers have also been trained in how to use the laptops and the contents we have provided.
Gives projector, speakers and other things as required to school to effectively show contents at the schools.	We have given only one projector (to PUPS Ammambakkam) so far. We also gave the school a speaker set and a 6' x 4' screen.	Many of the schools either have a projector already or do not have the computer and other infrastructure needed to host a projector in the school. Therefore we will be giving these only to 4 schools.
Maintain the computer labs	All the computers at the various schools that have computer labs were fixed by October timeframe. However with the rains many of the computers once again developed problems. At the end of December we were once again starting to fix these. These got completed only in January.	Some of the older machines are also being condemned because it is not viable to repair these.

Software

Develop software for delivering the contents to the teachers/classes	Initial version of the software is ready. All the teachers laptops are running this software. However we couldn't install this on the government systems because they were running 32-bit OS. In December a version of the software for 32-bit systems was made available. These were yet to be installed in the government systems by end of December.	A new version of the software with improved interface is being developed. This should be available before the end of the academic year.
Other Asha Software	Still only at the idea stage. We have plans for also developing an English read-along software. This effort has not started.	This was not intended as part of Phase-I of Sangamam Kanini which is this year of the project. We may however do this towards the later part of the year.
Other third party software	Laptops are installed with all the software required to view the contents provided to them including Windows 8.1 or Windows 10, Browsers, flash, Java Runtime Environment, Open Office, OOo4Kids, Tux Paint, MSW Logo etc.	As the contents are being enhanced we will also ensure the laptops have all the required third party software to view the contents. We typically will use popular free software. We got the licenses for Windows from Microsoft donation program (through Nasscom BigTech / Tech Soup).

Contents

English Lesson Recordings	These were recorded by a volunteer Mrs. Rekha Balakrishnan. Recordings lessons of all the three terms are available. These have been mapped to the lessons and made available to the teachers. They are beginning to use them.	
Maths Instructions	We couldn't get these ready for term 1 in time. They were made available for term 2 only by the middle of the term. The instructions for term 3 is available in time.	Tamil translations of these instructions is still required.
Third party contents mapped and made available to the teachers -- StarFall, Khan Academy Tamil, TN textbooks, Simply English, E-Speak, OneStopEnglish games, Azim Premji Foundation, Hello English, Toon Masti, ECTAL etc.	These have been provided to the teachers and they are using them.	The teachers have also identified and brought to our attention contents on their own. These are also being provided on the computers.
Contents that are still planned: Word Search Puzzles, Math Bingo Games, NLVM, MathIsFun, MangaHign, MathGames, MathPickle. PhET and other growing list of free educational websites and software.	These are yet to be downloaded, mapped and made available to our teachers. But several of these are directly being used by the teachers from the Internet especially MathGames and MathIsFun.	These are intended to be completed during the project year. So they are proceeding as scheduled.

Assessments

Conduct Annual assessment in April (end of the academic year)	This was conducted in April 2015. However there was massive assistance given during the assessments to the students by the teachers in many of the schools. We have got reliable data from the assessments only for 6 schools.	Conducting 3 assessments in a day was difficult for the children as well. There were also resistance to this from the administration (HMs and AEO). Therefore we are thinking of smaller assessment directly conducted by Asha teachers once a term.
Grading and Analysis of the Assessments	We used our own teachers to do the grading and entering of the marks into Excel sheets which were then uploaded to our database. This finally got completed in early August. We completed a minimal analysis of this data and provided it to the teachers and teacher trainers.	Entering the marks into the Excel sheet was very time consuming and also error prone. Though we put in error checks into the Excel sheet to prevent wrong data, it was not sufficient. Some more analysis can be done in the server for viewing live by teachers/others. We will be taking this up as we go along.

Assessments in 2015-16.	We were planning to conduct the assessments in the middle of Term 2 (i.e. by mid November). However because of the rains and floods this got pushed out and we weren't able to conduct it by end of Dec.	Given the wait the planning and execution of this should be a lot smoother this time.
Usage of the teacher laptops, school computers and contents provided		
Usage of contents	The two computer teachers at Thiruvallur are using the computers effectively in 4 schools that they go to. The rest of the teacher at Thiruvallur given laptops are also using basic contents like StarFall, MathGames, Toon Masti, other new sites they have found like Noolagam, XLKids.com etc. In the 6 schools where the computers have been repaired, the school computers are also being used. At Olcott memorial school the teachers are using the computers for the online English course they are taking from British council. We have not yet monitored how they are being used in the classrooms.	<p>The details provided on usage is from the teachers own reporting and observation by the project coordinator and volunteers. Once our software becomes the primary interface for viewing the contents, we will be able to use the data from the hooks for monitoring in our software.</p> <p>It was a very pleasant observation when the teachers started finding several useful websites by themselves and started using them in preference to the websites we have told them about. This ultimately is the most important goal of the project. i.e. Empower the teachers to improve their teaching by providing them the right aids. It was a joy to see that this was beginning to happen.</p>
Mailing list / Forum for teacher interactions and interaction with trainers.	A mailing list has been formed but is not being used actively yet.	
Teacher Computer Science to the students.	The two computer teachers are teaching basic computer science to the children at 4 schools. They have been doing this for several years now and not just as part of this project. We trained all the teacher on Logo. The computer teachers have also been training some of the older class children (esp. the 6 th to 8 th Std students at PUPS Ramanjeri) in programming with Logo.	We are trying to evolve a syllabus for the same and also get the children to do something like a multi-media presentation with open office software. We are also hoping to introduce more tools for teaching programming etc. like Logo, Snap, Scratch etc. in our schools.
Other Usage	The assessments were graded by the teachers and entered into an Excel sheet using their laptops and the computers already in the Thiruvallur office. The two computer teachers have been assisting us in mapping the contents to lessons. In all these they have been using Microsoft office software in a few computers and using email and Whatsapp to send things to us.	All this is part of the overall goal of training and empowering the teachers as well.

2.3 Challenges and difficulties (100 words)

There have been several challenges we have encountered during the execution of the projects.

1. As mentioned earlier, the Assessments proved to be a challenge in multiple ways.
 - It was a challenge to administer tests for about 1200 children – Photocopying the papers distributing it to the schools etc.
 - Setting papers which truly test the achievement levels of children that is aligned to a curriculum is a specialized exercise. I would say we achieved that for Maths but only partially met it for English and Tamil.
 - In many of the schools we realized that the teachers had actively coached the children before the exam. We realized the mistakes of distributing the papers to the schools couple of days before the assessment. In many of the schools the government teachers engaged in helping the students even during the test even after we requested them to stop it. In the second round of tests we prevented this by having a large enough number of volunteers to conduct the tests ourselves.
 - Students were finding it difficult to write three tests on the same day. We also realized it is almost meaningless to conduct these kinds of written assessments for 1st and 2nd standard children. They were rarely able to hold their concentration for that long and their reading and writing skills were not that developed.
 - Correcting the assessments and entering the marks into a database was also a lot more time consuming than anticipated. This took really long and then when the files were being transferred from the Excel files to the database, our script found a lot of errors.
2. Engaging volunteers for content development, developing software, mapping content to lessons etc. has proved to be challenge. Many of the people who come to volunteer for software development, do not have the necessary skills and do not have access to the necessary environment for the development. So it often ended up being a non-starter. Further giving tight deadlines to people who are doing things voluntarily without pay was not possible.
3. Even for some pay, we found it difficult to get people with necessary skills to maintain computers (repair hardware problems, setup Wifi network, install software etc.) in remote rural areas. We have had to take people from either Chennai or Thiruvallur to address the issues.
4. I have seen even in smaller offices (which are not centrally airconditioned all the time) there would be problems with some of the computer during the rainy season because of the humidity. However the problems in the schools were of a different magnitude. About 75% of all the computers were not working properly after the rains. We are in the process of repairing them. In a couple of schools water dripped on the computers and they are totally damaged.

2.4 Lessons Learned (100 words)

We are yet to come to some understanding on the broader goals of this project. i.e. Does empowering the teacher with a laptop, Internet connection, right kind of contents, training etc. improve the quality of education? However we have learnt several intermediate lessons.

1. We learnt a lot regarding how to conduct or more particularly how not to conduct assessments. For this year we intend to have assessments done differently. Two Asha teacher will go to each school and spend one day in each school. They will bring one class at a time to their room and conduct the assessment for them. These will be short enough to be completed in one hour. The assessments will have a part that tests basic achievement level which will be repeated every term and another part which tests specific areas that they should know at their age which will try and cover their entire learning objectives over the three terms. This year (2015-16) we will be able to do these assessments only in terms 2 and 3.
2. We have become proficient at handling the logistics of distributing laptops to the teachers, maintaining the computer lab at the schools, etc. We know what hardware and what internet service provider works for establishing network connectivity at the schools.
3. We have learnt that it is better to pay someone for developing software and contents. Voluntary mode of development can only take us so far. For this phase of the project, we are still mostly dependent on volunteer based effort. However for developing maths assessments, training and instructions for teachers we are paying Ramanujan Museum and Centre for Math Resources (though the amount they are charging us is a lot less than their usual rate). We are also getting the contents mapped to Samacheer Kalvi lessons using our own two computer teachers (who are paid).

3. Project Visibility

There hasn't been any media coverage of our project. The project has a page in the Asha website. See the link: <http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=1228>.

4. Volunteer engagement

There are broadly two kinds of opportunities for Oracle volunteers:

1. Software development using node (Javascript), node webkit and MySQL.
2. Training our teachers on standard software (office products, internet). It would also be useful to train them on software specific for teaching children like Logo, Snap, Scratch etc.

Neither of these have fixed dates associated to them. The software development would be done by the volunteers on their own with occasional merges with our effort.. The training sessions can be held on any Saturday or other non-school day for the teacher. We can schedule these as per the convenience of the Oracle volunteers. So far this has not happened.