

Project Contacts

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Project Background:

We would like to request a one-time funding for the purchase of 4 computers and 1 printer for two existing Asha projects (Aralu-Belaku and Navjyoti Swawalambhan Sewa Sansthan). Following is a description of both projects.

1: Aralu-Belaku

Aralu, is a secular, nonprofit, nonpolitical, non-governmental voluntary welfare organization registered under Karnataka Societies Registration Act of 1960 and under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act 1976. They operate in the backward and drought prone areas of the Bidar district. Long term objectives include integrated rural development, social and environmental awareness, education facilities, and development of depressed sections of the society. Their activities include education of children, child rights education, self help groups for the mahila sangha, watershed and agricultural development program.

Asha Chicago supports the creation and operational expenses of the Belaku home. This is a residential center for orphans and street kids in Bidar who are being nurtured, nourished, and motivated to join mainstream schooling.

Currently, Asha supports 22 children who live in the residential home. The support includes their food, health care, daily living expenses, cost of their education, field trips, etc. The children study in nearby government schools.

Asha Chicago also provides financial support to have staff at the residential home. Currently, there is a warden who lives in the residential home, along with two cooks. Since most of the children are first generation learners and come to the residential home at a very young age, a tuition teacher comes

every evening for a few hours to help the children with their studies.

The children are screened and selected by Aralu. The focus is on kids who end up on the street or become child laborers under varied circumstances such as

1. due to the death of their parents and lack of a good caring guardian,
2. one or more parents have abandoned them to seek work elsewhere

The philosophy behind the residential home is that without the environment provided to these children in the residential home, they would be deprived of education, would not be able to have a positive future and might become victims of problems such as child labour.

The center also has a plantation and dairy farm that is being nurtured by the children and staff and serves as a long term sustained support for them.

The children who now live and learn in this center named "Prashanti-Kutir" are slowly taking steps with the love and support of Aralu's staff to develop into confident individuals in the future

2: Navjyoti

The organization does its education work in the various villages of Aaraji line block at district Vanarasi. People manufacture Banarasi saris in most of the villages of Aaraji line. Many people, due to their poverty, have to employ their children to manufacture the saris. Therefore children are deprived of fundamental education.

All government and non-government schools are run at day time and most of the girls of the area can't go to school. Keeping all these things in mind, an evening school at Usarapatti village was opened on 13 August, 1994. For it, donations and contributions were taken from village. An evening school was opened so that children could get education without leaving their work and later other centers were opened at different villages by motivating the people of these villages.

The organization provides primary education in 2 main centers and non-formal education in about 10 centers including 6 kishori kendras and more than 30 self help groups in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The organization also runs vocational training centers and supports various social causes.

Asha Chicago provides support for teachers' salaries, training and school supplies.

Project Goal

Currently, we are requesting funding for the purchase of 4 computers and 1 printer. Two computers will be used at the Aralu-Belaku residential home and the rest of the equipment at the Navjyoti permanent center in Nagepur.

We would like to use the computers in conjunction with the software developed by the Azim Premji Foundation as a teaching aid. AZP has created educational software in local languages in a variety of subjects. The software has already been implemented as a teaching aid at numerous schools across Karnataka. At Navjyoti, we plan to compare the results of students who had the benefit of the computers versus those who do not. To this end, the children at Harsos (the second permanent school at Navjyoti) will not use the computers during the initial phase. Both groups will be given initial diagnostic tests in the subjects where computers will be used as a teaching aid (initially math). The immediate goal is to evaluate the usefulness of computers as a teaching aid in rural settings. Aralu-Belaku and Navjyoti provide examples of two very different types of rural settings. Besides immediate educational benefits, we also hope to learn from and document this exercise for the benefit of other Asha stewards/projects.

Long Term Goals

Shankar and I arrived at this project in an attempt to understand how we as project stewards (in the US) could be of more practical use to our project partners. In particular, we were struggling with the general question of understanding our projects so that we can better serve them.

Both Navjyoti and Aralu take a very holistic view towards community service and development. They run several social programs catering to various groups of their community and geared towards addressing various social issues facing the community. These social issues include women's rights, children's rights, labor rights, human rights and right to health and

education. The social programs include street theatre groups, RTI/RTF/NREGA camps, health camps, preprimary centers, residential homes, Lok Samiti, and non-formal/formal educational centers. With this holistic approach in mind (and through discussions with both organizations), we felt that the introduction of computers would provide both organizations with a useful aid. Although initially the computers will primarily be used as a teaching aid, we hope the program develops into a community computer center in the long run.

The initial goal is to evaluate the success of computers as a meaningful teaching aid in rural schools. If successful, we hope to introduce more computers and make it a regular part of the full curriculum. Furthermore, we would also eventually look into introducing computers at the non-formal education centers. Eventually, we hope this leads to the creation of a community computer center. One vision is a center where all members of the community can benefit from computers. For example, it could serve as a place where RTI/RTF forms are filed. This would also allow the volunteers at Navjyoti and Aralu to keep better track of their NREGA/RTI/RTF activities. Eventually, this would lead to better data and statistics which could be used by Asha to better understand the impact of this more holistic approach towards community development. The center could also be used as a vocational training center, resources center (for employment etc.) and for the management of Self Help Groups. Computers have been used in this capacity at various other projects across India (including other projects in Asha).

Budget

System Configuration:

Processor: Pentium III

Memory: 256 MB

Hard Disk Drive: 20 GB HDD,

Monitor: 14" or 15" CRT

Keyboard & Mouse with Cabinet & SMPS.

Unit Price: Rs. 6500/- (All Inclusive) x 4 = Rs 26,000

500 VA UPS : Rs. 1700/- (All Inclusive) x 4 = Rs 6,800

HP - 4185 : Rs. 3750 + VAT 4% = Rs 3,900

Total = Rs 36,400