



Asha for Education™

UFlorida Chapter

Gators for Asha, 300-9 J W Reitz Union, P.O Box 118505, Gainesville, FL 32601

www.ashanet.org/uflorida

FORWORD – TN Floods Relief and Rehabilitation – Conference Call & Approval Minutes

Date : **16th November 2015**

Project Steward : **Shivashankar Halan**

Chapter : **Asha – UFlorida**

Attendees : **Shiva Halan, Gayathri Balakrishnan, Sindhu
Gayathri Srinivasan, Devesh Chugh, Ravi Venkatraman, Ramya
Sivakumar & Revathi Kadari**

Background - Floods of November 2015

Chennai and Kanchipuram district were hit by heavy rains and floods over the past two weeks and were affected in the worst way possible. Most pictures from the area showed flooding in the urban areas due to improper drainage facilities. The areas in which the 13 evening learning centers were located were also affected by the flooding and heavy rain. Since the children supported by FORWARD and their families hail from poor socio economic conditions, they have become the worst victims. Around 350 children studying in our education centers are severly affected by rain. Some immediate relief materials like warm clothes, bed sheets, blankets, food packets are the immediate needs of the affected people. In this context, the project partner has requested if some amount can be mobilized to meet the immediate needs of the affected people. Roads are blocked today due to floods on all main roads (mobility restricted). The Director of FORWARD (Ms. Shiamalababy) will be visiting these areas tomorrow (Nov 17th 2015). At that time the project partner will also share few photographs of the affected areas.

Requested Budget

Sl.No	Item	Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
1	Tharpai (Water Resistant Floor Mats)	₹ 640	250	₹ 1,60,000
2	Sweaters for the students	₹ 270	350	₹ 94,500
3	Blankets/ Bedsheets	₹ 230	350	₹ 80,500
4	Biscuit packets	₹ 12	500	₹ 6,000
5	Rice	₹ 38 / kg	1000 kgs	₹ 38,000
6	Bread	₹ 15	300 packets	₹ 4,500
	TOTAL			₹ 3,83,500



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Meeting Minutes:

The attendees met the evening of 16th November 2015 to discuss the submitted proposal and decide on future action on the submitted proposal. The meeting started with a general discussion about the current situation of the rains and flooding in Chennai and outskirts and volunteers shared personal stories from friends and relatives from back in India about the recent downpour and its after effects. Following this the attendees reviewed the budget and debated about the requested line items and tried figuring out how the requested items would be the best possible resource contribution to support relief and rehabilitation efforts in the area. Since the attendees could not get much clarity about the requested items, it was decided to have an impromptu conference call with Ms.Shiamalababy to get better understanding of the requirements on ground zero and also the current situation.

Some of the main questions raised prior to the conference call were:

- Why are the Tarpaulins requested? How will they be used to help the relief efforts?
- Why was readymade food like biscuits and bread chosen over cooked food or more nutritious food like milk?
- How were the sweaters/ blankets/ bedsheets going to be purchased and distributed?

Conference Call Minutes:

The conference call started with Ms.Shiamalababy mentioning that her own apartment complex was affected overnight as the nearby Ramavaram river had broken its banks and there was an imminent risk of flooding in the area her house was located. She mentioned that the people in the locality were afraid that flash floods could breach the compound walls of the apartment complex and it was a challenging situation this morning for everyone in that locality.

She continued to mention updates from the various centers. She mentioned that all the areas in which the FORWARD centers are operating and have operated in the past have been greatly affected from the floods and rain. The biggest challenges have been that houses have been destroyed rendering several people homeless currently and many people having been evacuated to other areas for safety reasons. She mentioned that 5 houses were destroyed partially to completely in Vilangadu village which hosts one of the most successful FORWARD education centers. She mentioned that at this point according to reports received by her and her team Vilangadu is the only village that can be easily reached by road as many of the other villages and areas have been cut off due to overflowing rivers and lakes. She mentioned that Thandarai and Madampakkam Irular colonies were some of the worst hit regions and access to these areas is limited by road



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and mostly only accessible using two wheelers at this point of time. She mentioned that she had talked to locals from these areas about the floods over telephone.

She also mentioned that thankfully no loss of life has been reported in any of the areas that FORWARD works in. Regular life has however come to a standstill as people are finding it difficult to travel to work or get the bare necessities for food and shelter. She mentioned that the main requirements right now for the relief and rehabilitation is food, shelter and clothing for warmth in that order.

She mentioned that she had visited the Madampakkam Irular colony just last week before the heavy rains created havoc in the area and even then she was able to see the effects of the rain from the previous two weeks. She was actually getting ready to go to Vilangadu at that time to meet with the villagers and try to help them in the best way possible. She mentioned that a private donor – GRT Jewelers had promised 300 food packets, 50 tarpaulins and 50 bedsheets for the needy today. However they had wanted them to collect the same from Kanchipuram, which was challenging at this point with all the rain, traffic and road blocks. After further requests the GRT administration had offered 100 food packets this morning in Chennai and also 50 tarpaulins and 50 bedsheets. Ms. Shiamalababy was just starting to collect these relief material and then distribute them among the needy at Vilangadu today.

Answering the questions from the volunteers she said:

- The tarpaulins were recommended to be purchased to keep the water from entering into the houses or huts that had a mud floor. She mentioned that majority of the houses in these areas had mud floors and so the water seeped in through these porous floors making the houses or huts unlivable. She mentioned that the people were currently using jute gunny bags and they were good enough to keep the water out and make the floors dry enough and suitable for living. Hence the request for tarpaulin sheets that would keep the water out and help provide some warmth for sleeping and cooking in the houses with mud floors. As mentioned above they were going to receive 50 of these sheets from local donors today.
- She mentioned that food was high on the list of requirements because the unlivable conditions and lack of transport made it hard for people to get the food items or cook food in a dry place even if they got the items. Also it was hard to maintain any perishable food substances in this situation. Hence the suggestion to buy non-perishable food items like biscuits and bread so that the people could immediately get food and easy to transport and serve. Rice was on the list of items requested as this would help them survive for a little bit after they settled back in and are able to find the resources for cooking. She said that the government provided gas cooking stoves made it easier for a lot of these homes to cook even with the inclement weather and flooding.



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- When asked, Ms.Shiamalababy mentioned that if provided with the financial support she would definitely be able to purchase quickly the tarpaulin sheets, sweaters and bedsheets and also coordinate efforts to distribute them to the needy as soon as possible. Although some of the areas were still hard to access, she mentioned that the team could definitely work to find a way to distribute the food and items. She mentioned that she will respond with more information about how this can be done and also photographs of the affected areas after her visit to some of the affected areas today.
- She also mentioned that the students were affected by the sudden drop in temperatures and damp climate and so the sweaters/bedsheets/blankets will help the children and family members keep warm and avoid falling sick. She also mentioned that the children had already been given caps for their heads earlier this month from Asha funds to help with the colder climate.

Approval:

After the end of the goal and a review of the answers provided by Ms.Shiamalababy, a vote was taken whether to support the proposal for relief and rehabilitation.

No of Yes votes : 7

No of No votes : 0

No of Abstain votes : 0

So it was unanimously approved by the attendees to support the relief and rehabilitation efforts at FORWARD through a funding of ₹ 3,83,500