



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

Vikasana conference call minutes

Date: Oct 11, 2009

Attendees: Mr. V. Cleatas (Vikasana), Ajoy, Sharan, Dr. Sitharam and Sanketh (Asha UFlorida)

Updates from Mr. Cleatas:

Bridge school activities going on very well, 21 children (3 orphans, 5 single parents) in the Asha supported Bridge school this year, 16 children newly joined, parents meet with school authorities, funds received till Dec 2009, after 9 o' clock special classes, after 10 o' clock they go for normal school, children participate in cultural activities regularly, 1 children now studying 1st year BA, basic computer education for all children, all children getting nutrition support. The kids are also taught garden farming, herbal medicine cultivation etc.

- How long any child stays with Bridge School till they get into main stream school
1 year on average, some stay for 2 years

- Which classes they are studying in Bridge School
- Generally till 8th standard

Any children below 3 rd standard-No

-1 cook and 1 teacher stay in the bridge school itself. Everyday 1 teacher does tutoring and on Sunday there is a special teacher.

- How far from the organic farming is the school: 15 km. The farm is in Tarikere, but the Asha supported bridge school is in Bhadravati. Next year all students will be shifted close to the organic farm land

-Update on the land purchase for organic farm initiative.

Money for buying the land was received on Jan 16th 2009, cost of land 3 lakhs per acre, originally 2 acres was proposed, but the landlord is not ready to sale 2 acres, he wants to sale the whole 4 acre land, so more money was required, 1 lakh was collected from members, rest to be obtained from bank at 8% interest.

- Any space around the school that is currently in Bhadrabati?

- Playground is there, kids play indoor and outdoor games, cricket, carom board, etc.

Asha UFlorida expressed condolences on the loss of their senior accountant in their accident. There was question on who is their account now.

One trust member, Murugeshan is handling account at present



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-There was a Hindi teacher, is she still there?

- No. But its taught in school and some children also take additional classes for competitive exams.

-How is Santosh and Prem doing?

They are doing well. Prem joined Manjunatha Trust as an electrician. Santosh completed 10+2, he wants to join BSW/MSW, he is mobilizing funds from family, One of the teacher Asha who graduated from the bridge school itself got married and is settled in Bangalore, got data entry job.

- Please tell us about the plan for the land.

- It was a private land, they cultivated ragi and groundnut, there is a plan to put one borewell in the land, small shed for the children, sustainable agriculture activities, raagi, coconut, tree plantation, playing equipment also planned.

-Organic Farmers Association

The trust was instrumental in setting up 2 organic farmers association. Around 500 farmers are a part of the trust now. The certification takes 3 years and some of the farmers have already got the certification. They will now be able to sell the agricultural products at a higher rate. They distribute the products to places in Banglore, Shimoga, Chikmaglur and Tarikere.

-Updates on Organic shop

The shop is doing pretty well. Having a profit of 15k-18. The shop belongs to organic farmers association and all profits go to the association

-Seedbank

The trust has set up a 4th seedbank in Tarkikere. Around 1000 farmers use the seed banks and 500 of them are organic farmers.

-Funding for other agencies

The grant from KKS expired in Dec 2008. They only support the other bridge school kids, but sustaining employees has become difficult. They have a corpus fund of 10-15 lakhs, which gives them interest and that's how they are paying the employees' salaries. The KKS supported school has 75 children and there are 8 girls in the girls hostel. They have written another proposal to some European agencies, but it will take another year and a half to come through. The other funding agencies are Capart and Nabard.

Child labor problem



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Initially, need to counsel parents repeatedly. Talk with employers. People are scared to employ children. Seasonal child labor problem is on a rise due to beetlenut cultivation, opportunities in brick kilns and coffee bean cultivation. Mr. Cleatas is the chairman of child protection agency in Chikmaglur. Cases of child abuse, juvenile crimes have been decreasing over the years. Proposal for child-helpline in Shimoga has been put and is pending for quiet sometime with the government.