

Siddamma Fellowship Renewal

June 2005

SECTION I: Personal Contact Information

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Nominator: Shanmuga (2002)

Have you applied to Asha Fellowship Program before? No. If yes, when? _____

SECTION II: Summary of Work

Name of Project (if any): NA

Location: Districts : Thiruvallur, Cuddalore, Vellore, Virulupuram

State Tamil Nadu

Which communities will your work serve?

My work has been primarily focused on the Irula communities. However, I will also be working with other economically backward communities who are living in the Thiruvallur district. The locations and associated activities are:

1) Thiruvallur: Formed Sarpam and the unorganized workers union. Different activities of the Sarpam include building local leadership, educating people of their basic rights, understanding and utilizing schemes available from the government. Sarpam is registered under trade union act and also working on getting it registered as a cooperative society. Over time Sarpam has come to represent the Irulas to the government and many of its members are now included in government committees. More recently the Sarpam has also been involved with the rescue and rehabilitation of bonded laborers.

After the Tsunami struck we have been organizing communities to help and support each other in the Pulligat area.

We have also been working on education and started motivational centers. These centers use alternate education to get the children to a point where they can integrate into the government schools. The centers run for around 3 yrs and then do a year of follow up work with the government schools.

- 1) Children of parents working in rice mills in Thiruvallur city (95-97)
- 2) Asha school, Pulligat 3 schools Rajaratna Nagar, Kullitemadu, Kallukadumedu (00-03) full time school and enrolled them into government schools and one yr follow up work.
- 3) Mullainagar, Punneri Taluk (00-03) and 1 yr follow up

- 4) Illevanmedu, Punneri Taluk (00-03)
- 5) Pundelimedu, Gumdipundi (01-04) one yr
- 6) Sanjiagaram, Uttakottai taluk (00-03) one yr follow up
- 7) Kodankuram, Uttakottai taluk
- 8) Janganapallai, Uttakottai taluk

2) Vellore: Sarpam related activities, and schools supported by Asha.

- 1) Panakatari – This is a thick forest area. There is actually a government school, but there are no teachers. We are working on activating this school.
- 2) We are also working with brick kiln bonded laborers

3) Cuddalore: Tsunami work for the Irula communities here. We started working in 6 affected areas and have also reached out to 20 other irula villages. In the 6 villages set up schools for 600 children through Save The Children organization. Government school not very close and the girl children either take care of chores or younger siblings and not going to school. Some parents are desperate and tie a rope to their children and ask them to dive into water and catch crab and prawn. There is no infrastructure so they have to catch by hand. It is easier for parents to put them into water since they can pull them out. This is very hazardous work and we are trying to build infrastructure and work with parents to avoid doing this.

4) Virulupuram Interacting with people and made detailed survey of the villages.

Resource center would like to create it in the border of Tiruvallur and Vellore. Local community consists of artisans, weavers, potters, carpenters and small farmers and some tribals. Most of the local communities are dalit communities. There are also 800 people rescued from bonded labor from Red Hills rice mills and have been provided some land by the government close to this area (6 km-10km). Government has provided a package for 200 people (each person is provided 3 cents i.e. 1 acre for 30 people in all around 5 acres of land). This is dwelling land.

The resource center would present an opportunity to the community to attempt various techniques old and new that would be beneficial for income generation and a decent livelihood.

Location : Economically disadvantaged at Thiruvallur Dist.

Socio-economic background : Economically backward. They are however skilled in fishing, beekeeping, traditional farming. They have also been working as agricultural laborers and coolie workers in rice mills.

Type of work (select three maximum):

- Curriculum development and teaching methods
- Health & Nutrition
- Alternate Eco. Development

SECTION II: Education and Experience

Name Organization Address/Phone/Email

1979-80 Teacher Training Government Teacher Training Institute Chitradurga

1980-83 B.A. Sociology Bharath Education Society Bangalore

1981-82 **Search Training Centre** - Training for personality development and for social work. During this period I taught street children in Bangalore. I was associated with the Center during the period

Oxfam fellowship for one yr and go to doctor for surgery in Chennai – 2 yrs

1983 – Abacas – Ammukta Mahapatra, educational resource center in Chennai.

1985 got into activism when working with poor conditions of women in slum areas.

Early 1990 **CRY** - I was teaching the Irula children from 1990 onwards and motivating the tribes for their empowerment and teaching the children using non-formal methods of education.

Late 1990s **Bharathi Trust**- I founded the Bharathi Trust in 1990 and have been working as Managing Trustee with the Irula tribes since then. I liked a few ideas that Bharathiyar had brought forward that of equality of everyone in the society and that women should be literate and empowered. I took the feminine name Bharathi in honor of these ideas. Later 1990s started training teachers. I opened a school for rice mill children .

1995 Was working through CRY fellowship.

SECTION IV: Organizational Affiliations & Memberships

Organization	Your Role	Dates	
1	CRY	Worked as a teacher	1990
2	RIOU	Started training teachers. I opened a school for rice mill children.	1996
3	HIVOS	As Managing Trustee of Bharathi Trust I have in association with HIVOS been working for the empowerment of Irulas and education of the disadvantaged	1997
4	Asha	As Managing Trustee of Bharathi Trust I have provided 8 motivational centers for Irula children	1999

SECTION V: References

Geetha Ramakrishnan

National Construction Workers' Union

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SECTION V: Proposal

Please answer the following questions in the space provided

Name of Project (if any): (To be decided)

Mission Statement:

To create a society where a respectable life and livelihood is possible for all. To develop a system of education that is truly beneficial towards this end.

Community based resource centre to educate economically disadvantaged, provide skills to sustain, revive indigenous medicine, agriculture, art and culture, life style and traditional skills. Design syllabus for social change. Involve resource persons from rural and urban sectors resulting in a model school

Clearly describe why you will succeed:

All initiatives undertaken are through the involvement and ownership of the community. This is the only method of achieving success.

As far as the resource center is concerned we will succeed is because we have been working with the Irula community in the area for the past twelve years. During this period, we have interacted with various communities and experienced first hand the life of the villager. The community will be involved with the working of the resource centre. They will find employment as artisans, develop their skills and the community shall take the responsibility of ensuring the quality of education in government schools. They will also help in the construction and eventually ownership of the resource centre.

Describe any innovative ideas & approach:

For the resource center the land that will be bought shall be an agricultural land whereby the food grains will be organically grown. The centre shall also utilize renewable sources of energy such as windmills, biogas plants and employ techniques such as rainwater harvesting. The structure put up for the centre shall be eco-friendly i.e. using hollow bricks, Mangalore tiles, etc. The Centre shall also grow herbal plants on the land. A library of traditional skills shall be built up that can be accessed by all interested in the cultural diasporas of the

area.

Community based resource centre to educate economically disadvantaged, provide skills to sustain, revive indigenous medicine, agriculture, art and culture, life style and traditional skills.

Design syllabus for social change. Involve resource persons from rural and urban sectors resulting in a model school.

Clearly describe the need for the project or your work:

Even though Bharathi Trust has enrolled many children into the government schools, there is a great need to improve the quality of teaching methodology and the relevance of syllabus. The resource centre will reinforce and motivate the government teachers and students by providing facilities in the form of library, laboratory and learning materials.

The Irulas were dwellers in the forests. For generations they have been able to sustain themselves utilizing the forests as a natural capital rather than a recurring income and taking care not to overuse and deplete their resource. However, there is a growing threat among the people to in the villages of losing this philosophy and traditional culture and use technologies and methods that hurt the environment, for example the use of non-biodegradable materials such as plastics to replaced usage of clay cups, trays. While the lack of understanding and the resulting callousness is understandable and affordable in the cities this is not so in the villages where the people need to live with and depend directly on nature.

The traditional dance, culture and music had helped generations in expressing themselves, develop confidence and also provide livelihood. These techniques were also used to bring up questions of relevance to the society. This culture is being replaced by the film culture, which the people can neither truly app to nor aspire to be a part of. The resource will provide an opportunity to rediscover the values of the villages and wean the people from the present trends.

Clearly describe the proposed solution:

The resource centre by providing facilities and demonstration programs shall attempt to rediscover the old traditional skills and bring about a socio-economic change in the society.

It will also be used to understand how relevant techniques can be incorporated in the traditional techniques and understand where government provided training and schemes can be useful for the people.

Clearly describe the expected impact of the project or your work :

The villages surrounding the resource centre will be exposed to the revived techniques and learn to implement them in their day-to-day lives. The aim is to find a balance between the modern amenities available to them with the

traditional skills and local resources so that there is a harmonious integration between the modern and the traditional.

List any organizations, including universities, international agencies, NGOs, etc., involved in the work:

We have aligned with many people's movements to give strength to people based initiatives in the past.

As far as the resource center is concerned we are working with some people from NAI (National Agricultural Institute) as resource people. Financially we have received some help from students in Europe. So far, we have not approached any organization with this project. We look forward to initial approval from Asha.

How will the impact of the work be measured (data collection, interviews, etc.):

The resource centre will maintain records of the people who have visited and benefited from the Centre. Periodic visits to the government schools and neighboring villages to measure the impact of our work.

What are the intermediate milestones:

- 1) To identify and document the existing activities and skill of the villagers around the proposed centre.
- 2) To construct a small structure on the land to serve as an office.
- 3) Identifying resource people who can provide their expertise in various skills.
- 4) To start vocational school (model school) for children
- 5) To train the children in various skills such as pottery, tailoring, etc.

What learnings from this work can be applied elsewhere & where :

The experience gained from this resource centre can be applied in the nearby villages and later extended to the areas that Bharathi Trust is working with. It can then be extended to the Taluks, District, State and lastly the entire country.

List the current financial resources, including any other grants or fellowships, available for the project/work.

We have not received any fellowship or grant for the proposed resource centre. After approval from Asha and receipt of initial grant, we propose to approach, if necessary, various funding agencies, including State/National government for grants.

What activities will be undertaken for the project:

Activities such as pottery, weaving, carpentry, dairy farming, organic farming, beekeeping, paper making, leather work, screen printing, embroidery, tailoring, dance, music, etc. Besides, the above activities, the children shall be taught the basics in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Y I am 18 years of age or older

Y I am prepared to commit a minimum of 32 hours per week to the proposed work

Y I am prepared to commit to a minimum of 2 years to the proposed project starting May, 2002

Y I am not proposing an academic research project

Y I am not a prior recipient of Asha for Education Fellowship Program funding

Y The proposed project/work is not affiliated with any religious or political organizations

Y The proposed project/work is an independent and autonomous project

Y The idea proposed is my original idea

I have attached a resume and other pertinent information to this application

Y I certify that I have answered all questions truthfully. I understand that if I have misrepresented myself

or my proposed work, Asha for Education may disqualify my eligibility.

Signature:

Name: E. Siddamma

Date:

What level of funding are you requesting from Asha for Education (stipend, project funds, etc.). The

fellowship shall be US \$ 225 per month and US \$400 for one year towards travel, phone and other expenses.

4 Jun 05

Notes

The fellowship is to be provided for Siddamma as an individual to be involved in the many initiatives for the Irula and other economically backward communities and not only for a specific activity of the resource center. – Sanjeev