# Asha for Education Chicago Chapter’s Work-an-hour WAH Proposal

# For Aralu-Belaku

The Chicago chapter presents the Work-An-Hour (WAH) proposal on behalf of its project partner, Aralu-Belaku as follows:

***INTRODUCTION***

Asha Chicago supports the operational expenses of the Belaku home, and affiliated with Aralu. Belaku is a residential center for orphans and street kids in villages outside Bidar, Karnataka. The project is envisaged to bring overall development in the target group of children through rehabilitation, education, skill development including learning, training and production for self-sustenance - residential home for orphans and street kids

***PROJECT DETAILSs***

ARALU, is a secular, non-profit, Non-political non-governmental voluntary welfare organization registered under Karnataka Societies Registration Act of 1960 and also registered under 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 develop 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.

ARALU is the dream child of K.T.Meril. Meril hails from Dalit Christian background. Even as a child Meril was exposed to the wide gaps in the socio-economic status of people around him, which set him thinking about the social structure. His yearning to learn and obtain education saw him work as a child laborer in hotels. During his college days he would go to the adjacent big city Hyderabad to earn in his summer holidays. He paid for his younger brothers’ education. Obtaining TCH and postgraduate degree, he realized the significance of education in shaping the personality of a person. First a child laborer himself, then an apprentice in social work, he slowly graduated to a full time social worker. Before starting an organization he had acquired knowledge about issues, developed sensitivity to respond to social injustice around him and most importantly a craving for developing deprived communities of Bidar district. He developed a team of youths, with whom he worked with people, forming SHGs, joining the government in watershed programme etc. Equipping himself well with trainings in several subjects he was ready to give a formal body to his thoughts, after nurturing them for about a decade. Thus ARALU was born in 1993. Initially the organization had teething problems in that it did not attract funds for its programmes. This did not discourage Meril and his team of youths from involving themselves in developmental work. Since then, the organization has run or is running programmes in education, women and youth empowerment, small farmers, Dalit women and discrimination issue, child rights etc.

**Project Partner(s):** Meril K.T

**Project Steward**: Gaurav Kaul

**Other Contacts:** Tata Venkata

**Project Address:** C/o K.T. Meril, Jerusalem Colony, behind Jerusalem Colony, Bidar,
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**Project Type:** Child Home

**Primary Focus:** orphans

**Secondary Focus:** children of dalits/tribals

**Area:** Rural

***Project Purpose / Goals***

The following are the objectives of the organization:

* To assist rural and urban communities to become socially aware and self-reliant.
* To set up study groups to study social, environmental and economic problems.
* To establish formal and non-formal educational facilities to service the com. Needs.
* To provide leadership training to youth and children; to motivate them to work for the benefit of the community.
* To conduct adult education classes in the villages.
* To encourage individuals, groups to start income generation activities and be self-reliant.
* To undertake soil and water conservation activities.
* To undertake afforestation, irrigation and water supply schemes.

***Project Description***

Currently, Asha supports 24 children who live in the residential home. The ratio of girls to boys is approximately 1:1. The age of the children is in the range of 7 - 14. The funding from Asha Chicago for the Belaku Center supports 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 labourers 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 in the absence of 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 labor.

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.

***Budget***