

Mukti Visit by Padmanava Sen (Steward)

February 2023

Context:

There are monthly calls between Mukti founder Sankar Halder and half yearly call between MSS lead Srijita Mukherji (Mukti). However, in the Feb 2023 India visit, multiple visits to Mukti office in Kolkata has been planned. Visit to Sundarbans would not be possible due overnight stay constraints (as the steward has at-risk family members at home, so only day visit possible with masks)

Visit on 3rd February 2023

I reached Mukti office at 9-00 am (near Kavi Nazrul metro station) and discussed with Sankar Halder (President) and Satyajit Ray (Secretary) different aspects of Mukti, Asha for Education and future plans. Also, during this visit, I have met other Mukti members spread across 3 different locations in that area as well as Mukti Fresh (organic farming community business spin off from Mukti) office. The aspects discussed are summarized below

- The need of people driven business model – The cost minimization model is not working in a country like India with millions joining workforce. Sankar presented his idea of product and services driven model without forgetting the basics (food, shelter, education, health). He gave examples where the cost minimization model to generate profit failed. How it is not right that the health provider hospitals made record profits during a health disaster situations like covid-19 pandemic whereas that is when the profit should have been minimized. On that context, the community driven business models and Mukti's work on that context have been discussed.
- Sankar and I have discussed about the role of Asha for Education in Mukti and also, we discussed about the book chapter written in collaboration ' Sustainable societal development through holistic education programs' https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-19-2053-0_7 (we also recorded this session)
- Later Sankar and I discussed about Mukti and used this opportunity to introduce this program for AfE volunteers (we recorded this session)
- Satyajit and I discussed about how Mukti helped AfE disaster relief efforts and how AfE helped Mukti over last 16 years of collaboration (we also recorded this session)
- Few points mentioned by me for future efforts
 - Mukti as a knowledge base for other AfE partners in WB, who are not able to scale
 - Mukti community business efforts to help other parts of WB beyond Sundarbans to create job opportunities for youth
 - Continue this collaboration and build new models e.g through education and employment programs



Myself (Padmanava) in Mukti Fresh Office

Visit on 17th February 2023

The primary goal of this visit to Mukti office is to discuss the future of MIT and chalk out the employment exchange/training effort in an organized and sustainable fashion.

Meeting attendees : Padmanava, Debabrata Halder, Sankar Halder, Sanjib Ray

What are discussed:

- MIT and MEE budgets are separated
 - MIT is around 6 Lakh, leaving at least 8 Lakh for MEE if same level of support is given
- The Jobs available in the market for which training is needed
 - Considered jobs are only for 12 passouts and graduates with general stream (which is the most % of students)
 - An area like Baruipur or Sonarpar are targeted which is close to Kolkata and hubs of Students from Sundarbans
- The employability and the gap to the requirements
 - A lot of stress is given to the age group 20 -28 (Sankar mentioned 28-38 age group are most vulnerable as they could not settle in life without jobs and also the first few years of enthusiasm dies away after graduation)
- The structure of training and models for such an exchange (Mukti Employment Exchange)
 - Yearly 600 youth are targeted
 - 3 main employees and 3 support employees will be needed
 - The guaranteed job scheme should become sustainable after 3 years.
- Next steps
 - Mukti to start raising the one term costs and recruit the main coordinator first
 - Padmanava to work with Ankita to formalize the proposal