

**Asha for Education  
Fellowship Nomination Form**

<b>SECTION I: Nominator Information</b>
Name: Ravi Venkatraman
Organization (if any): Asha for Education
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Email: <a href="mailto:ravi5889@gmail.com">ravi5889@gmail.com</a>
Affiliation with Asha: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asha Member (Chapter U.Florida)</li> </ul>

<b>SECTION II: Nominee Information</b>
Name: Senthilkumar Gopalan
Organization (if any): Payir Trust
Address: 3/256, Payir Trust, Thenur village, Perambalur District – 621 114, Tamil Nadu
Phone: +91 9047 255 25
Email: <a href="mailto:senthil@payir.org">senthil@payir.org</a>
Affiliation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member/Employee of Asha funded NGO: Payir Trust</li> </ul>

<b>SECTION III: Field of Work</b>			
Name of Project (if any): Payir			
Location: Thenur Village/City/District, State: Thenur village, Perambalur District, Tamil Nadu			
Which communities will Nominee's work serve? Socially and economically backward rural communities, particularly women and children			
Type of work (select three maximum):			
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">Teaching Methods</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">Health and Nutrition</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">Income Generation</td> </tr> </table>	Teaching Methods	Health and Nutrition	Income Generation
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<b>SECTION IV: Recommendation</b>
My relationship with Nominee I have been a Steward for the Payir Project from Asha-U.Florida for the since 2013-14.
How long have you known Nominee? I have known Mr. Senthilkumar Gopalan for more than two years (since August 2013) as a volunteer, and subsequently as the project steward. I have had many conversations with him about the ongoing developments at Payir, future goals, and challenges. I have had the chance to

discuss in detail about his overall vision for Payir and Indian villages, and his learnings from the past.

(Give an overview of the context and nature of your interactions in the past with the nominee)

Why should Asha support this Nominee as a Fellow?(Include your perspective on the strengths of the applicant, key/unique aspects of the work being proposed, how Asha can create a mutually beneficial relationship with the fellow)

#### About Senthikumar Gopalan

Mr. Senthikumar Gopalan has had a long standing vision of an Indian village and the opportunities for growth – social and economic. Since his days in middle school, he envisioned a change in the villages which would transform the villages into self-sufficient and prosperous ones. After an illustrative technical career for ten years and accumulating sufficient funds, he returned to Thenur, where conditions were quite deplorable. After setting up Payir Trust at Thenur and working relentlessly for more than a decade, Senthikumar was able to transform the face of the village into prosperous town.

#### Vision

The long term vision for Senthikumar is to create an ideal model for a self-reliant village, which can be used to develop villages across the country. Thenur is a diverse village consisting of people representing multiple religions and castes. Hence, this serves as a good test bed to replicate programs across India. Multiple initiatives have been undertaken keeping this larger vision in mind.

#### Education

One of the key areas of focus to develop any society is children's education. A primary school has been setup at Thenur, which enrolls children from the surrounding areas, who might otherwise have obtained access to poor or no education at all. Recognizing the importance of good quality teachers in the education process, Senthikumar encourages teachers to attend multiple training workshops across the state. Additionally, a professional trainer visits the village regularly to monitor and improve teaching quality. The teachers are trained with not only better teaching techniques such as ABL and other non-formal techniques, but also in better communication skills, providing a friendly environment to develop the overall potential of children. It is encouraging to note that teachers have taken their own initiatives to formulate alternative teaching techniques which suit the circumstances. Overall progress of children is ensured by providing access to cultural and physical training activities. Senthikumar and his wife, Preethi, are very dedicated towards providing adequate nutrition to the children. They have keenly participated in mid-day meal programs, with the understanding that it is one of the most important aspects in the early years of development. Insufficient nutrition has been a major concern throughout the schools of India, and have resulted in several national schemes. Recognizing the efforts of Payir, the Government of Tamil Nadu has chosen Payir to conduct a pilot nutrition program in 20 schools in the region. The program has been conducted thoroughly with detailed documentation of all metrics and processes. A comprehensive scientific approach has been identified to measure the outcomes of the program, which will conclude in mid-2016. The results of this pilot program will be deeply studied for executing programs by the Government on a larger scale.

#### Other activities

Keeping in mind the larger vision of betterment of the village, Senthikumar has invested considerable time and effort into avenues other than education as well. One of the major problems plaguing the village was widespread alcoholism. He sought to address the same by convincing villagers to adopt good employment opportunities, with a focus on agriculture. There has been an emphasis on sustainable agricultural methods and organic practices in Thenur and surrounding villages. Senthikumar has been investigated traditional and modern practices of

organic farming, while ensuring food security. Senthilkumar and his wife, Preethi – a homeopathic doctor, have also been strong proponents of good health around the village. They have established primary health centers with local assistance, which cater to large needs of the village. Senthilkumar has also promoted self-help groups and employment of rural women by providing opportunities for vocational training. After attending multiple training sessions in tailoring and crafts, women have started their own activities that generate revenue. However, it is the self-confidence that has been instilled into these women that is of larger significance, as they inspire others to do the same now.

#### Relationship with Asha

Asha for Education's vision to bring about socio-economic change is being realized by Senthilkumar and Payir trust through education, agricultural, health, women empowerment and other such initiatives. Having partnered with Asha for more than five years through Payir, we have already developed a close relationship with Senthilkumar. Now, as he faces difficult times financially in carrying forward his endeavors, it would be appropriate for Asha for Education to support him with a fellowship award. His vision, methods and dedication are an inspiration to many. The results achieved and challenges overcome by Senthilkumar will be a source of learning for others across India and for volunteers of Asha for Education.

Additional Comments:

Signature: Ravi Venkatraman  
Date: November 20, 2015