

Conference Call Minutes

Date: Monday August 24th, 2009 (Austin) / Tuesday August 25th, 2009 (India)

Attendees: Vallabh Pandey (Overall coordinator and monitor for all Asha projects in north India)
Vijaybhai (Project coordinator, Asha Samajik Vidyalaya, Reoti)
Rahul Rao, Ganesh Krishnamoorthy (Project stewards, Asha Austin)

1. Update on teachers' salaries

- Salaries have not been increased to maintain equality across all ASV centers in U.P.
- Other centers have lower salaries for a similar education system and hours, and hence to avoid impression of bias, salaries proposed to be flat this year.
- Teachers have not expressed any discontent towards that.
- Providing a yearly bonus is possibility. This has not been considered earlier and needs to be thought about in greater detail
- Another possibility is to arrange for an outing for the teachers (like a vacation) or some non-monetary benefit

2. Continuing education of students who graduate from/leave the ASV school

- Students attend the nearby government school after 5th grade
- All kids in the ASV school come from a basti (hamlet) within an approximately 1 km range
- Most of the teachers also stay in the same community as the kids and hence it is easy to check with them on the on the quality of education and progress
- Last year there were 4 kids who were in class 7 at the ASV school. This year they will move to class 8 in the government school. The students who were in class 5 will go to class 6 in the govt. school
- The quality of education in the government school used to be unsatisfactory but with societal pressure on the school and its staff, the quality is improving, and some kids have moved there
- This has been achieved with emphasis on RTI (Right To Information) and with greater involvement of the community in the school
- The main idea is to move the students in the ASV school into mainstream education, rather than run an alternative education system
- The current teachers (led by Omprakash) touch base with kids who transfer to other schools on a regular basis to track their progress

3. Discussion on long term objectives of the ASV school

- One of the first batches of students graduated from 7th standard the school last year
- Usually the trend in the village has been that the students usually study till the 12th standard

- After that, these kids often go to bigger cities like Bombay for labor oriented jobs, working in diaries, or driving jobs
- The societal norms in the village are such that, once the boys are around 14-15 years of age, they are expected to start earning and support their families
- The ASV folks have been trying to convince the parents to send these kids (14-15 yrs) to the government –run ITI (technical training institutes) once they finish basic schooling
- The idea is to provide them with exposure and interest in other kind of opportunities beyond those that have been traditionally available to them
- The aim is to provide increased confidence for the kids themselves, with exposure to different handy kind of jobs (repairing hand-pumps, diesel-engine repairing, mobile phones, etc.) as opposed to just manual labor work.
- The resulting job opportunities are many since all houses have hand pumps and mobiles are almost omnipresent.
- There are many government-run polytechnic institutes and ITIs
- There is 50% reservations for backward classes
- The closes ones are located in Ballia, roughly 20kms from Reoti
- The transportation costs are roughly Rs. 60 per month in addition to monthly fees
- One of the biggest achievements of the school according to Vallabh, has been to get the girls in the community educated to some extent.
- Girls who previously had never read, now are studying up to 7th or 8th stds which provides them with greater independence

4. Miscellaneous

- List of students for this year
- 21 kids of the 148 in the list will not be returning
- 15 kids have transferred to other schools, the remaining 6 do not go to school at all at present and do not want to return to the ASV school either. The teachers are still trying to talk to their families and convincing them to return.
- The teacher training program has been delayed till September,
- Vallabh will be visiting Reoti on August 28th
- Vijaybhai has taken photos of all the kids in the school (around 110), the logistics of sending them to Asha Austin has to be tackled.