

Trinita conference call: Saturday, November 12, 2011 at 9:30 pm EDT.

Attendees: Shivashankar Halan, Kriti Khurana, Vaishnavi Krishnan, Lokendra Bengani, Akshay Anugu, Shampa Roy (Trinita) and Ajoy K. Saha

Q1. Please give us a brief background of Trinita?

This organization was founded by a group of volunteer doctors and social activists in 1997. Trinita is presently working in the districts of Cooch Behar, 24 Parganas South and Hooghly and maintains over 20 small centers in diverse areas of Kolkata. It started functioning in 1997 by providing health checkups to rag picking children at the railway stations of Sealdah and Howrah in Kolkata. After this Trinita ventured into providing care to pregnant poor women and also got involved into the national child labor program. In 2004 the adolescent girl program was initiated through which Trinita started imparting health and sex education to underprivileged slum girls. Their parents usually try to get their daughters married at 14 years or below. We intervened to raise awareness about the problems associated with child marriages. This worked and we were successful in raising awareness about the pitfalls of child marriages to some extent. We also regularly warn people that child marriage is illegal and that we will not hesitate to report to the police if we find people disobeying the law.

Q2. Can you please provide us more details about the attitude of the Government toward child labor?

The Government has made it clear that it is not possible for them to stop child labor completely. It is difficult to track child labor in unorganized sector and take legal action. The organized sector has to pay a fine of Rs. 5,000 if they are found to employ underage children. So there is some control and pressure on the organized sector from the Government on this issue.

Q3. Can you please tell us about your work with Asha for Education?

In 2007 we started imparting non-formal education in communities for students in classes V-VIII with support from Asha for Education. More students tend to drop out from schools as they reach the VI/VII standard. There are various reasons for the drop out. Because of weaker academic background many parents discourage their children from continuing their studies and instead force them to work and earn money to support the family. Some students find the course work tough and get intimidated by the pressure. For these children we started after school coaching centers where we help these children with their studies to minimize drop out from schools. Currently we have 2 high school (standards V-XII) programs where we impart coaching to ~100 school students, about 50 in each school. We

also have 5 non-formal training centers for community children. Here we train children who have already dropped out from schools and cannot continue their studies in regular schools because they are overage for their respective classes. There are 125 girl children in these community center schools. So, in total we are training about 225 girl children with the support we receive from Asha. 3 days every week we impart coaching to the high school students. In the community centers we have classes during all the 5 weekdays.

Q4. In the budget you have addressed the Trinita teachers as “Animators”. Can you please explain the reason behind such a name?

We call the Trinita teachers “Animators” because in addition to teaching the students they go around in the community and help the member with different kinds of work. For example the community members would often come to us and ask our help with paperwork related to bank activities.

Q5. What difficulties do you face running these centers?

With rising cost of everyday items like food, stationery and books it is getting very difficult for us to manage these centers. The girls in our schools do not get enough food. The Government is supposed to provide food to the children in the schools through the mid-day meal scheme. But the quality of the food is very bad and also the service is irregular. Students do not get enough nourishment from the mid-day meals served by the Government schools. Also, these students do not get enough food at their homes because most of the families where they come from are under poverty. These students come from families with monthly income below 3,000 per month. We try to provide some snacks to these students. They get food only 2 days during the 5 day workweek in the community centers. The amount of Rs. 4 per girl per snack that we provide is not enough. With rising food prices it is getting increasingly difficult to provide enough food to each student and providing food is very important for them to continue with the studies. Although food is provided to the students in the community centers students at the evening after school coaching centers do not get any food. Sometimes, these students also ask for food but our hands are tied. Our resources do not permit us to provide food to these students.

Besides food we face problems with lack of resources for books and stationery. The Government is supposed to provide everything including books and stationery to those studying in Government schools because school education till standard VIII is free. However, all of this is in paper. In reality most students have to pay for all the required books and stationery. Because the economic background is weak their parents cannot provide all the resources necessary for education. These students from the community come to us for help because they know that we provide educational help to students in the community. However, we have limited resources and it is not possible for us to provide support to all the needy students. Sometimes their parents come to us requesting help with

purchasing books. In many cases it is hard to turn them away and I help them from my personal funds. But I am not very rich and I cannot do this for everybody.

The most important requirement for us is to support the education of Trinita girls who have passed the 10th standard education and who want to go for higher studies. Many of these girls are dedicated and work day and night to support their education. They work as domestic help, in factories during the day time when they are not in school and also at night to support their family while getting their education. For advanced studies they need help from private tutors. Their academic background is weak and they cannot continue their studies without external support. For students studying in the +2 level the required amount to support private tuition is about Rs. 1,500 per month. Math and English are the toughest subjects which they cannot manage by themselves. For students studying undergraduate courses they need help with at least two subjects with tuition amount varying from Rs. 700 to Rs. 1000 per month per subject. For example students in B.Com need help with business math and accountancy.

Q6. At Asha-UFlorida we are constantly debating on whether to use our funds for the education of smaller kids or use some of the amount to support adult students. Why do you think supporting adult education is important?

Supporting adult students is important because it not only improves the motivation of smaller kids but it does a world of good to the morale of these adult students. Many of these adult student who go for higher education and highly motivated and determined. Despite their weak academic background they are fighting all odds to support their own education. They work during the day to support their family and their own education and do odd jobs when they are not in schools to earn money. They work as domestic help, as factory workers and also provide tuition to younger students. Their life is hard and it will be of immense help if Asha-UFlorida comes forward and supports some of these girls. Asha-Atlanta is currently supporting 5 of these students.

Q7. Do you think that all of the work that you have been doing for so many years is providing any positive results?

Yes, the awareness among the community members has risen considerably and they understand the importance of education. Parents encourage their children to continue their education if support is available. Many of the parents and their children are particularly enthusiastic about courses on spoken English and computer education.

Note: Trinita was asking for additional funds for food and stationery expenses. This is because of the sharp rise in food/stationery prices since they have submitted their proposal in April this year. So, I asked Shampadi to send a revised budget which will

accommodate the increase in cost of food/supplies and she has sent me the new budget today. Here are the old and new budgets:

Old budget submitted on April 3, 2011

Items	Amount	One time/ Annual
-5 Animators Honorarium girls centre	@Rs1500X5X12M	90,000 .00
-Private Teacher for school students Eng -2 @RS1800,Maths-2@Rs2000,History , geo, Bengali-2@Rs1500	3600X4000x3000x12month	127,200.00
-Educational material for 125 girls	Rs@100x125girls	12,500.00
-Contingency(stationery, traveling, center maintenance)	2000x12m	24000.00
-Tiffin @Rs4X8daysX125GirlsX12Month	125xRs4x8DaysX12month	48,000.00
2Schools Maintenance	@Rs700 x 12MonthX2	16,800.00
Total Cost		3,18,500.00

New revised budget for food and supplies, submitted Nov 14, 2011

TRINITA SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL AND HEALTH RESEARCH

Revised budget on the following Items which is recently affected for booming cost of those items for the period 15th November 2011 to 31st March2012

LAST PROPOSED FOR 225 GIRLS	AMOUNT	REVISED REQUEST FOR 225 GIRLS/students	AMOUNT	TOTAL 36 days
TIFFIN	Rs.4/- per girls	225 girls/students	Rs.7/- per student	56700.00
A LUM sum amount for Educational materials for new session from January'2012 for 225 students				25000.00
				81700.00

Total Budget was for the year	Rs.3,18,500.00	Request fund from U Florida chapter Total INR
Received Amount from Atlanta chapter (1 st installment)	Rs. 1,57,327.00	
Fund still to receive	Rs. 161,173.00 + the additional revised amount Rs.81,700.00	INR 242,873.00

The total budget for all the 225 girls for 2011-2012 was \$6,500. According to the revised budget the total amount now stands at \$8,358 taking \$1=Rs. 50.

Asha Atlanta paid the first installment of \$3,500 out of the total \$6,500. So, according to the old budget we are supposed to pay \$3,000. However, in the new budget they are asking \$4,858 as second installment. I think we have the capacity to pay \$4,000 or \$4,500 as second installment. What do you guys say?

Feel free to send your comments/suggestions/modification for any of the things mentioned above.