

Minutes of Asha Austin meeting of June 29, regarding Nammalvar's fellowship, and follow-up Q&A in the Asha-Fellows weekly conference call.

(<http://data.ashanet.org/datastore/data/Focusgroups/Fellowships/Proposals/Pending/Nam malvar/>)

[NOTE: Questions from the meeting are in RED and answers to them are in BLUE]

- The fellowship is currently being discussed in the fellowship-group
- Asha-Fellow: a grass-roots worker whose personal expenses are taken care of by the chapter. Asha Fellows group does not take financial decisions
- Austin currently supports two Fellowships – Siddamma and Nandlal
- Nammalvar is an organic scientist. He has been working in the area of natural farming for the last 45 years
- He was working with government until the Green Revolution came along (and pesticide and chemical use) and since then he has been working with NGO's and other organizations
- He primarily works in Tamil Nadu and in some areas of Karanataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh
- He has managed to get 100,000 acres of rice to be grown with natural farming methods
- He was part of the team which visited Germany to fight the neem extract patents
- He worked on desalinating land after the tsunami
- Organic farming, mixed farming is useful because of the low input costs
- He is working in areas of low rainfall now
- He has currently got good support from the TN government
- Last week there was a conference call with Nammalvar as part of the fellows group
- A farmer can restore the soil fertility for organic farming within three months by using a twenty point method
- He will be closely working with the resource center
- As part of the fellowship the support is needed for - his personal expenses and also for publishing booklets about organic farming. His assistant Murali will help in translating the booklets to English
- Since Nammalvar is 71, there may be many more medical expenses. We need a method to support increased medical expenses
 - May not be necessary - not the kind of guy who will go to a hospital. Will be accounted through the personal expenses part of the budget – he is in really good health, does yoga, has many potions of his own concoction including panchagavya.
- Q: Why do we need to discuss this in the fellowship group? A: Asha-wide this has become the process of supporting new fellowships
- Q: What is the current method of support? A: It is ad-hoc right now. He is supported by the different groups he visits

- Q: Does he hold training camps? A: He typically travels to the NGO to organize camps.
- Q: What about support for his personal assistant?
 - More of a honorarium - is an engineer. Mostly doing the driving/documenting voluntarily.
- Q: Are there other members of family he needs to support?
 - We don't know about this yet.
- We are supporting a Fellow, so we should also be supporting their activities, otherwise what use is the Fellowship In case of Siddamma, it is not easy to imagine how we can support all her activities as we support her Fellowship
- Q: How do we support his Fellowship? A: Most probably we will get this supported through the Bharathi Trust
- AID Austin was interested in working with Siddamma's efforts and Asha and AID had a conference call with Siddamma. That was when the fellowship proposal for Nammalvar came up and is now currently being discussed by Asha and AID.
- Exposure visits are for farmers to visit Resource Center and other such efforts. The cost typically covers the traveling expenses for neighboring farmers.
- Q: What does "Meeting and training expenses" cover?
 - When we had fellows conference, in parallel bharati trust had organized a local meeting with farmers for Nammalvar - so that he could explain the economics of going organic to the farmers. The first step of convincing is where he is extremely good at. So in this phase, if there is a group that is organizing his talk, the part of the farmers having to come and stay at some place etc. the travel and food etc. and training expenses - are paid for by the group. If there aren't any organized groups which can do that, then he would do that on his own using these meeting and training expenses.
- We should look at connecting up different projects
- We should also look to buy the material generated by Nammalvar.
- Murali needs a used laptop. Vinod will check with the SV chapter on laptop give-away by Infosys in Bangalore (upto 40 of them every year)
- He is trying to make farming viable – that is the fairer way to look at it (how the farmers perceive it). All things along the lines of organic, renewed land, no soil erosion, multi-culture, no GM etc. are part of his philosophy, but what the farmers are looking for is low cost. In the context of the current farming crisis low cost is an important solution.