

GRANT ASSISTANT FOR GRASS ROOT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Project Title : Integral Child Education Programme
at Ushagram Project Area

Implementing Agency : **USHAGRAM TRUST**

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Project Title	:	Integral Child Education Programme at Ushagram Project Area
Project Period	:	On going
1. Name of the Organisation	:	USHAGRAM TRUST
2. Organisation's Address	:	USHAGRAM TRUST Ushagram Vikash Kendra Village: Ushagram, Post: Birnagar District: Nadia, West Bengal 741127
3. Telephone No.	:	+91(0) 3473 260885/261084/260283
5. Year of Establishment	:	1980 under Indian Trust Act, 1961
6. Date of Registration & No.	:	Registered on 17.07.1980 bearing No - 64 A
8. Name of Chief Functionary	:	Smt. Tanmoyee Chakravarty, Secretary
9. F.C.R.A. No.	:	147060084
10. Date of receiving F.C.R.A.	:	13.08.1985
11. Type of F.C.R.A.	:	Comprehensive

Ushagram Trust : its genesis and development

The name of the Project is Ushagram i.e. the village of dawn (Usha) where there will be continuous experiments for a higher consciousness for the whole community. Ushagram is a dream to be realized, an aspiration to build up a conscious community as the nucleus of a brave new world.

Gopal Chandra Chakravarty, under the inspiring influence of Ramkrishna-Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, purchased this piece of consolidated but fallow land in the year 1968 and dedicated himself to the mission of setting up a Tapoban type Ashramic Vidyalaya (Ashram type School) for children as well as for the socio-economic development of the people around. The land was uneven, arid and non-irrigated, situated in between Tahepur-Nazirpur area of Birnagar by the side of old Palasy Road. The said free primary school was set up under improvised sheds in the year 1974 for imparting education to the children of the locality that had no school going habits at that time. As a sequel to the partition of the country, the original residents, left the place for East Pakistan and uprooted families from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) settled in these areas. Social cohesion, harmony and solidarity were totally absent among the new settlers. Moreover, this area was a veritable den of miscreants of the district. In order to gain the confidence of the local people, Shri Chakravarty, an outsider, had to pass through numerous ordeals and untold social and mental sufferings during the period from 1970 to 1980.

In order to give a practical shape to Sri Aurobindo's vision of a Gnostic society, Ushagram Trust, a non-political, non-profit-making, rural voluntary organization, was formed in the year 1980. The Settler, Sri Gopal Chandra Chakravarty handed over 5.40 acres of agricultural land and 1.66 acres of land with a running primary school and few residential houses including a small dairy farm to Sri Jyotirmoy Bose in presence of Sri Narayan Sanyal, an eminent litterateur on 15th August, 1980. This was the turning point in the genesis of this organization.

The main aim of the trust is to build up a harmonious conscious Gnostic community in a small compact area.

As emphasized in the foregoing, Ushagram Trust is not just a social service organization known to official circles in the so-called misnomer NGO.

Human touch is a quality, which is innate in a human being and cannot be developed by training, incentive or legislation. Human touch, the hallmark of NGOs, got eroded with the introduction of professionalism in social work, because volunteerism and professionalism are poles apart.”

Ushagram is, therefore, something remarkably and decidedly more than that right from its inception as a voluntary organization having ‘human touch’. It is a voluntary organisation with the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo’s thoughts and ideas and with an identical dream of Auroville Project of the Mother of Pondicherry in a small area of rural Bengal.

Objectives of the Organization :

- ✍ To spread elementary, primary and secondary education upto class VIII and gradually extend it to class IX & Class X in formal way with a view to develop integrally all aspects of the personality of the students (viz physical, vital and mental and spiritual faculties).
- ✍ To spread education among school dropouts, boys and girls of poor merit, farmers, artisans and wage-earners through State Open School and back up educational support to Secondary school students of near by schools.
- ✍ To impart Physical Education (Yogasan & Pranayam), Health Education to the children and women through Ushagram Integral Health Centre (Arogyo Bhavan) and to render promotive and preventive health education and primary health care service through this wing.
- ✍ To organize vocational training cum Production in different trades of Loka Sikshaniketan (People’s College) for dropouts both male and female for creating self-employment in villages.
- ✍ To disseminate information for farmers, artisans wage earners, village youths, students of primary, secondary and higher secondary through Ushagram Gramin Pathagar .
- ✍ To develop yoga and spiritual discipline.
- ✍ To build up harmonious, peaceful, self-reliant strong village community.

Plan and Structure of Educational Service :

Formal Education :

- a) **Pre-primary Education for children in the age group of 3-6 years by running a Balwadi in each village.**
- b) Primary Education for children in the age group of 6-10 or above in the apex Primary School christened Vidyaniketan Sishubihar.
- c) Recently started up-gradation up to Junior High School, i.e., class IX-XII
- d) Improving and assisting Government Primary Schools in the Project area.

Non-formal Education :

- a) Serving as a Centre for State Open School (Rabindra Mukta Vidyalaya) and National Open School for drop out children/youths upto the standard of XI & XII.
- b) Distribution and collection of books from the Central Library (Ushagram Aurobindo-Rabindra Gramin Pathagar) and the village library units in the Project area.
- c) Nurturing of folk culture, exhibition and lecture demonstration.

Project Location : West Bengal

Cluster-I : Shibpur, Nazirpur(S+N), Ushagram(Taherpur Nutanpara), Taherpur Puranapara , Mahishdanga(S+N), Barasat, Bhaduri

Cluster-II : Gagrakhali, Bargail, Mugrail, Chandandaha, Barakullah

Target Group or Beneficiaries of the project:

Sl #	Name & Address of Balwadi Centres	Inception	Roll Strength of			Teacher
			Boy	Girl	Total	
1	Mondal Smriti Sangha, Nazirpur	1984-85	13	14	27	02
2	Bhaduri Sanghasree Club, Bhaduri	1984-85	14	22	36	02
3	Barasat Trinami Sangha, Barasat	1984-85	20	32	52	02
4	Shibpur Milon Sangha, Shibpur	1984-85	17	16	33	02
5	Nazirpur Tarun Sangha, Nazirpur	1984-85	36	16	52	02
6	Taherpur Vivekananda Sangha,	1984-85	10	12	22	02
7	Singha Smriti Sangha, Ushagram	1984-85	39	21	60	02
8	Mahishdanga Nabin Sangha,	1984-85	15	20	35	02
9	Mahishdanga Yuba Sangha	1992-93	35	31	66	02
10	Gagrakhali Yuba Sangha, Gagrakhali	1996-97	26	16	42	02
11	Bhaduri Balaka Sangha, Bhaduri	2001-02	05	16	21	02
12	Bhaduri Khudiram Sangha, Bharuri	2001-02	14	18	32	02
	Total		244	234	478	24

The project has been implemented by Ushagram Trust, operating amongst weaker section of women population in 14 adjoining villages in two clusters. The inhabitants of these villages are mostly persons displaced during the partition of India in 1946-47, still struggling to put ends together. They mostly belong to weaker section of population with low literacy level and dismal health awareness.

Purpose of the Project:

Knowledge is power. “Nothing is so costly as ignorance and nothing is so cheap as knowledge”, as said by Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, the legendary vice-chancellor of Calcutta University of last century.

Integral Education plan to impart literacy with development of functional/vocational skill-set to the children is a powerful tool to be used by Ushagram Trust in its project area for participatory rural development. The need for inclusion under adult education of *health education (promotive, preventive and curative)* with particular awareness about health issues during pregnancy, maternity health and child-care for women of rural areas can be hardly over-emphasized. Further to this, the incorporation of the general knowledge-base and understanding about the society, place, country and the global issues like environment, culture and technology in which these children and their mothers live, will be brought under the focus of this curriculum.

Goals of the project:

The program aims at development of each children is to be covered under the project so that it will be able to use its skills and knowledge such as 3R (reading, writing and arithmetic operation), functional skill and general aptitude to do the following independently without much of difficulty.

Background of the proposed Balwadi (Pre-primary Education) Project :

At the very outset, Ushagram Trust unanimously resolved that its thrust area would be comprehensive rural upliftment in one Gram Panchayet area, i.e., Barasat Gram Panchayet in Ranaghat Block-I of Nadia district consisting of 14 villages, and education should be the main plank. On the basis of this plan, the Trust endeavored to set up Balwadi Centres (Pre-primary Education Centres) to begin with in the 8 (eight) adjoining villages, christened Cluster-I villages. At the initial stage, UNICEF came forward to assist the programme as an innovative scheme of child education and some teaching aids and equipments were received. Thereafter, the Government of Republic of Ireland came forward to fund the project on co-finance basis and 8 (eight) Balwadi Centres were constructed. At present the number of Centres has risen to 13 (twelve) in the 10 (ten) adjoining villages. Lady teachers, either from the same village or the nearby ones, have been imparting play-way education to rural children who come mostly from the families of small and marginal farmers and loomless weavers, hawkers and the like. Here they are encouraged to break the age-old curse of illiteracy and ignorance from the very beginning. School-going habits are growing in this area and with it eagerness for education and learning. The joyful environment of these Balwadi Centres attract the children and encourage them to come regularly and timely. Mothers are also becoming education conscious. It is to be noted that no major Government grants have been received in this connection beyond some meager financial help from the Department of Relief and Welfare, Government of West Bengal, and that too has stopped before long. Till very recently, a Calcutta-based NGO, named SAHAY, had been helping us by granting the total requirements for the 12 (twelve) Balwadis, but they have now stopped funding. Indeed, all funds for Balwadi education have dried up and unless some funding agency interested in basic education comes forward, a very beneficial project for rural disadvantaged children will come to a grinding halt.

Science & Technology input required in the project

To make this elementary education project more meaningful and many-faceted, we have included two other subsidiary programmes, namely,

- a) adult literacy programme for women
- b) health awareness programme for adolescent girls and mothers

Courses in software being developed. For the alphabet training in both English and Bengali, FLASH 5 programming tools may be used. It is necessary to build up a facility for displaying these software using a battery-operated laptop and a projection screen. Such facility will be mobile, i.e., it can be shifted from one village to another.

The literacy programme has been designed in such a way that it is tagged with the health awareness programme with the following objectives :

- ★ To stop/reduce the numbers of early marriage of girl children in villages
- ★ To arrest the trend of immature unwilling pregnancy of young mothers
- ★ Pre and post-natal care
- ★ Menstruation sanitation, cleanliness, sexual diseases types and prevention
- ★ Reproductive child health care
- ★ Immunization necessity and cost-effective nutritious food habit, use of available green vegetables and local fruits.

Expected outcome :

Ushagram Trust has been running the Balwadi (Pre-primary Education) Programme for over the last two decades. We have built up a well-thought educational complex for rural areas, which includes one Apex School (Nursery to 8th Standard) State Open School for appearing at the Madhyamik/H.S. Exams. and a Vocational Training cum Production Centre (Ushagram Loka Siksha Niketan) both for male and female students. Where only about twenty years back there was no atmosphere of

education, the entire place being a den of anti-social elements, gradually a situation has come over when the total number of students in the apex primary School is about 435 and that of the 12 Balwadis is 478 odd. We strongly feel that all this has been made possible since such great emphasis has been laid at the right place, that is, free pre-primary education for all and sundry. The total population of our area of operation is 33,000 odd. The component of Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe population is registered at 65% and 5% respectively. Workers include Agri-labourers, marginal farmers and other workers include the weavers without looms. Over and above, cultivators comprise 90% of the population in the area. But the literacy rate of our Project Area, which stands at 65%, far exceeds that of the national average, which is at once rewarding and replicable.

Estimated Cost :

Rs. 5,00,000 /year

Recurring Expenses

a)	Honoraria of Balwadi Teachers 24 nos @ Rs. 1000.00 each	Rs. 2,28,000.00
b)	Teaching Materials @ Rs. 2000.00 / School	Rs. 24,000.00
c)	Supplies for School students @ Rs. 150.00 each	Rs. 71,700.00
d)	Sishumela & Exposure Trip for Balwadi Teachers	Rs. 60,000.00
e)	Administrative Expenses	Rs. 32,300.00
	Total	Rs. 4,76,000.00

Dated : 6th October,2007
Place : Ushagram, Birnagar, Nadia

Tanmayee Chakravarty
Secretary