

FRIENDS SOCIETY MEMBER UPDATE

(6th February 2019, v2) (The previous update was on 9th Jan 2019)

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FRIENDS DAY

The EC is reviving the old tradition of holding a Friends' Day. It will be on the **17th March 2019 (Sunday)** at the FS Campus (Petit Library in Fatehganj). The EC members are busy planning the details and will share that with you when they are ready.

GOLDEN JUBILEE REUNION (reminder)

As communicated in the last update, the reunion is scheduled for **30th December 2019 (Monday)**. **Shaurya** event will be held the day before (on the **29th - Sun**) and you will have an opportunity to attend that also. The team is working on developing detailed plans and they will be sent to you when they are ready. [Clarification: In the last communication, I had failed to mention that, besides the reunion, the team is working with the EC to have individual activity groups conduct a special event for their group during 2019 and is considering holding a musical night as well. – Niranjana]

A LETTER FROM A PAST MEMBER

Shailesh Venkatesh, past FS member (who had joined FS in 1991) and who currently lives in Singapore, had experienced a dose of nostalgia when he got some old photos from Gowriben. So, he wrote a letter to her. She shared that letter with me, and I thought you may also like to see it. It clearly shows what effect FS typically has on its members. I am sure most of the past members share such nostalgic moments, I certainly do. The letter is attached separately in the email. - Niranjana

IDEAS FOR MAKING FS STRONGER FOR THE FUTURE – FROM VANCOUVER, CANADA

I had met in January 2019 Shashidharan Enarth (a past FS member who had joined FS in 1985) in Vancouver, Canada. He has decades of experience working with large number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in several states in India and in two countries in Africa and was a consultant with the World Bank working on a few NGO projects. He has also done a Ph.D. ('why most community service organizations in India fail within 4 to 5 years of starting'). He was asked by the University of British Columbia in Vancouver to establish a masters level program on public policy with focus on international students. In one of his classes, a case study on FS was presented. Nine graduate students had participated by reviewing the information provided, analyzing it, and coming up with ideas to help FS. – Niranjana

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Graduate students in the Master of Public Policy & Global Affairs program at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada who had participated in a 90-min case study on FS. (L to R): Khadijah (Pakistan); Touv (Madagascar); Hilary (Korean); Kilim (Korean); Sara (Korean/ Lebanese); Alex (UK); John (Nigeria); Diego (Ecuador); and Ida (Russia). I found the concentration with which they were reading the case study assignment to be quite impressive.

Key points suggested by the students participating in the case study and from many hours of discussions with Shashidharan are listed below.

1. Consensus skills – this is a must for non-profit organizations; conduct workshops for trustees, mentors, EC members, and staff for developing this skill - [from Shashi]
2. Accountability focus – also a MUST for NGOs; however, most NGOs are not good at holding people accountable [from Shashi]
3. Involve students in decision making process even for the issues that are at strategic or higher levels (such as a selection of a chairperson) – besides them making decisions for service activities. A student suggested that it will be like a student body at a university and how they participate in discussions on larger issues affecting the university (comment: even if they may not have specific input to provide, they should be a part of discussions at least, and it will be learning opportunity for them) [from case study]
4. Young member participation in decision making should not be just tokenism, need to really listen to and understand their points [from Shashi]
5. Assign some of the administrative functions to students [from case study]
6. Give specific assignments to students (for example, write reports or newsletters, follow an event before, during and after to record observations, take photos and video clips, and then to prepare a comprehensive report like what a journalist would do; give scholarships in some cases for such assignments, if necessary [from Shashi]
7. Develop a support system for volunteers (such as specific people to go to) to get guidance in case they come across improper actions taken by a staff at the agencies where they are providing services [from case study]
8. Use technology more, and more effectively [from case study]
9. Determine systematically what the community needs are for services [from case study]
10. Establish local university partnerships [from case study]
11. Placement students – this is a high-quality resource and FS needs to use it effectively; develop a list of 15 to 20 specific issues at FS that they could work on and share that list with professors; when placement students write reports and make suggestions, FS may or may not accept them. [from Shashi]

12. Market FS to recruit new student members; share benefits realized by past members from participation in FS activities [from case study]
13. Mentors are very important; question: can a non-FS person be a mentor? [from Shashi]
14. Mission / principles are very important; some organizations conduct an annual review of mission (vision) and principles and make changes if necessary, this also is a useful reminder to all; often this is done as a part of a retreat for trustees. [from Shashi]
15. Establish high credibility in the local community; develop relationships with large number of small donors; very important and necessary to do this in case community support is needed for matters that may affect FS seriously [from Shashi]
16. Office administrator position is very much needed at FS (Note – I had extensive discussion with Shashi on this topic – there are too many details to include here) [from Shashi]
17. Explore the possibility of joint project with Baroda Citizens’ Council (BCC). In the past, they wanted FS to do training for school children on leadership [from Shashi]
18. Allowance for cell phones given to staff is ‘a joke.’ (one can get three-month plan for a couple of hundred rupees) [from Shashi]
19. Travel reimbursement for FS staff should be for actual travel instead of monthly allowance (for example, Rs. 7 / km for two wheelers and Rs. 10 / km for cars) [from Shashi]
20. Consider achieving financial self-sufficiency [from case study]

NOTE: FS is currently focused on identifying ways for making FS stronger for the years to come and many different ideas are being discussed and developed. This input from Shashi and his class will be folded into that effort. Once the improvement ideas take a concrete shape, they will be shared with all members, so that you can review and provide your input. - Niranjan

QUARTERLY ACTIVITIES REPORT - UPDATE

We plan to publish every year three quarterly FS activity reports and one annual activity report (which will be published in July after our program year ends on 30th June). The current quarterly report is delayed as we are still tweaking the activities reporting formats and system. We are getting good at it, but slowly. So, please bear with us as we work through it. We may skip Oct-Dec 2018 report and then issue in April 2019 a combined report for two quarters.

BAD NEWS: STILL CANNOT RECEIVE FOREIGN FUNDS

Our FCRA registration (which allows us to receive money from foreign countries) has not been renewed for close to a year now. [The FCRA stands for “Foreign Contribution (regulation) Act, 2010.”] We are told that everything in the forms we filed is in order, yet the renewal registration is still not available, and we are not able to find out when we will get that. Due to this, we have not received this year, a contribution from FACES group in Germany, that is a significant blow to our finances.

Anyone who wishes to donate money or send membership fees from other countries, will not be able to do so until this registration is received. Until then, if you can arrange for money to be sent to FS in rupees, please do so.