

Volunteers of Change

Jamia Nagar, New Delhi

Progress Report: August 2014- March 2015

1. Foundation

Volunteers of Change (VOC) was founded on 31 August 2014 in a meeting of 21 activists of Jamia Nagar area called by the president of Universal Knowledge Trust Abdul Rashid Agwan at the Meeting Hall of Nadwa Old Boys Association, Shaheen Bagh, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi. It was resolved to develop a network of activists for an overall development of Jamia Nagar by focusing on core fields of community development for this purpose. The network will be structured into groups (domains) of activists run under the supervision of its Convener helped by group incharges. Volunteers will commit minimum possible time and contribution for running the network. There will be monthly review meetings for planning and evaluation of undertaken activities of the network.

2. Stationery

Soon after the foundational meeting, a four-page brochure was developed for the introduction of Volunteers of Change in Hindi language and was duly approved in the monthly meeting of 27th September. It was decided to have its translation in English and Urdu languages which is under process. Receipts for the collection of funds for the network have also been ordered for printing.

3. Volunteers

In the foundational meeting itself 21 volunteers joined the network. Thereafter, over 40 volunteers joined it of whom 27 registration forms have been submitted to the Convener and others are in the possession of group incharges. Thus, around 60 volunteers are presently associated with the VOC.

4. Website

As soon as the network was established, a domain name www.volunteersofchange.com was booked for the promotion of its activities. Moreover, the email ID volunteersofchange@gmail.com was also registered for communication of the network. The website is presently under construction.

5. Review Meetings

- a. **Monthly Meetings** were held on 27 September, 25 October, 29 November and 27 December 2014. The monthly meeting of January 2015 could not be held on the last Saturday of the month as per schedule, since the launch ceremony of Okhlahealines.com was held on 26th January in which many volunteers participated.
- b. **Meeting of Coordination Group:** Meetings of select volunteers was held on 6 September 2014 and other occasions to discuss regarding the stationery, website, surveys, etc.
- c. **Biannual Review Meeting:** The meeting is planned on 6 March 2015 for reviewing the progress, future plans, and financial management of the network and also to enroll new volunteers according to the needs of the working groups.

6. Clean Okhla Campaign

Volunteers of Change and its volunteers participated in People's Initiative for Clean Okhla coinciding with PM's Bhartat Swacchata Abhiyan on 2 October 2014 as organized by the NGO Serving Human Foundation. In this event a dozen volunteers joined a cleaning drive from City Nursing Home to the first High Tension Pole in Shaheen Bagh Main Market and the assembly was addressed by Br Abdul Rashid Agwan, Dr MA Johar and Sis Shaheen Kausar. The demonstrative effect of the campaign led to similar independent drives in the area. The convener of the VOC wrote a report on all such efforts of local people which was later on published on okhlaheadlines.com.

7. Support to Talent Search Finale

Volunteers of Change supported Sathi Parivar in holding its Talent Search Finale 2014. The finale was organized at Okhla Ramlila Ground on 2 November 2014 in which 5 best contestants of 257 students of a quiz competition of Jamia Nagar area competed for the top positions. The Convener of Volunteers of Change Br. Abdul Rashid Agwan was the Chief Guest of the program whereas 10-15 volunteers of the network were also there in the audience.

8. Meeting with Ward Councilor of Okhla

As suggested in the monthly meeting of volunteers held on 25 October 2014, a joint delegation of representatives of RWAs of Ward 206 and Volunteers of Change met with Mr Amiruddin in the Ward Councilor's Office on 8 November 2014 to discuss with him some pressing issues of the Ward. Incharge of Residents Affairs Br. SM Noorullah coordinated the meeting in which issues related to cleaning, place for waste storage before dumping, covering of the drainage on the western side of Shaheen Bagh and authorization of colonies were raised. It was agreed that: 1. the Councilor or her representative Mr Amiruddin will meet the authorities of UP Irrigation Department in the next week for providing space for waste storage 2. Deputy Commissioner South MCD and his subordinate staff will be invited to visit Johari Farm and resolve the problem of sewer-line blockage there 3. A list of schools running in Ward 206 will be provided to the Councilor so that anti-malarial and anti-dengue treatment may be done there. On the matter related to covering the drainage nala going near Shaheen Bagh Mr Amiruddin informed that it was not possible due to a Supreme Court order.

9. Meeting with Ward Councilor of Zakir Nagar

In the wake of concerning decision of the meeting of 25 October 2014, a delegation of the network met the Ward Councilor of Zakir Nagar (Ward 205) on 17 December. The delegation comprised the Convener of Volunteers of Change Abdul Rashid Agwan, incharge Resident Affairs Group Br SM Noorullah, Dr MA Johar, Br Naushad Ahmad, Br Muslehuddin, Sis Shaheen Kausar, Br Shamsuddin, Br Anis Saifi and representatives of some RWAs. The Councilor Mr Shoeb Danish willingly discussed problems of cleaning, parking, water logging as raised by the delegation and assured his cooperation for their solution. He also offered that he could be helpful to the VOC in its activities in the field of education and health.

10. Meeting of RWA Representatives

The incharge of Group on Residents Affairs SM Noorullah convened a meeting of office-bearers of RWAs of Jamia Nagar on 19 October 2014 at Mushawarat Hall joined by 11 representatives. Abdul Rashid Agwan briefed the attendees regarding the objectives of Volunteers of Change and assured that the VOC

will cooperate with the RWAs in improving conditions of the locality. The issues of better functioning of the RWAs, cleaning in the area, declaration of O-zone policing for the area, unification of the two groups of the RWA federation, etc were discussed.

11. Efforts for Milli Affairs

It was resolved that Volunteers of Change should cooperate with the Delhi Unit of All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat instead of forming separate group for milli affairs. Consequently, Br Abdul Rashid Agwan, Br Tahseen Ahmad, Haji Noor Mohammad, Br SM Noorullah and Br Mohammad Jabir became members of the Mushawarat. Coincidentally the first two were later on elected as the president and general secretary of its Delhi unit. Efforts are going on for the generation of better unity among various Milli organizations working in Jamia Nagar area through Mushawarat which has also held a meeting of mosque management committees and Imams of Jamia Nagar on the issue of notice served by the Delhi Police for the installation of CCTV cameras inside and outside mosques.

Members of Milli Affairs Group participated in the meeting of Riayasati Mushawarat as held on 16th and 23rd November 2014 and played their due role there. Br Abdul Rashid Agwan, Haji Noor Mohammad, Br Mohd. Jabir, Dr MA Johar, Br SM Noorullah, Br Muslehuddin, Sis. Shaheen Kausar, Br Naushad Ahmad, Br Tahseen Ahmad and Dr Anwarul Islam joined these meetings as the associates of VOC.

12. Participation in Civil Rights Issues

- a. Dr MA Johar, Br SM Noorullah, Br Mohammad Jabir and Br Vakil Johari took active interest against arrest of well-known Bareilvi scholar MI Yaseen Akhtar Misbahi on 20 January 2015 and were present in the demonstration organized by people at Jamia Nagar Police Station. Due to mounting pressure, the police released him after an interrogation. Br Abdul Rashid Agwan and Br SM Noorullah visited MI Misbahi on 23rd instant for expressing their solidarity.
- b. Dr MA Johar, Br SM Noorullah, Br Mohammad Jabir and Br Vakil Johari took active interest against illegal detention of a local resident on 16 February who was duly released on public pressure.
- c. A letter was sent by Volunteers of Change to the authorities of State Bank of India on 3rd March 2015 to appoint additional staffs in the wake of increasing workload in its Zakir Nagar Branch.
- d. The report of Women Development Group published on community portals containing the discrepancy of voter sex ratio in Okhla constituency, being the lowest in Delhi just 647, attracted reaction in a wider circle of all concerned.

13. Green Okhla Campaign

The VOC has at its core activities local environmental issues and its Group on Environmental Affairs is headed by Dr Abdur Rauf. Though the group is yet to be duly formed but the article of the Convener Abdul Rashid Agwan published on okhlaheadlines.com raised certain issues for the information, awareness and ensuring interest of activists on some critical environmental issues of the area.

14. Okhlaheadlines.com

A dedicated web-portal www.okhlaheadlines.com was launched in a well-attended ceremony at Hotel River View on 26 January 2015. The editor of the portal, Sahahbuddin Yaqub, is a volunteer of the

network and other volunteers are also associated with it somehow. It is regularly giving space to the campaigns and activities of the VOC, which remains Community Partner of the portal. OkhlaHeadlines has also published a video interview of Dr MA Johar regarding the issues to be taken care of for the development of Okhla area. The convener of VOC regularly contributes on the portal as regards issues that matters the community development in its Opinion column, particularly those that have direct relevance for the people of Jamia Nagar area.

15. Voter Awareness Campaign

Voter Awareness Campaign remains one of the major activities of the VOC since its formation. The campaign focused on certain measures. A meeting of select volunteers was held on 10 January 2015 as soon as the election was declared for Delhi Assembly to generate voter awareness in the area. It was resolved to undertake opinion survey for the identification of key issues of local development, hold a discussion on the measures issues, generate awareness on them through a pamphlet and seek consent of candidates on the top 10 issues. Consequently, a discussion was held on 18 January at Mushawarat Hall for wider support on the identified issues, 8000 pamphlets were distributed and 5 contestants from Okhla Constituency were contacted to sign a commitment termed Promise to People.

Moreover, representatives of the VOC participated in different meetings organized by concerned citizens and voiced for a better candidate. Dr MA Johar and Br Anis Saifi joined a meeting on 31 January held at Zakir Nagar whereas some other volunteers joined a meeting called by Mushawarat the next day on the matter of supporting any party for the ensuing elections. The incharge of Islamic Affairs Group Br Muslehuddin met around two dozen Imams of mosques for the announcement of VOC's appeal to vote in large number as a democratic responsibility.

After the election and just on the day when results were announced, a meeting of select volunteers was held on 10th February to decide follow-up as regards local issues. A felicitation ceremony was held on 15th February at Mushawarat Hall in which the newly elected MLA of Okhla Constituency was publically received and the Promise to People document developed by the VOC was signed by him towards his commitment to fulfill the concerning demands of people as the local MLA. A follow-up committee has also been formed under the chairmanship of Adv. Wahid Husain to pursue the matter with the MLA and authorities.

16. Area Map

Incharge Town Planning Group Br Ehitishamuddin Khan discussed in his two meetings with the Convener regarding the possibility of development a detailed map of Jamia Nagar for reference and planning purpose. He assured to work on it but faced some bottlenecks of the concerning departments. Hopefully, the matter will be completed soon.

17. Senior Citizens Group

Senior Citizens Group is one of the first groups formed with an annual plan. Previously, Br Mohammad Salahuddin and then Dr Sayed Khalid Ahmad have been nominated as its incharge. The group remained active and enrolled some new members as its volunteers and it took initiative for the formation of Street Committees in the A Block of Shaheen Bagh.

A meeting of Senior Citizens Group was held on 21 November 2014 at New Vision Public School in the evening of the day and convened by Dr Sayed Khalid Ahmed. Four volunteers joined it and it was decided to meet each of the other listed senior citizens for seeking their confirmation to join the Campaign. Consequently, a team has met 7-10 persons by this time and many of them joined the network.

The group also organized a health consultation camp for senior citizens on 21st December at City Nursing Home in which allopathic, homeopathic, Unani and dental experts checked the participants and advised them regarding a wholesome life. Dr Rafiqur Rahman an expert in gerontology joined the camp as its chief guest and around 25 persons were attended. At the outset, some tips were discussed regarding old-age health problems. Volunteers associated with Senior Citizens Group and Health Group cooperated in the successful organization of the event.

18. Education Group

Group on education is yet to be formed. However, directors/principals of some local schools are taking active interest in the VOC and its approach. The VOC mobilized participants for two workshops of All India Educational Movement held recently on educational issues and principals' motivation at Abul Fazl Enclave. The group will be formed in the coming month after completion of the present academic session.

19. Health Group

Health Group is working under the charge of Dr MA Johar. So far it has held three meetings for identifying issues for its work, on 14 October and 11 December 2014 and 27 February 2015. The group also helped in the organization of Senior Citizens Health Consultation Camp. Moreover, it has resolved to hold an awareness program regarding Swine Flu on 8th March.

Volunteers of Change has joined the swine flu awareness drive the Health Department of Delhi Government as Local Circle.

20. Islamic Affairs Group

This group has so far held two meetings to set priorities for its work. Previously, Br Muslehuddin was its incharge and now Br Naushad Ahmad has been nominated as its incharge. The first meeting of Islamic Affairs Group was held on 21 November 2014 at New Vision Public School. Thirteen volunteers joined, many of them as freshers. The second meeting was held on 22nd February at the same place.

The group has decided to undertake a detailed survey of mosques and Islamic institutions present in Jamia Nagar before any practical work. It was also decided to mobilize some more members of the group and collect information regarding the nearest Mosques and Islamic institutions on a survey format to be prepared by Br Shamsuddin. A pamphlet will also be prepared on the importance of mosque in public life for the awareness of all concerned to be prepared by Br Naushad Ahmad. The Brochure of Volunteers of Change will be translated and published in Urdu.

21. Youth Development

Youth Development Group is still in the formative stage and will take a definite shape soon. Br Shakeel Ahmad was made incharge of the group. Later on Br Taquir Alam has been nominated as its incharge. A meeting of local youth was held on 23 November at Aman Academy with the cooperation of Br Shakeel Ahmad in which some 15 youths joined including 10 new volunteers. It has been resolved to hold a workshop on 15th March focusing on youth development with the cooperation of Br Aslam Naved and his team of resource persons.

22. Women Development Group

Women Development Group has been formed recently under the charge of Sis. Shaheen Kausar joined by around a dozen eminent activist ladies of Jamia Nagar. The first meeting of the group was held on 25th February at New Vision Public School. It was resolved to include more volunteers in the group and then its activities should be taken up systematically. Report of the meeting on OkhlaHeadlines received a wider appreciation. The finding of the discussion that Okhla constituency has a highly negative sex ratio was shocking and needs further action leading to proper enrollment of female voters of the area. The group also decided to send a representation to authorities regarding the need of a park for women, children and senior citizens of Abdul Fazl Enclave and Shaheen Bagh.

23. Skill Development Survey

A survey of potential beneficiaries of skill development schemes was undertaken with a view to register welders, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, computer operators and skilled persons of the area so that they could be provided skill certificate in their respective fields. Br Ateeq Khan has collected information of some interested persons but a thorough survey is yet awaited.

24. Interfaith Group

One meeting of potential volunteers of the proposed group was held in the first week of October but without any conclusion. Later on Br Tahseen Ahmad has accepted the responsibility to lead the group. It was resolved to prepare a list of eminent Hindus, Christians and Sikhs of Jamia Nagar and also of such eminent Muslims who could be interested in interfaith activities. Br Abdul Rashid Agwan and Br Tahseen met the Pujari of Hindu temple at Okhla bus stand and others in the neighbor. They also met Vimal Kumar the president of the Ramlila Trust, which is formal organization of the Hindu community living in Okhla Village. However, formal constitution of the group is required for undertaking any activity.

25. Justice Group

Justice Group is in the process of formation under the charge of Br Mohammad Jabir. The VOC was approached by a family of local residents for proper guidance in the concerning dispute and duly helped.

26. Legal Affairs Group

This group is under the formation with Adv Wahid Husain as the incharge. A meeting of some like-minded legal experts was held at the house of the incharge on 20th January for planning. It was thought that dissemination of legal literacy can be one of the activities of the group besides providing legal help to innocent and poor people in their cases.

27. Public Park

One major need of local people particularly those living in Abul Fazl Enclave Part I & II that emerged during voter opinion survey has been the availability of a public park. In this regard Sis. Saima Khan organized a meeting of the delegation of VOC with a Muslim political leader of Uttar Pradesh on 26th February. It was resolved that a proposal of establishment of Lohiya Park on the land of UP Irrigation Department should be forwarded to the Chief Minister for consideration and the said leader will pursue the matter further at the helm of affairs.

28. Additional Dispensary

The information that the government is prepared to establish a dispensary in Shaheen Bagh was passed on by the convener Br Abdul Rashid Agwan to an owner of a suitable property near Thokar 6 and Br Anis Saifi was requested to use his contacts at the Batla House Government Dispensary for early decision on renting the identified portion for the desired dispensary. Hopefully, the matter will be settled soon.

29. Media Coverage

The VOC activities have received useful media coverage from time to time. Mainly Urdu newspapers Inqilab, Sahara and Khabren and the community portals Okhlaheadlines and MuslimMirror published the press reports of the network. Such events as Swacchata Abhiyan, Voter Awareness Program, MLA Felicitation Program, the meeting of Women Development Group found space in media.