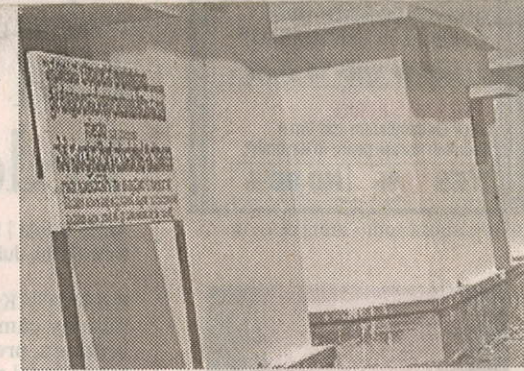


Building houses, making homes

Flood rehabilitation is much more than giving houses to the displaced. The Infosys Foundation — with its thrust on education, social security, and the little details that make lives better — seems to have got it right, says **Ramakrishna Badseshi**



WHAT IS AASARE

It is a scheme to construct houses for the people affected by the floods of last year. Each house has a built-up area of 250 square feet and consists of a living room, a bedroom of the size of 8.3 X 8 feet, and a bathroom. The living room also serves as the kitchen. The total area of the site is 1,500 square feet, and the family can expand it by constructing two more rooms. Each house will have a toilet constructed outside the house. The houses under Aasare scheme have the same plan and built-up area as the houses constructed under other schemes like Ashraya, Indira Awas. Aasare houses have asbestos sheet roof but the houses constructed by Infosys have RCC roofs.

INFOSYS FOUNDATION

Promoted by Infosys Technologies Ltd, the Infosys Foundation was founded in 1996 to help the underprivileged. The Foundation started its work in Karnataka and later spread to Tamil Nadu, Orissa, Punjab, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Its focus areas are health, rural development and rehabilitation, education, art and culture. The Foundation has so far received many awards in recognition of its service to the society.

SUPPORT FOR THE FOUNDATION

Kottalabasaveshwara Bharatiya Shikshana Samiti Sedam is providing execution and management support for the construction of houses in Gulbarga and Yadgir districts. In Dharwad, Sri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara Rural Development Program Dharmasthala is helping the Foundation. Ramakrishna Mission, Belgaum is providing support in Raichur and Belgaum districts.



SUMANGALA is building her house and getting paid for it. She, like many others of Balwadgi village in Gulbarga, are helping the Infosys Foundation build houses under the Aasare scheme — houses that will eventually belong to them. Sumangala says she has “developed attachment” for the under-construction house, her hands are building it — a job that also pays her Rs 120 for a day’s labour.

This is flood rehabilitation, the Infosys Foundation way. The beneficiaries are stakeholders, and the job is to not just build houses for the flood-hit, but get their lives back on track.

The Foundation is constructing houses in Gulbarga, Yadgir, Raichur, Dharwad and Belgaum districts under the Aasare scheme. It has taken up partial or full rehabilitation of 14 villages in Gulbarga and Yadgir, and is constructing 1,537 houses. Construction had

Houses built by Infosys Foundation have concrete roofs; other Aasare houses have asbestos roofs. They have also built a small platform outside houses to give children space to study

begun in February and is nearing completion in Balwadgi village of Chittapur taluk, Betagera village of Sedam taluk and Shivur village of Afzalpur taluk.

The Foundation, however, is not content with building houses, it wants the beneficiaries — those who lost their houses in the floods last year — to have their lives back. It has incorporated many well-thought measures to achieve this end.

A small platform has been constructed outside the houses to give children space to

study — Aasare houses are small 250 sq. feet tenements with a bedroom, and a living room which is also the kitchen space. School going children will be provided with a set of text books and the Foundation is convincing beneficiaries to send all their children to school.

It has roped in the forest department to plant saplings in front of every house, and the State Bank of India has responded positively to its request to open a “zero balance account” for each family. The Foundation has also written a letter to Nandan Nilekani’s office for priority in allocation of UID.

The Infosys Foundation is presenting each beneficiary family a solar lantern to help children to study during night.

Vasudev Rao Deshpande, Program manager, Infosys Foundation, and the man overseeing the construction of 2,250 houses in 18 taluks in five districts, told *The New Indian Express* that 191 houses would be ready by the July. Toilets — a separate unit built outside the house under the Assare scheme — would be constructed by August.

The Foundation has decided to hand over completed houses in a phase-wise manner in Gulbarga/Yadgir districts.

In July, 51 houses will be handed over, 310 in August, 509 in September and the remaining 667 houses in October.

The Infosys Foundation is constructing 108 houses in Balwadgi village; 71 houses in Sugur; 60 houses in Kadboor village; 37 houses in Shivur village; 149 houses in Mannur and 171 houses in Kodignoor village of Afzalpur taluk of Gulbarga; 191 houses in Sedam town; 56 houses in Betgera; 26 houses in Adaki village of Sedam taluk; 110 houses in Avarad-K; 100 houses in Firozabad and 69 houses in Hagargundgi village of Gulbarga taluk; 239 houses in Anur [K] village of Yadgir taluk; and 50 houses in Goudur village of Shahapur taluka, Yadgir.

Apart from this, the Foundation is constructing 70 houses in Beerangaddi, Belgaum district; 143 houses in Chintamana Doddi, Raichur district; 86 houses in Pulameshwari Dinni in Raichur district and 425 houses in Navalagunda town of Dharwar district.



SUDHA MURTHY

Sudha Murthy, Chairperson, Infosys Foundation told *Express* that Gulbarga is backward and the people here need support. She had developed a fondness for Gulbarga over the past few years, Murthy added. Infosys has given financial support of Rs. 1 crore to open a Virtual Learning Centre for computer education, and has also given assistance to Kottala Basaveshwara Shikshana Samiti, Murthy added. Murthy holds a honorary doctorate from the Gulbarga University for her service to the society.