



Rural Immersion Internship Programme

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Preliminary Report on the Rural Immersion Internship Programme
organised in collaboration with District Administration of District Singrauli,
Madhya Pradesh. **Year 2014**



Submitted by:
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Rural Immersion Internship Programme

Background

The Rural Immersion Internship Programme emerged from a discussion during an enriching lecture by Ms. Swasti Pachauri about her work as Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellow (PMRDF). The aforementioned lecture was delivered in the Seminar Room of CIC last year and proved to be thought provoking for both the students and the faculty alike. A series of discussions and emails followed which eventually culminated with the initiation of the Rural Immersion Internship with twelve CIC students.

The Rural Immersion Internship (RII) Programme formally began after the exchange of emails between CIC and the Collector & District Magistrate (Mr. M Selvendran, IAS) of District Singrauli, Government of Madhya Pradesh. The Internship request letter dispatched from CIC (Letter no. CIC/14/3268 dated 4th May, 2014) and duly signed by Prof. Tarun Das, Joint Director, CIC was responded in the positive by Mr. M Selvendran vide Letter no. 672 dated 13th May, 2014. On behalf of the District Magistrate, Ms. Swasti Pachauri and Mr. Rohit Joshi acted as point persons. Both Ms. Swasti Pachauri and Mr. Rohit Joshi are PMRDFs. Mr. Rohit Joshi is appointed as PMRDF in District Singrauli, which was the chosen field area for this internship. The architecture and minute by minute itinerary of the internship was designed by Mr. Swasti Pachauri. On-the-field support was provided by Mr. Rohit Joshi throughout the internship period.

Student Selection

The first step towards the RII programme was the selection of suitable students. The RII Programme was open to all the three courses at CIC, viz. B.Tech./BS Innovation with Mathematics & IT (IM&IT), B.Tech. Humanities and Master in Mathematics Education (MME). The Programme Coordinator of each of the aforementioned courses was requested to identify and select students for the said internship. A total of 18 students were first selected which comprised 10 students from B.Tech. Humanities, 4 students from B.Tech./BS IM&IT and an equal number of students from MME. Due to the nature of the internship, it was felt that the students of B.Tech. Humanities will benefit most from this internship because of which they were selected in larger number.

In due course of time however, the Programme Coordinator of the MME course felt that the nature of the said internship may not be of benefit to MME students. The names of the 4 MME students were subsequently withdrawn. At the same time, on 28th May 2014, Mr. Rohit Joshi requested that it would be beneficial for the internship programme if the total number of selected students was limited to 12. By this time, 2 students from B.Tech. Humanities had also withdrawn from the RII programme. Consequently, a final list of remaining 12 selected students was communicated to the District Administration of District Singrauli for participating in the said internship.

Rural Immersion Internship: Student Exposure and Learning

The Rural Immersion Internship began with the train journey from Hazrat Nizamuddin Railway Station (Delhi) to Jabalpur. From among the two routes available (Delhi-Jabalpur-Singrauli and Delhi-Renukoot-Singrauli), train tickets were available only for the Delhi-Jabalpur-Singrauli route by the time train reservations were being made. An advance train booking from Renukoot to Singrauli had to be therefore cancelled since attempts for train booking from Delhi to Renukoot were unsuccessful. Reservations in the train from Delhi to Jabalpur and Jabalpur to Delhi were made in Second Sleeper (SL) class. Reservations in the train from Jabalpur to Singrauli and Singrauli to Jabalpur were made in AC Chair car (CC) due to extreme weather conditions in this short distance.

Prior to the journey, students were assigned trip-related tasks for better coordination during the entire journey. The students were also provided with a pen and diary and instructed to note their daily observations in a systematic manner. Table 1 lists the names of the 12 students who were selected for the Rural Immersion Internship. The table also includes their Course and the duties assigned to them prior to the journey.

S.No.	Name	Course	Duty Assigned
1.	Pallavi Ekka	B.Tech./BS IM&IT	Video Documentation
2.	Kapil Kumar	B.Tech./BS IM&IT	Medicines & Healthcare
3.	Vineet	B.Tech./BS IM&IT	Medicines & Healthcare
4.	Ajay Kumar	B.Tech./BS IM&IT	Conduct daily meetings
5.	Rahul	B.Tech. Humanities	Video Documentation
6.	Riddhi Garg	B.Tech. Humanities	Archiving Bills/ Finance
7.	Mohit Kumar	B.Tech. Humanities	Photo Documentation
8.	Amit Kasana	B.Tech. Humanities	Security and Safety
9.	Ashish Yadav	B.Tech. Humanities	Food & Water
10.	Vipul Kumar	B.Tech. Humanities	Food & Water
11.	Khyati Panwar	B.Tech. Humanities	Maintaining Log of all activities
12.	Vivek Shekhar	B.Tech. Humanities	Train Tickets and Local Travel

All the students performed their duties with sincerity and dedication throughout the duration of the internship.

Upon reaching Singrauli (Bargawan Railway Station), we were received by the transportation arranged by the District Administration. Students were divided in two groups and taken to Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL) guest house and NTPC guest house. This was done due to shortage of required number of rooms in either guest house. The faculty was also adjusted with the students and due care was taken that the women students were provided rooms in the same guest house where the faculty member was provided accommodation. For the next four days, the students were given an orientation on the various Government policies (both Central Government Schemes and State sponsored schemes) towards rural development by the officials of the Singrauli District Administration. The orientation took place at the *Zila Panchayat* of Singrauli District.

Along with this, students were taken on field visits to various mining and thermal power plants in different parts of the district. The larger objective in the first few days of the internship was to make the students understand the delicate relationship between development, environmental protection and social impacts of development projects. The outline of this exercise was spelled out by Mr. Rohit Joshi when he asked the students to try and answer the question, “Development for whom, and at what cost?” The exposure of the students to mining projects, thermal power plants and the interaction with the management and the staff (some of the latter being villagers and tribals living in areas adjacent to individual mining/ power plants) (Annexure I) proved to be a good learning experience for all the students. The interaction with the officials of the District Administration – the very people who are implementing the various government schemes for rural development – was also very useful for the students as it helped in clearing many doubts and assumptions of the students. Some of the schemes about which the students were oriented belonged to the sectors such as education, employment, livelihood generation, agriculture, extraction of non-timber forest products (NTFP), healthcare, etc.

Rural Stay

The extended orientation of the students was followed by ‘immersing’ the students in the rural hinterland of Madhya Pradesh. The students were taken to Village *Tingudi* and housed in an *Adivasi Ashram* meant for tribal students. The students were already oriented about the *Adivasi Ashram* scheme which enabled them to draw a comparison between what a policy looks on paper and the realities in its implementation on the ground. Here, the students were oriented and trained by a team from PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action) NGO which works in this area. The PRADAN team trained the students with some useful PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) Tools which enabled the students to better interact with the tribals and the villagers. No further information about the village or its problems was provided by the PRADAN team and the students were asked to spend a day in the village to identify the same themselves.

A significant aspect of rural stay was that the students developed a good understanding about the working of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in rural areas. Some of these SHGs have been formulated and organised by PRADAN team itself and students were divided in groups of four and made to participate and witness the entire proceedings and working of a SHG meeting. From here, the students were asked to approach and identify one family each and request them to let them spend an entire day with them. All the students were successful in finding one family with whom they could spend an entire day. Interestingly, villagers were themselves eager to spend time with the students and share their issues and day to day affairs with them. The role of women in development was adequately understood by the students during this exercise especially since SHGs involved mainly women. The students were later informed that gender was a criterion for selection of members of SHGs by the PRADAN team.

The food provided to the students during the village stay was organised by the staff of the *Adivasi Ashram*. Students also had the opportunity to cook and organise their food which

became a good team building exercise for all of them. Students also received firsthand knowledge of the food and infrastructure provided to the students of the *Adivasi Ashram*.

After a preliminary exposure to village life, the students were divided into groups of two and assigned one topic each on which they needed to collect data and information from the villagers and tribals. The topics included Education, Healthcare facilities, Agriculture, working of the Panchayati Raj Scheme, etc. The findings of the students after this exercise provided them greater insight into the problems and challenges being faced by rural India. The students could also use their knowledge and learning to come up with suitable solutions for solving some of the challenges they witnessed in the field. These were shared by the students during the daily meetings in the evening time. The challenges in the working of *Panchayati Raj* system as well as in the implementation of schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) were adequately witnessed and understood by all the students. Good cooperation was shown by the Village *panchayat*, *Sarpanch* and also the Police *Thana* located in the village during the entire stay in the village.

The concluding task assigned by the PRADAN team to the students was to organise a *Jan Sabha* inviting all the villagers and tribals and making a presentation of their findings. The entire task of organizing the *Jan Sabha* was assigned to the students. The students formally invited the villagers and tribals, members of the *panchayat* as well as members of *Zila Panchayat*. A special invitation-request was also made to Mr. Rohit Joshi so he could witness the presentations and share from his own experience for the benefit of the students.



Figure 1. Villagers and tribals participating in the *Jan Sabha* hosted by CIC students.

The *Jan Sabha* began with an introduction to the Rural Immersion Internship programme and CIC by the students for the villagers. The students shared their learning during the *Jan Sabha* in individual groups through interactive verbal presentations. During the presentation, the villagers, tribals, members from the PRADAN team as well as from the District Administration provided useful inputs which further helped the students understand the rural situation better. The students also exhibited good innovative spirit by putting together a *nukkad natak* (street play) for the villagers and tribals capturing all that they had imbibed during their rural stay. The street play was the high point of the entire *Jan Sabha* and was appreciated by all the participants.

The Rural Stay concluded with an interaction between the students, PRADAN team and Mr. Rohit Joshi immediately after the *Jan Sabha*. The students were provided useful inputs based on their performance and all remaining doubts were clarified. The PRADAN team also provided useful reading material on rural development for the students while also inviting further participation of CIC students in the activities and initiatives of PRADAN.

Training on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Rural India

After a five day long stay in Village *Tingudi*, the students were taken to the mining site of Jaypee Minerals Limited, a Joint Venture company between Jaiprakash Associated Limited (JAL) and the Madhya Pradesh State Mining Corporation Limited (MPSMCL) for developing the Amelia (North) Coal block. Accommodation, etc. was provided to the students here by Jaypee Minerals Ltd. itself. The Amelia (North) Coal block is located in the vicinity of Village *Majhauri*. The mining in this coal block has started only recently (May, 2014).

At Jaypee Minerals Limited, the students were first provided with an orientation on the working of the company and an excellent presentation on the entire mining process, its legal requirements, the clearance process, environmental impact assessment details, social implications etc. was made by the officials and staff of the company. The measures taken by the company for meeting its social responsibility, especially in Village *Majhauri*, were also shared by the officials of Jaypee Minerals Ltd. with the students. This was followed by rigorous field visits to Village *Majhauri* so the students could understand the impacts and implications of the mining project as well as explore the same from the villagers' perspective. The contrasting and sometimes conflicting views of the company officials and the villagers were discussed by the students in the daily meetings in the evening time, which further helped them to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges and problems in the sector of rural development.

The students were then asked by the Jaypee Minerals Limited to prepare a preliminary blueprint for carrying out and achieving its corporate social responsibility. This required further field visits to Village *Majhauri* and nearby areas. The students also interviewed the staff of Jaypee Minerals Limited many of whom were villagers from Village *Majhauri* and nearby areas. Prior to this exercise, the students were given practical on-site exposure to the entire mining process in the extraction of coal. This helped the students during their survey

since they could compare and contrast the working of villager in farm conditions (their original profession) and in the open-cast coal mines. Students also developed a deeper understanding of land acquisition for development purpose and the Resettlement & Rehabilitation (R&R) policy of the Madhya Pradesh Government which was a useful learning for them. Each time the students would get stuck with something, officials of Jaypee Minerals Limited readily helped them by answering their queries and providing them with useful inputs.

After some detailed field visits and survey & analysis work, the students presented their findings to Jaypee Minerals Limited on the concluding day of their stay here. Senior officials of the company, Mr. Rohit Joshi from the District Administration and the Chief Executive Officer of the Zila Panchayat were present during the CSR related presentation of the students. The presentation was met with a great enthusiasm from the officials of Jaypee Minerals Limited. It also gave them more insights into the area around their mine and provided them fresh food for thought for putting together a more detailed CSR plan. For the students, it was a good opportunity to have some hands-on training in the conceptualization and development of CSR plans. With this, the Rural Immersion Internship concluded and the students were dropped to the Singrauli Railway Station the next morning, for the onward journey to Jabalpur and to Delhi.

Conclusion

The two week long Rural Immersion Internship programme (9th June 2014 to 24th June 2014) involving 12 CIC students provided an excellent exposure to the challenges of rural India and the complexities associated with the rural development sector. The internship programme also provided a window to the students into the life and day to day affairs of tribals and villagers living in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The internship not only provided the students with an understanding of the Government policies and programmes for rural development but it also enabled the students to get a deeper understanding of the challenges associated in the implementation of such policies and programmes. The site visits to the various coal mining and thermal power plants in the heart of the coal belt of India helped the students understand complex inter-relationship between development, environment and society.

The simultaneous interaction and exposure of the students to the activities of the coal-mining based projects & companies and the response of the project affected families to such projects proved to be very useful in developing a balanced understanding of the entire scenario. The most beneficial among all exercises and tasks was the spending of an entire day with one family in the villager by individual students. This gave the students a practical insight into the life and lifestyle of the villagers and also helped the students in making the rural versus urban comparison in terms of facilities, amenities and resource use and availability. The facilities provided by the companies as CSR schemes were also evaluated by the students along with developing an understanding of the response of the villagers to such schemes. This would certainly help make the students better policy analyzers in the near future. The insights into

the working of the *Panchayati Raj* system further provided the students with useful learning for becoming better policy analyzers since the *Panchayati Raj* system is the central point in the implementation of almost all rural development schemes. The experience will also give the students an edge over others while formulating policy or designing programmes for rural development.

The Rural Immersion Internship seemed to have succeeded in enlightening the students with the challenges of rural development, inspired them to come up with solutions to these challenges and has certainly enriched the students with an experience that will have a life-changing effect on many of them.

Recommendations and Way Forward

As discussed above, the pioneer Rural Immersion Internship programme has proved its worth in providing students with an enriching and meaningful experience of rural India while at the same time exposing them to the realities and challenges of rural development. It is therefore recommended that the Rural Immersion Internship (RII) programme may be extended and made a regular feature in CIC every summer. The RII programme has good learning potential for the students of B.Tech. Humanities. The students of B.Tech./BS IM&IT also stand to benefit from this programme provided they are given suitable orientation beforehand. It is also felt that the programme may benefit if students from the same Semester/Year are selected instead of from different Semesters/Years. This will ensure the development of a more appropriate training during the field/rural stay. The students of MME may benefit from the RII programme but only if it is in their objective to teach/engage rural India.

In addition, other way forwards may also be conceptualized as an extension of the RII programme. During the present RII programme, students found good physical infrastructure for education but very poor teacher strength. There were schools with no or insufficient teachers. While the CSR etc. schemes lead to the construction of buildings, it is difficult for them to recruit or provide teachers which come at a recurring cost to them. Companies do not engage in tasks which incurs such recurring costs. This has to the present situation with school buildings without teachers. CIC could collaborate with some of these companies, in association with the district administration and provide teachers for a limited duration (e.g. 3 months). However, doing this requires the preparation of a course/module as per the needs of the students.

During the RII programme, it was found that despite considerable investment by the District administration towards the popularization of the social welfare schemes, only a limited number of people were aware of them. CIC could also partner with the District Administration in taking up the tasks of promoting government schemes. This can be done through the development *nukkad nataks/ Jan Sabhas* or similar tools.

It was also felt that while considerable number of Government schemes exist, these schemes are either not reaching the people or, as discussed above, the people are simply not aware of these schemes. Consequently, while the District Administration remains content with the fact that the Schemes are being implemented, the schemes often do not make much difference on the ground. An important lacunae here is the feedback or assessment of such schemes. It should be noted here that villages in Madhya Pradesh may have population between 50 houses to about 500. There is thus a possibility of using recent advent in the field of ICT to develop a database of all the families in one village, assess their social status and monitor them very efficiently. CIC may then envision adopting one village to begin with and develop such a system which could help connect the entire village either to the *Zila Panchayat* or directly to the District Administrator. It would aid in the monitoring of any scheme while also improving the implementation of government schemes.

District Singrauli is the hot bed for mineral based projects. Consequently, many such projects are located here and many more projects will be installed here in the near future. CIC could explore the possibility of developing CSR strategies and plans by the meaningful interaction of students in this process. At least one of the companies visited in during the present RII programme (Mahan Coal Limited) offered to explore such partnerships with CIC.

In addition to the above, other challenges in the area include that of lack of potable water (since ground water is unfit for drinking at many places), lack of handicraft – recognition and development schemes, need for documenting dying tribal life/lifestyle, alarming dependency on the forests (*mahua* and *tendu* leaves) leading to large-scale deforestation and dying traditional knowledge which has medicinal importance. In fact, initiating an inventory of the traditional environmental and medical knowledge (including cancer curing herbs) of the tribals – through participatory research methodologies – could well be a very meaningful and useful contribution to the society at large.

Annexure I: The interaction with the following key officials and staff was facilitated during the Rural Immersion Internship.

S.No.	Name	Designation	Dept./Company
1.	Rohit Joshi	PMRD Fellow	Dist. Singrauli
2.	Priyanka Chande	PO, MGMRMS	Zila Panchayat, Distr. Singrauli
3.	V. K. Dubey	GM	DIC, Distr. Singrauli
4.	I.B. Patel	Assistant Commissioner	Distr. Singrauli
5.	Dr. Vivekanand Mishra	HR Head	Mahan Coal Limited
6.	Vishwadeep Gupta	Consultant	Mahan Coal Limited
7.	Ramakant Tiwari	CEO	Mahan Coal Limited
8.	Harish Khandelwal	Chief Finance Officer	Mahan Coal Limited
9.	Jaspreet Singh	Vice President, HR	Hindalco
10.	Anshul	Employee Relation	Hindalco
11.	Abhijeet	CSR Head	Hindalco
12.	Anand Chaturvedi	CA	Hindalco
13.	Prabhakar Deshpande	Upp Prabhandhak	Northern Coalfields Limited
14.	Om Prakash	PRADAN Team	PRADAN NGO
15.	Parvez	PRADAN Team	PRADAN NGO
16.	Kundan	PRADAN Team	PRADAN NGO
17.	Sanjay Kashyap	MRE Department	Jaypee Minerals Limited
18.	Kr. Suresh C. Tyagi	Additional GM, HR	Jaypee Minerals Limited
19.	Raghu	General Manager, HR	Jaypee Minerals Limited
20.	Neeraj Shrivastav	Sr. Personnel Officer, HR	Jaypee Minerals Limited
21.	Chaubey	Assistant Coordinator	Jaypee Minerals Limited