

Explorer Program Report

Global Area Studies

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I visited India from July 28 to October 6, 2013, carried out some observation for my research, and chose my field. My research topic is NGOs and Community Development in Rural India, so I visited some NGOs and observed their activities in rural areas around Delhi, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu.

I thought that two NGOs were especially interesting: Sulabh International's vocational training center in Rajasthan, and CIRHEP in Tamil Nadu. Sulabh International is promoting sanitation all over India, providing public toilets called "Sulabh Toilet Complexes" in public places such as hospitals and tourist attractions (Photo 1). They have adopted the system of pay-and-use, which requires people who use the toilet to pay two rupees for every use. With that profit, they cover all the expenses of toilet management. Moreover, because their toilet is a water-flush (always called WC) toilet, they have been able to release the scavengers from the job of collecting human waste and have created new employment for them. Sulabh established a vocational training center for scavenger women in order to train them for new jobs such as tailoring, embroidery, and sari-making (Photo 2).



<Photo 1: Sulabh Toilet Complex in Alwar, Rajasthan>



<Photo 2: Women who were previously scavengers working as seamstresses >

CIRHEP is focused on environmental protection and income-generating activities in a rural part of south Tamil Nadu. I visited and observed the watershed development activity of CIRHEP. The people in this area have suffered from drought for two years (Photo 3). Farmers have constructed bunds in their fields, that is, special containers to catch run-off water effectively; have set well recharge pits (Photo 4) to filter rainwater; and have learned organic farming techniques that avoid chemical pesticides and fertilizer. Unfortunately, none of these will start working without more rain. While they wait for rain, for income, they are engaged in the 100-days work that the Indian government provides to rural poor people (Photo 5).

By observing these two NGOs, I was able to hear the voices of the people directly, sometimes serious and sometimes optimistic, and to get a sense of their “reality.” I would like to use the opportunity to investigate further to deepen my research and make my findings more meaningful.



<Photo 3: A field affected by lengthy drought.>



<Photo 4: Well-recharge pit>



<Photo 5: People engaged in 100-days work>