

A Word About Me

I am a 4th grade student at Hokkaido University. I am studying international economy especially the developing countries. My interest is on some issues like the relationship between education and economic growth. I will also write my graduation thesis on 'education and economic growth in India'. It is very interesting for me.

What I intended to do in my internship at CARPED

I am also a member of 'Service for Peace' - a Japanese NGO. Our activity is picking up trash in my city and appealing to University students to appreciate the issues of concern and role of youth in global peace and well being. We help them gain interest in international linkages and networking. We also help them to visit developing countries for study or to gain first hand understanding of issues through observation and interaction with community and social work groups. We organize talks and group meetings with the students who come back from developing countries to share their experiences with other students.

Firstly, I wanted to know how NGOs abroad work and what are the varied issues of child development they are involved in. Also I am interested in child education in India. So I decided to go India and work with NGOs engaged in promotion of child rights and universalisation of elementary education.

I was glad to work with Centre for Action Research & People's Development (CARPED) because it is working on varied issues of community development and has lots of work in promotion of child rights and eradication of child labour. Especially CARPED's emphasis on improvement of child education and sensitization of women and village committees appealed to me immensely. So I expected to go to the villages and talk to children and the teachers. I also expected to see their activities in lots of villages. I wanted to see CARPED's activities in forest protection, collective action of women, farmers sanghas, immunization of children and pregnant women and several other activities. Also I wanted to know how CARPED sensitizes and collaborates with other NGOs on major social issues in the state.

My observation during my stay at CARPED (Medak and Hyderabad)

I was in India on a very short stay. Only 2 months programme which I realized was not sufficient to know the beautiful place and people and lots of social issues. It was too short to know in detail lots of interesting activities they are doing. However, I want to let you know my observations.

I wanted to focus my study mainly child education. So I visited a lot of schools at Kowdipally mandal of Medak district with CARPED staff. I visited villages where there was no school before CARPED started its activities four or five years ago. Many villages now have a government school with a few teachers and new buildings. I also had a chance to talk with teachers. I'm sorry I couldn't talk with children because they can't speak English. I thought I wanted to learn local language to communicate with them. I wanted to know their feelings about classes. But I couldn't because it was only two months that I could stay there.

In general, the NGO organization "CARPED" is much more reliable for village people than government staff or international organization. I think the reason for CARPED's success in addressing very challenging issues is because of their honesty and transparency. They are also available to the villagers to share problems and seek suggestions. CARPED also stresses on peoples partnership and involvement. It educates villagers to take care of the development programmes gradually without depending on outsiders. CARPED's activities, I found, are more relevant to local people's daily lives because they listen to the ideas and requests of village people. Local people are made important actors in the development programmes. They hold meetings with the villagers every week and large meetings every month. They have a lot of trust in each other.

I plan to work for Japanese government organization as JICA. As of now, JICA does not work directly with local NGOs. Their role is primarily at the level of government to government. But after the field work in villages for two months in India, I strongly feel that it would be immensely appropriate for supporting community development programmes through NGOs. I feel it would be great thing if JICA like agencies could support CARPED like NGOs so that Japanese government could help more people and effectively as well as strengthen the collective action of the villagers through self help by local people. Japanese support will be reaching more people and making great changes in their lives.

Support from Japanese people or government, being far off spatially and different from the local culture and language, can make significant help to global peace and development as well as international understanding by acting through NGOs. Working through local NGOs like CARPED would effectively implement projects like helping education or changing bad habits like child marriages or child labour which is much difficult to be done for friends and agencies from outside. However, if they act with NGO, it is easier and effective. I am sure that I will be able to make good use of this experience after graduation. I hope JICA would also collaborate and facilitate between Japanese government and foreign NGOs.

The standard of living among the rural families is far from the ideal notion of well being. Some children in some village are not in school. They are not having preschool and adequate medicare. Some children are working as labour in farms for rich farmers. Parents of the poor families are struggling hard to give better living conditions for their children. Good number of girl children are not in school after the age of 12 years or so. Every village I saw in Kowdipally mandal of Medak district had twenty to a hundred children, depending on the size of the village, out of school or working as labour until CARPED started its interventions here. CARPED motivated the parents and provided basic education and started single teacher schools here. Now there is a generation of children who are literate. I noticed with great joy that more than 3000 such children have been sent from CARPED schools to government schools and hostels for assured education. A new generation of literate children among the rural poor and tribal families is made possible with hard work of CARPED in the last five years. About thirty new schools have been started by the government in these villages after the CARPED initiative. CARPED's work has shown government that there are children who need and demand education! It's a great social change in the village here for the children. I saw it with joy and seen pride in the faces of these poor rural and tribal women who have got new government schools in their small village son the basis of CARPED's efforts. Lots of strategies are employed by CARPED's team of local youth and motivators in mobilizing community for better infrastructure for child development. They have cultural education, street theatre, group meetings, village committees and cluster level meetings of the village elders. It's a nice experience to learn these methods of people's mobilization and help collective action of the rural poor.

Development work is very complex. Rural poor also have expectations that are not appreciable. Years of disappointment with authorities and leaders also make them have

no dreams sometimes. I was thinking as to what was the biggest problem about education. I asked many people in the villages I met 'What is the problem with your school?' and they said 'NO'. Lack of awareness is a big problem. They are satisfied with the present standard. From my view point, the school had a lot of problem. But if they thought such a thing, of course children couldn't improve their study or environment. So we have to educate parents and teachers in the villages drastically as we work for promotion of child education. It is important to have lots of books, like library for children in rural areas, to help know outside world. Books will give a lot of dreams to them. Books will give them incentive of studying. They can be second teacher for children. The most important thing is to let them know outside world.

There was no library for the community in the villages. There are lots of books CARPED collected on different social themes for the benefit of staff and volunteers. CARPED is thinking of starting a library and community science center shortly for children and the villagers. They are struggling for the resources to put this plan into action.

My learnings in India

It was turning point of my life. I didn't expect this stay was so hard and so much exciting. At first I was shocked to experience Indian daily life because it is much different compared to Japan. But I could adapt soon and I could enjoy my time. I also noticed that my English ability was not enough. In Japan, my English abilities were considered far superior to many others and I had great confidence. But on my visit, I realized the limitations of my language ability especially of conversational English. If I didn't go, I had never realized that. But friends in India would make an effort to understand my feelings and me and help me speak to them and soon I could gain lots of confidence and improve in spoken English.

And I also realized how much I know about Japan. Although I was asked by a lot of Indian people about my country, sometimes I couldn't answer. It was a new discovery for me about how much I knew Japan!

I was helped by many kind people and sometimes they were like my family. I had never experienced such warmth in Japan. In fact one family made me feel part of them. Head

of the family, an elderly gentleman who is retired from government service recently, treated me as an adopted daughter!

Before going to India, I couldn't decide whether to go for graduate school or work. But I met a lot of village people and also poor people in city. Visit to India made me decide to work for JICA. I want to help lots of people soon rather than my studying. If I didn't go India, I couldn't pass JICA's examination because English test was so difficult. I could also improve my English in 2 months of interaction with lots of nice people at CARPED, AIESEC and several other agencies. When I took an interview, I talked my Indian experience directly. I think that's the crossroads of my fates...

It was only 2 months but I could have so precious time of my life.