

Orientation and Exposure Visit for Ghana Delegation

I. Duration of Visit: August 29 to September 6, 2011

II. Background of Participants: The India-Ghana Women Farmer's Partnership is a collaborative program that links the Shea nut women workers of Ghana with RUDI Multi trading company of SEWA, India to engage in the opportunities, investments and best practices that could be incorporated in women run enterprises. Five women, of varying levels of administration and leadership, attended.

III. Objective of the Training:

The objectives of the visit was to gain observe, learn and adopt practices from SEWA's RUDI trade facilitation center and make a similar model based on RUDI's structure. There was emphasis on understanding the organizational structure, management practices, member involvement, and benefits of incentives and outreach. An understanding of the different parts of SEWA, with an eye towards incorporating these in Ghana. And finally, to show how SEWA operates as a trade union as an example for implementation by the Shea farmers in Ghana.

IV. Summary of Training:

The 9 day training was structured to provide field exposure visits highlighting SEWA's organization and practices to the participants.

An orientation was given on the first few days of the training which provided an understanding of SEWA and its various structures: cooperatives, federations, associations, cooperatives, and companies. Examples of success stories were shared, along with the cautionary tales from the early days of SEWA. A detailed introduction to a number of SEWA initiatives was provided, including the Green Livelihood Campaign and Rudi. The core of the orientation was on focused on the importance of organizational management, understanding the different structures of collaboration, introduction of member-based organization, and formation of groups. The group was particularly interested in how SEWA and its members received funding for initiatives, as well as the inclusion of male youth in activities.

The team visited a number of SEWA organizations: a savings and credit organization, a weaving center, a Community Learning Business Resource Center, Ganeshpura Tree Growers Cooperative, the SEWA Trade Facilitation Center, and the RUDI food processing center. The women were able to learn the best practices discovered by SEWA through its many years. The women hope to be able to utilize these lessons and avoid hardships. Specifically, that a decentralized model enforces quality checks at the group level and enables involving far-flung households who otherwise lack a reasonable means of livelihood.

The team also attended training on micro-planning and participatory rural assessment (PRA). Attendance to the training enabled participants to understand how to create a village and develop community member profiles to address the issues of its people. They were also given financial management training that included bookkeeping and calculating cash flows. These are critical skills for their day-to-day work. The group learned how to develop business plans as well.

The methodologies used in delivery of the week-long training were done through numerous field and exposure visits to SEWA facilities and cooperatives. The interactive nature of learning allowed the participants to learn by doing and seeing first handedly, such as their visit to the SEWA Trade Facilitation Center (STFC). Activities and games were used as tools to actively involve the participants in the discussion and learning experience.

At the end of the visit, the Ghana team chalked out a plan for the next 6 months. They wanted to implement a number of initiatives, starting with trainings on good farming practices and focusing on health, specifically youth and teenage health. They also wanted trainings on the supply chain development of RUDI, specifically on the importance of weighing of products, stock keeping, maintenance of records and other cost control measures. Within their Shea oil production, they returned with increased market awareness, value-chain awareness, and better agricultural practices. They also sought to revive their sewing/weaving industry to provide alternative methods of employment. A crucial initiative was to create vocational training for children to create local livelihoods and keep them from urban migration. SEWA, in partnership with the Global Fairness Initiative, proposed to support the PagSung organization by creating master trainers for their initiatives.

V. Feedback from Participants

Sister Adiza Lausah Yakubu: Executive Director – Africa 2000

“No large capital is required to start business.” I had heard a lot about SEWA and on visiting, I realized why it is so. Looking at the weaving centers here, and the beautiful designs I do feel we need to revive our community weaving class. I also feel that organic farming can be started. We are still young .We have to go miles. I have a vision of 15 years. By next year we would have young people coming back and not migrating any more. The entire journey has been very educative for all of us.

Zaharawa Imran: Field Worker

The sense of belonging of women that SEWA is their own association is very commendable. They take pride in introducing themselves as the share holders of the company. The meeting with Jalpaben in the food processing center was very interesting. The fact that she started on a very small scale and made it big is learning for all. Never could we think that a face pack could be made from the skin of fruits. That experience was amazing. She makes use mangoes, gooseberries to make different products like juice, jam etc. “Asal “caning center was wonderful place to visit. I also learnt how the intermediates in marketing are eliminated and this attracts better prices for the farmers. The centers are very well kept.

Safiya Alhassan: Secretary of Pagsung

“It was a great opportunity for us to come and learn about SEWA. I have been impressed by the work done by SEWA. I really appreciate the patience planted in the organizational work. I also learnt how to handle people and will implement this and impart the knowledge to my fellow women so that Pagsung will be raised high as SEWA.

VI. Snapshots from the Training