

Brent Shively
Lumos Final Project Report
India 2012
Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti

Brent Shively graduated from Belmont University in May 2012 with a BS in Social Entrepreneurship. After spending the summer working in Nashville, Brent set out for a 3.5 month internship in Udaipur, Rajasthan, India from September to mid-December 2012. This is Brent's account of his experience working with Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti (JJVS), a local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).

Prior to leaving for India, I wanted to prepare in every way possible for my internship. My ProWorld coordinator, Sarah, gave me several resources on international development and on the working environment in India, and then told me that I most likely wouldn't really know what my work would be until I arrived. I poured over the given materials, packed my bags, and hopped on my very long flight from St. Louis to Udaipur.

I landed in Udaipur on September 1st and had two days of orientation of various do's and don'ts in Indian culture, learning enough Hindi to travel around the city, the location of various landmarks, and other cultural sights of the city with Sarah, while working through some stomach issues I picked up over the Atlantic. The second night I moved into my accommodation, a guesthouse called Chandra Niwas. Although it was technically a guesthouse, it quickly began to feel like a homestay for me, as I got to know the owner, Samvit, and his parents, who warmly welcomed me into their household. Samvit also ran a NGO, the DAAN Foundation, and had many volunteers stay at the house throughout my stay. Getting to interact with people from all around the world and learn more about their cultures and lifestyles was a great experience and chance to expand my own worldview.



On my third day in India, I began my internship at Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti (JJVS), which translates in English to *People's Awakening and Development Society*. Working with this organization shifted my ideas of what development could look like. In the US, a lot of non-profits are single-issue, single-community based. After 25 years of working to provide sustainable, income-generating opportunities to rurally based individuals, Jagran has developed a wide range of programs that are active in communities all over Rajasthan and other neighboring states. Their programs include: traditional medicine preservation, microfinance, village infrastructure development, education, women's empowerment, watershed management, agricultural development, and more. Each program is developed through utilizing local knowledge and integrally involving the beneficiaries in each step of the process.



Coming into an organization with such a strong history and variety of programs was a bit intimidating; however, they had had many international volunteers and had become efficient at getting their volunteers involved. Sarah had told me beforehand that the organization was going through some financial struggles at the time, and since I have had some experience with grant writing and researching funding opportunities, I became a full time development intern. I wasn't going to get to go into the field all of the time, but I was working on something the organization really needed to continue functioning and had the potential to make real lasting impact.

For the next 3 months, I was researching potential funding sources for Jagran's programs and developing proposals for submission to those sources. With their wide variety of programming, the organization qualified for many types of grants, foundations, and corporate giving programs, and I quantified the future opportunities into a database. One of the programs I prioritized was their microfinance program, as it had proven to have positive impact in all of the villages it was implemented into. Since the beginning of the program in 2007, every borrower has paid back their loans in full and on time, while being able to use the loan to expand their venture, which ranged from microenterprises to fishing to agriculture. The organization was receiving

many inquiries about the loans but did not have enough funding to expand the program. With Jagran's reputation in the area and their established approach, the chance of their microfinance program getting funded was very high, and my instincts were right. The week before I left I found out the proposal I developed for this program had been accepted by a livelihood promotion institution based in India who is going to give a loan of 3 to 4 million Rupees to JJVS for the program.

One of the greatest parts of working for JJVS was getting to know the other people who worked there. We shared a lot of knowledge, whether that was Dr. RK giving me lessons about how to make chai, cutting vegetables with Lakshman, downloading typing software I found for Pankj who wanted to increase his English typing speed, or looking up cricket scores online for Gidiraj. While I got very close with the employees of Jagran who all spoke decent English, I still ran into one of the classic problems in India, things happening slower than expected even if you are given a deadline. There were a few times where I was missing data about some of the programs and did not get it until a week or two after I was supposed to. Fortunately, I had plenty of work to do, and this difficulty turned into a lesson in patience and not a major source of frustration.

For the months of November and December, I took on an additional role, part-time volunteer coordinator for JJVS. There were two new interns from the US who came to the organization in early November, and I went with them to two of the Jagran's field offices and helped explain several of the programs. As they were new to the organization and working in India, they went through some of the same working environment culture shocks I had experienced, and I was able to help them with understanding the issues and the best way to address them. Also, in early December, there was a group of Finnish funders who came to review Jagran's programs, and I was responsible for helping them adjust to the culture and providing them with data on various programs.



Despite working 6 days a week, I did have a social life between hanging out with Samvit, the volunteers who stayed at Chandra Niwas, and other international interns at different organizations. There was always someone wanting to hang out in the Old City and try a new restaurant, or to drink "coffee" (it was actually more like a mocha

but in terra cotta cups) by Fatah Sagar, one of Udaipur's 7 lakes. Additionally, for the first 7 weeks, I was taking Hindi lessons from a teacher, which was enough to become nearly conversational with the random people on the street who were very excited to talk with a foreigner who knew broken Hindi.

During my time there, I did get stir crazy knowing I was seeing only a very small part of the whole subcontinent. My friend Abhi told me that culture and language in India changes every 15 km, a fact I found to be true on the trips I took. My first trip was to Himachal Pradesh to see some of the foothills of the Himalayas, and the second was to New Delhi and Pushkar for the annual Pushkar Camel Fair. The final one was a marathon train ride to Agra to see the Taj Mahal my last weekend in India. Though I went on the first trip by myself, I was never "alone". Everywhere I went, I was able to find help or recommendations of things to do in the city I was in. I made some really great friends both Indian and foreign along the way that I know I will see again some day.



My time in India was filled with people I will never forget and experiences I will always remember. About halfway through my time there, I started to seriously consider moving to India because the country is incredibly beautiful, diverse, and challenging. India felt like home, despite the fact that it is not an easy place to live for a few reasons including the income gap and the extent of male-dominance in the society, an idea ingrained in the culture for centuries. But the country is greater than the sum of its problems. Once you are able to fully experience India, it will change you in more ways than you will know. At least it did for me.