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It feels almost impossible to sum up my experience in India when every single day was filled with new experiences; at times experiences that left me heartbroken, mothers begging with children in the 108 degree heat, a man with no legs sliding himself across the broken cement sidewalk with flip flops on his hands, or malnourished children rummaging through dumpsters or grabbing at my legs as I passed by. Other days I was so grateful for the opportunity to be living and working in India, for the support of Kellogg, the Foundation for Sustainable Development, the NGO, and my kind host family. Other days, I was frustrated by the language barrier and overwhelmed by the chaos trying to navigate an hour long commute on two crowded public buses each way to the NGO I was interning at. Yet other days I was in awe and full of adventure and excitement at exploring the beauty and wonders of India, entering Hindu temples, hugging elephants, riding camels, and hiking up to 400 year old forts with breathtaking views.

This summer I spent two months in Jaipur, India through my internship with the Foundation for Sustainable Development. Through this internship I was placed with an NGO called Taabar, which was established in 2007 and provides community-based services and rehabilitation to orphans, runaway children, street children, children in the slums, and children in the juvenile justice system.

During my first week of the internship, I conducted a needs assessment and had various meetings with my supervisors and coworkers at Taabar. During this needs assessment I also spent four days at Bal Basera, which is a transitional shelter run by Taabar for children who have been rescued from child labor. The children stay at this shelter for anywhere from a few days to a

few months and during their stay receive schooling and other support services. There, I had the opportunity to observe and provide assistance.

When speaking with my supervisors to plan my project, they told me there was a large need for improvements to the counseling program and increased enrichment opportunities for the children staying at Bal Basera, given that most have suffered traumatic experiences. This includes being sold into child labor and often being physically or even sexually abused while working and/or while living on the streets. My supervisor asked if I could assist them with this project given that I am majoring in psychology and have a strong interest in counseling.

One of the most emotionally challenging days of the internship for me was after getting to know and coming to love the children at the Bal Basera shelter, watching them have to leave the transitional shelter and being so concerned about their uncertain future. The staff at Bal Basera told me that most of these boys were rescued after being sold by their families into hard labor out of desperation due to extreme poverty. While working, these boys are often beaten and abused. However, even after the boys are rescued, Bal Basera is just a transitional shelter and the boys cannot stay long term and cannot be adopted. Instead, Taabar is required by the government to immediately contact the boys' families and require the families to pick up their children. The staff members told me that this process is incredibly frustrating given that most of the boys do not want to return to their families and often run away when they are returned home because, otherwise, the families often sell them back into labor. One of the staff members told me that he had seen one boy come through Bal Basera three times already because each time he was rescued from labor and then "reunited" back to his family, they re-sold him into labor.

Given that, sadly, many of these boys would end up back in child labor or as street children after leaving Bal Basera, I developed an "Emergency Services for Children" card and

worked with a graphic designer to fit the local emergency numbers, the number and address of the shelter for children, and the 24 hour free Child Help Line and Child Labor Helpline, onto a business card with visuals for children who could not read and with text in both English and Hindi. I printed 100 of these cards and distributed them to the children at Bal Basera while teaching them about their rights and how and when to contact emergency services and authorities if they found themselves back in these situations. I also distributed the “Emergency Services Cards” to the staff.

Additionally, I wrote and developed a counseling booklet for teachers and shelter staff to help them understand the symptoms and behaviors of children who had suffered trauma and/or been victims of various forms of abuse. This counseling booklet also discussed simple yet effective ways that they could most appropriately and effectively support these children including active and compassionate listening, effective and appropriate discipline, positive reinforcement, ways to help children develop their own self-esteem, and simple yet creative forms of therapy.

My supervisor at Taabar also asked me to help develop and then lead workshops to teach the children the basics of nonviolent conflict resolution, problem-solving, good communication, anger management, and other life skills. The lessons on anger management and non-violent conflict resolution were particularly important given that in speaking with the children, many of them shared that they witnessed domestic violence in their homes and/or were beaten by their fathers or labor supervisors and thus it is important to intervene and discuss non-violent conflict resolution so that they learn early on that there are alternatives to violence. My hope was that by learning these anger management techniques and non-violent conflict resolution strategies, they could begin to break the cycle of violence and would be less likely to become violent in the

future towards other children, their future spouses, and their own children one day. Throughout the workshop I was really impressed with how participative and engaged the children were throughout the lessons, games, crafts, and activities used to teach them different tools and strategies to deal with anger, and use non-violent conflict resolution, good communication skills, and safety tips. At the end of the workshop I had them go around and each share something they had learned in the workshop and I was truly impressed with how well they had paid attention and really seemed to understand the concepts. Afterwards, I met with one of the social workers at Taabar and showed him how to continue to give the workshop. I also used the powerpoint slides and talking points I had written and utilized throughout the workshop, to create a booklet that I printed and distributed to him and the other staff at Taabar and Bal Basera with the hope that they will continue teaching this workshop as new groups of children come through Bal Basera.

Another component of my project involved working closely with the social worker at Taabar to completely rewrite their intake questionnaire and counseling format. This new intake questionnaire now includes questions upon each child's entry to the shelter that identify the child's personal strengths and goals, peer relations, and a series of indicator questions meant to assist staff members in learning whether or not a child may have been a victim of sexual or physical abuse, as well as several questions modified from a child PTSD questionnaire that discusses possible symptoms that the children may be experiencing after exposure to trauma. The new questionnaire also includes a section that asks whether or not the children have any schooling experience and know how to read and write or whether they require additional classes. This addition to the questionnaire was very important given that after piloting the new questionnaire with the children, I learned that most of them were very interested in learning how to read and write but had never had the opportunity to attend school since they were told as

children they had to work to support their family. This new information was shared with the social workers, Taabar staff, and teachers.

While at first it seemed a bit overwhelming to have been given a very broad project theme and minimal check-ins from the staff, I ultimately really enjoyed having this freedom to be able to pursue projects that I was passionate about and felt would most adequately benefit the organization and the children receiving services from Taabar. I am very grateful that the staff at Taabar, who were all locals from Jaipur, were very supportive and helpful with this project. Additionally, after working closely with the social workers and learning about and observing their work to support these youth, I became very interested in the possibility of becoming a social worker myself one day as I begin to look into graduate schools. I felt as though this internship was a very beneficial experience in helping me to discover my professional interests and passions and to learn more in depth about careers in international and youth development. Ultimately, I am incredibly grateful for having had this opportunity from Kellogg to intern with the Foundation for Sustainable Development in India and though I often felt challenged, this internship experience truly helped me to develop a stronger sense of independence, a broader understanding of development, and a true passion for international and youth development.