

A Case Study on Village Immersion Program in Cuddalore District, Tamil Nadu (INDIA)

Bharathidasan Institute of Management, Trichy had introduced a 10-day long Village Immersion Programme (VIP) during the 1st term of its 35th Batch students. It is believed that the exposure to the rural settings in India will sensitise management students to the issues faced by the population residing in the villages. The entire batch of 120 students have been divided into groups of 5-6 members accompanied by a faculty member. Three groups of students have completed the programme in Cuddalore district who have worked on 3 different project ideas to improve the socio-economic status of the people residing in the villages.

The broad objective of this program is to design enterprise plans for various project ideas identified by different groups with the assistance of the office of the District Collector. The 1st group worked on 'Conversion of cashew apple (cashew fruit waste) into value added jam'. The 2nd group worked on 'Conversion of pseudo banana stem waste into value added fibre' and the 3rd group worked on 'Value addition to jack fruit in the form of dehydrated jack fruit powder'.

During the duration of the program, all the groups have analysed the current status of each of the project ideas and assessed their potential. They have then identified potential micro entrepreneurs who are expected to benefit from entrepreneurial activities in the areas of the above project ideas.

All the 3 groups have initially completed a base line survey of a few sample villages in the district to analyse the socio-economic status of these villages. The students have immensely benefited by experiencing the existing conditions in the villages for 10 days. This experience had helped them to visualise various marketing challenges in the context of Indian rural markets. The VIP experience had also helped the students to observe and imbibe many value systems existing in the villages. It helped them to realise that 'India truly lives in its villages' as expressed by Mahatma Gandhi. The significance of this program was mostly seen in terms of it being a medium through which a scientific understanding of Indian society could be developed.

The students who participated in this VIP programme consider that this familiarity with the rural settings has provided them deeper awareness about how rural community can be moulded to be the upcoming economic and social epicentres of our country. This

involvement had facilitated the participants to improve sensitivity towards value systems prevalent in villages and absorb some of those for their academic and personal growth.