

TAA AWARD FUND

Naysan Adlparvar - Case Study

Having graduated from the University of Reading's International Rural Development Department (IRDD) in 2004 I found myself in debt and with little work experience to forge access into the world of international development. A number of lecturers at the University of Reading, however, suggested that I apply to the Tropical Agricultural Association (TAA) Award Fund as a means to gain experience and receive supplemental funding to allow for an initial volunteer posting in a developing country context.

After a swift and painless application process I found myself with a £2,000.00 award and a supervisor with a wealth of experience to guide me on my six month (February - August 2005) self-arranged placement to India. I was to work with the Foundation for Advancement of Science (FAS), a non-governmental organization (NGO), based in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, in the north of India.



FAS undertakes income generating activities - including the delivery of training courses and the publication of educational materials for local Indian schools - to fund the implementation of broader educational and social development programmes. In this manner FAS attains complete financial sustainability and independence in the formulation and delivery of its educational activities.

Working in both aspects of FAS - including both income generating activities and the implementation of their educational programmes - I developed an invaluable understanding of the realities of functioning effectively in a challenging environment. I spent the majority of my time

developing an integrated agriculturally-focused primary school curriculum. In addition to this I also began the initial implementation and monitoring of a previously developed teacher-training curriculum. My outreach activities included extending support to eleven rural schools that FAS supported, in the areas surrounding Lucknow.

Undertaking my assignment with FAS had a series of implications for me. Primarily, I think that the realities of working with a small-scale organisation became clear to me. I identified various constraints, benefits and opportunities of working at this level and, had the freedom to experiment with addressing social issues at the community level. It was also vital, I believe, to encounter the pragmatic issues one has to deal with when working with others in an unpredictable environment. Additionally, I had the opportunity to reflect on the theoretical issues delivered from my Masters course and consider the future direction of my career.

Following my experience in India I have been able to obtain assignments in Afghanistan, where I have now worked for over two and a half years with a series of NGOs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the University of Cambridge. I believe that the experience I gained in India, working with FAS and supported by TAA, was fundamental in formulating and grounding my approach to development practice. In addition, my opportunities for obtaining employment were greatly enhanced.



I am now back in the UK completing my Doctorate of Philosophy (DPhil) at the University of Sussex's Institute for Development Studies (IDS). I am also an active member of the TAA's Award Fund Committee. I am eager to assist other new graduates to benefit from the kind of support the TAA has offered to me.