REPORT ON SIX-WEEK FIELD INTERNSHIP AT CARE INDIA

SUBMITTED BY:

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Srujanwita Mohapatra
Introduction:

The six week field internship was completed with a national NGO i.e. CARE India, that mainly focuses on the empowerment of women and girls from poor and marginalized communities leading to improvement in their lives and livelihoods. With a vision to end poverty and social injustice, CARE India has been working in the following four major domains- Health, Education, Livelihood and Disaster Preparedness. As the Intern’s interest area was on livelihood, the organization allowed her to study its ongoing pathways project and also assigned her the responsibility to prepare a process documentation on REFLECT CIRCLE- an integral part of this pathways project.

CARE India’s Pathways program builds on, and is inspired by the vital roles that women around the world play in smallholder agriculture, providing food security to their households and communities, and consequently contributing to development and growth. It is a part of global initiative that is currently implemented in selected regions of six countries- Bangladesh, India, Malawi, Tanzania, Mali and Ghana with the support from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It focuses on 3 key dimensions of empowerment: Agency, Structure, and Relations. The Pathways India initiative focuses its work in Kalahandi (in 62 villages) and Kandhamal (in 86 Villages) districts of Odisha State. These two districts which comprise large tribal population with agriculture as primary occupation, are found to be the backward region of the state, with higher poverty and illiteracy.

Since time immemorial, the SCs and STs rarely have any access and control over productive assets and resources as well as no decisive participation in any political processes. Again, it is a common tendency of our society to consider women as the object of control. When the upper caste people dominate the lower caste or marginalized section, the lower caste men start controlling the women of their caste to show their masculinized and hegemony over them. So, the women of marginalized section (SC and ST) are oppressed by both upper caste men and women as well as lower caste men. Though she does a lots of work including her household and outside, her work is never recognized and appreciated by the community. She has no control over anything even if on her body also.

So to bring equity and empowerment, Pathways project has introduced a new strategy known as REFLECT CIRCLE APPROACH. REFLECT stands for- RE- Regenerated; F- Freirean; L- Literacy through; E-Empowering; C-Community; T-Technique. It is an innovative approach to
adult learning and social change, which fuses the theories of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire with participatory methodologies.

**Strategies of Reflect Circle:**

Within reflect Circle, members from different collectives and non-collectives (irrespective of gender/caste), by virtue of having representation, come together for discussions and dialogue on workload sharing, women’s equal participation in decision-making process, access to market for free and fair trade, gender and caste equity, social justice, and issues relating to basic human amenities (food, education, road, water, health, electricity etc.). These RC member representatives take the issues back and initiate discussions in their respective collectives. The Reflect Circle has started for last six months and its meeting are usually held once or sometimes twice in a month.

This can be better explained through the below-mentioned structure:
So, reflect is a process that empowers the community members to “question” the hegemony of the oppressors and their “power over” the community and to exercise their rights for the enjoyment of full citizenship.

**Impact/Early Changes Of Reflect Circle:**

During the internship period, the intern visited to 9 villages of Kalahandi and Kandhamal districts of Odisha to observe some of the early changes due to this reflect circle. These villages are Kamgaon, Urladani, Boringpadar, Borguda, Nunpani, Budhidar of Kalahandi district and Dodapada, Kalungia, Adasunga of Kandhamal district. These villages were coming under the jurisdiction of different blocks of both the districts like Madanpur Rampur, Narla, Junagarh, Dharmagarh (Kalahandi) and G. Udayagiri and Tikabali (Kandhamal). Except Adasunga village (Tikabali block) of Kandhamal district, Reflect Circle has been working in all other villages since last six months. Some of the early changes are:

1. **Enhancement of skills and capabilities of Impact group:** The basic aim of this pathways is to make women self-sufficient and self-reliant by improving their knowledge, skills through various meetings and trainings. Realization and mass participation within RC has made women more empowered. *(Appendix-1.1)*

2. **Promotion of Workload sharing & Women's participation in decision-making process:** The importance of workload sharing among the male members has been realized through RC meetings. Women’s participation in decision-making process has also increased through RC by allowing them to sit in Panchayat meetings and Palli sabha, where they step forward to solve major issues of villages like road problem, water and sanitation, food and agriculture, health issues, electricity, school and Anganwadi problems etc. *(Appendix-1.2)*

3. **Women’s mobility through market involvement:** Through Reflect Circle, the importance of women’s mobility and her market involvement is realized both by its members and their husbands. *(Appendix-1.3)*

4. **Some reduction in Alcohol consumption and Violence:** One of the biggest success of RC in majority of villages is, some reduction in alcohol consumption. RC Facilitators and members arrange various meetings to create awareness among the villagers especially the youth, against alcohol consumption and growing violence out of it.
5. **Gender and Caste Discrimination**: To reduce the gender and caste barrier, Reflect Circle has designed to include all genders and castes within its ambit. *(Appendix-1.4)*

6. **Blind Belief**: RC enables its members to think rationally and logically by reducing their blind beliefs. Though a complete change can’t be possible within a period of six months, but some early changes have been observed. *(Appendix-1.5)*

7. **Knowledge sharing**: Through RC meeting, they discuss and share various information and knowledge resulting in the promotion of unity, equity and empowerment.

8. **Gender-based and caste-based violence**: In most of the villages, people deny the incidents of gender-based violence, although in some villages they prefer sons over daughters. Discrimination is there, but no violence usually occurs. As they are tribal people, so they have different culture. This gender-based violence exists in some of the SC families. RC tries to make people aware over the issues. *(Appendix-1.6)*

**Learning & Reflections:**

Following are some of the learning and reflections that have developed through Field Internship.

1. **Strategies and approaches used in a project should be simple and unambiguous**: The longevity and success of any project depend upon its approach. This is the first learning that as every project aims for the development of poor-backward tribal people, it must be simple and easily reachable to them.

2. **Deeper understanding of Livelihood concept**: Through this internship, the intern is able to develop her understanding about the concept of livelihood. She learnt that livelihood comprises people, their capabilities and their means of living, including food, income and assets.

3. **Role of men in empowering women**: This is another major learning that no empowerment can be possible without the self-realization and help of men. Because empowerment of women does not mean the negligence of men.

4. **Self-realization by the project beneficiaries**: During internship, it was observed that unless and until people become active or want to develop their existing conditions, no development can be possible by the outsiders. They need to understand the basic objectives,
goals and how this project will help them to improve their future. Changes can be brought by them, not by the NGO workers only.

5. *Every project should be individual-based rather than organization-based:* Another important learning that is realized from this internship is while implementing any project, our basic motto should be individual-concerned that means we should concern with the welfare of project beneficiaries rather than the profit and publicity of organization. So, whether the organization remains in future or not, development should not be back stepped.

6. *Role of NGO in developmental process:* It gives the intern an opportunity to study the various strategies used in the project and how those approaches are helpful in achieving developmental goals.

7. *Setting up smaller targets to achieve big goals:* Long-term goals can be achieved through smaller milestones. E.g. CARE’s Pathways project, whose ultimate goal is to improve the livelihood of tribal women by empowering them, that can be achieved through smaller targets i.e. by reducing gender/caste barrier, enhancement of mobility and independence of women, adopting improved agricultural practices etc. So, each small targets should be achieved truly to bring big change.

**Limitations & Suggestions:**

It is a universal truth that without failure, no success can be achieved. Similarly, when there is no challenges, there is no development. These are some of the challenges encountered during internship.

1. *Language Barrier:* Understanding of language is one of the major challenge of this project. As the project is working on empowering tribal women and in most of the cases, they speak tribal languages, it is very difficult to understand and interpret correctly. So, impartial translator should be employed.

2. *Attendance issues of Reflect Circle Members:* Reflect Circle is a continuous process, which requires full participation of all its members. So, the unequal and irregular participation of members pose a difficulty to bring all of them on the same platform.

**Video recording of the meeting** will enable the organization to check the gaps and consequently help to improve various strategies of reflect circle.
3. **Skills and Knowledge of CRP, RC Facilitators & Members:** CRP is just like a communicator between the villagers and CARE. If he is not skillful, then proper implementation of the program is impossible. E.g. in Budhidar village of Junagarh block (Kalahandi District), the CRP is not so skilled to make RC active. Less man power is also another challenge. So more training should be given to CRP, RC members and facilitators not only to enhance their skills, but also to evaluate it and make them understand the importance of reflect circle in their personal and community life.

4. **Absence of regular follow up:** During the visits, it was observed that, no regular follow up is made by the CRP for RC meetings and other programs of pathways project. In some other villages like Kalungia village of Tikabali block, where RC members are confused between RC meeting and SHG meeting that can be improved through regular follow up by CRP and partner NGOs.

5. **Issues of Gender and Caste Discrimination:** This is one of the major issue not only for reflect circle, but also for all other programs running under this pathways. In many villages, the gap has reduced up to some extent through RC, gender dialogue and all other training programs.

6. **Lower participation of male members, especially the young:** In some villages women are the only members of REFLECT Circle which develop a misconception that only women can be the part of it. So it is important to make them understand that no equity and empowerment is possible unless men are also part of RC.

7. **Number of households:** It was observed that the villages having limited households have well-functioning REFLECT Circles as compared to large villages. So, the larger village should be divided in to different parts for the better functioning of the project.

**Conclusion:** This six-week field internship has given me a good platform to understand the development process in the real scenario. It has helped me to think like a has helped me appreciate the gap between theory and the practical world.
Appendix-1:

1. As stated by the RC members of Kamgaon, Urladani and Nunpani, their confidence has increased as they have developed their skills through participation within the RC.

2. 

   **Jyotsna Bhoi, aged 32 years of Kamgaon village, Kalahandi-**
   
   “Previously men treated us as cattle and our only work was to obey their orders as they were giving us food for our survival. They didn’t allow us to join RC. But we didn’t listen to them. Whenever I learnt new things and started participating in the decision making process of my household, my husband used violence against me to stop my independence. But I didn’t stop myself and also other RC members helped me to fight. Now he fears me and respect my decisions.”

3. 

   **Shantilata Patra, aged 40 years, RC Facilitator of Urladani village, Kalahandi-**
   
   “We also didn’t want to go to market as we had no confidence on ourselves. We were not able to talk with unknown persons and traders due to our own fear. So sometimes, we sold our goods at a lower price. Our husbands also criticized us that created an inferiority feelings among us. But now we talk with each other and go for collective marketing. RC helped us to realize it. Other male members also help us a lot.”

4. As stated by CRP and one of the villagers of Kamgaon, previously it was not possible for them to sit together with SC people. But now the discrimination has reduced up to certain extent due to reflect circle. Yet a lot of improvement is needed.  

   *(Statements given by CRP- Mr. Shankar & Villagers- Rashmita Bhoi)*

5. Previously they were not allowing their daughter to study, but now they are doing so. In Urladani village, some young girls who are part of RC, stated that they have convinced some of their friend’s parents not to get their daughter married at an early age. Similarly, some of the blind beliefs relating to girl’s menstruation somehow changed. Villagers especially
women are now educated and is trying to make distinction between right and wrong. 
(Statements given by CRP Sarada Majhi, Urkadani village)

6. It is evident that in Kalungia village of Kandhamal District, the RC facilitator is not so much skillful and consequently, reflect circle is also not active. Some members are only participating by leaving a large number of members in silence.
Appendix-2: Questionnaires for Focused-Group Discussion

Community Resource Person (CRP):

- What is your understanding regarding the pathways project?
- What are the challenges you face while implementing this project?
- How do you manage those challenges?
- What are the changes you observe while implementing this project?
- What do you think about the role of gender in livelihood?
- How and what are the tools you use in facilitating the GED discussions?
- How do you facilitate the RC representatives in conducting Reflect Circle?
- What are the different training provided to you by the organization/Care India under Pathways?
- How do this training help you to enhance your abilities and skills in facilitating discussion on GED?
- What are the challenges faced in using the tools?
- How these tools have been beneficial in achieving pathway objectives?
- What are the changes observed by you in relation to the decision making ability of women /workload sharing /assess to inputs and resources due to this pathway project?
- How does the changing decision making skill influence the power relationship exist between the oppressed and the oppressor?
- What are the responses of the community?
- What are the changes at community level found?
- How do other interventions contribute in pushing forward the agenda of GED?

Reflect Circle Facilitators:

- Why RC? What difference they see?
- What is the composition of RC and how do you conduct it?
- What is the process followed in forming RC?
• How are the RC facilitators selected? Multiple membership in case of RC facilitators?
• What is the role of facilitator?
• What is the importance of RC?
• What are the different training received by them? How do these training help them in increasing their skills?
• What are the changes you see through this RC?
• What is the attitude of its members towards the Reflect circle?
• What are the challenges faced by you while initiating RC?
• How do RC and GED give women a special recognition in the society and what are its impact on them?
• How does RC create a realization among the male members regarding the status of the women at household and community?
• How does the changing decision making skill influence the power relationship exist between the oppressed and the oppressor?
• How does this process help in empowering women in bringing them together?
• Do they see any role of RC in GED? How?
• What are the different collective action-processes and results?
• What is their future plans?

Reflect Circle Members:

• Why do you join RC?
• What are the changes you observe on your part as well as on the part of others after joining RC at household and community level?
• How do this RC and GED approach give you a unique identity in your family and community?
• How do various strategies used in RC and GED approach influence your decision making ability?
• What are the benefits you get by joining the Reflect Circle?
• What are the challenges faced by you while joining RC?
**ST/SC Women Farmer/ Impact Population:**

- What is their role in agriculture?
- What is the contribution of agriculture to their family?
- What are the challenges they face from their family, community, and society while working as a farmer?
- What are the structural barriers faced by them?
- How do they contribute in strengthening the economy of their family through their income?
- How do the GED and RC strategy help them to create their own identity as a farmer?
- How do they manage their family and outside?
- While interacting with the market and other male members, what discrimination do they face?
- What violence do they face in their family and how do they raise their voice against it?
- How does working as a women farmer give them an equal status with their male partners?
- Who has the ownership rights over the land and other resources?
- How do they have access to loan from various formal institutions?
- How has their income in the present increased their savings compared to the past?
- How do the RC and GED approach help women to understand and address the social discrimination that prevails in their society?
- How do these approaches influence the political participation of women as well as the decision-making processes of local governance or Palli Sabha?
- How do they feel while sitting in Palli Sabha and discussing about developmental activities? Do they raise their voice in those meetings?
- How do the access to productive resources and means of production influence the decision-making ability of a woman in her family and community?
- How does a woman’s access to market influence her decision-making ability?
- How do they manage when they are in bad health? Do their family members or husband support them? How?
- How does the GED approach guarantee better education and good health for women?
- Is the training provided to them found to be useful in increasing their skills? How? Have they participated in these platforms before and impacted the same?
• Whether you share the learnings and experiences of different trainings and workshops arranged by the organization to other villagers, who are not the part of this program?
• Whether the reflective circle and GED process are helpful in strengthening your relationship with your family, community and villages?

**Women Farmer’s Spouse:**
• How do you see women as a farmer?
• Why do you support your wives to act in a different way?
• How does the income of women farmer influence the power relation and position of the male member in the household and the community?
• What are the challenges you face when women began to work as a farmer?
• Why do you support RC and GED approach and what are the benefits you are getting out of it?
• Why and how do you support your wives in managing dual responsibilities?
• How do RC and GED help in changing the attitude of men towards women or to what extent RC and GED tried to change the behavior of men towards women?

**Male Champions:**
• Why do you choose to work as a male champion and what is your duty and functioning?
• How do you feel being as a male champion?
• How do other male in the village look at you?
• What are the challenges you face?
• What are the changes you have brought as a male champion?
• How do the RC and GED approach bring changes in the village/in women?
• How many persons are influenced by you and started sharing work load and changing their behavior towards women?
• What is there participation in GED dialogue?
• Have they seen any tools used by CRP’s?
• What role do they see for themselves in taking forward the agenda of GED?
• What further support do they require in having the dialogues?
• What changes in behavior they would like to see in male to promote gender equality?
• What actions they have taken at their home and outside?

**General Questions:**
• What are the different training given on improved agricultural practices to women farmers?
• What are the different agricultural implements given to SHG?
• Women Land rights (Land Literacy)
• Aggregate- Mahua flower, Maize by women farmers, negotiate with traders and sell directly.
• Strengthening Women SHG’s to have linkage with banks.

**WORD COUNTS:**

**MAIN REPORT- 2010** *(Excluding Cover page, Acknowledgement & Appendixes)*