

# VILLAGE STAY

## Objectives:

- Experience full immersion
- Build empathy and respect
- Alter perceptions of time/efficiency

**Suggested Scheduling:** Week three

**Time Required:** 2-3 days

## BACKGROUND AND ORGANIZATIONAL INSIGHT

Village stay is a 2-3 day immersive village experience. It is valuable for rural fellows whose placements might resemble the village. It is also valuable for urban fellows whose slum communities are mostly economic migrants hailing from such villages. And more importantly, village stay provides a different context and a different way of being and living. Village stay is a key transition point from more internal orientation towards full community integration. Village stay is organized in partnership with a rural community organization with strong village relations. IndioCorps structured village stay as an exercise for the villagers to serve as teachers and acclimatize fellows to both the social dynamics, pace, and idyllic beauty of village life, as well as the hard work of everyday living.

## PREPARATION FOR THE FACILITATOR

Fellows are placed with various families in a village or cluster of villages and asked to shadow a different member of the family each day. Villagers are asked to suspend some of their gender norms to allow male fellows to assist with women's chores (drawing water, cooking, etc.) and vice versa. Fellows are asked to suspend judgment, minimize their baggage (literally and figuratively), be open to learning new ways, roll up their sleeves and immerse as fully as possible for the 2-3 days. IndioCorps staff do regular rounds to provide moral support, to make observations, and to organize a culminating integrated group project and gratitude dinner on the final day.

IndioCorps paid for food and nominal costs of adding a member to the households. Through the culminating group project and gratitude dinner, we also attempted to make a small tangible contribution for the villagers' time and effort.

## ACTIVITY

Village stay is a 2-3 day immersive village experience. Everyone travels together to a pre-designated village or cluster of villages. We gather first at the host community organization's office. The community organization debriefs us on their work/experience, the demographics of the village, and safety protocols. Community organization leaders and an advance team then deliver volunteers at their respective home-stays and remind everyone that the volunteer is not

here as a guest, but to shadow and work alongside various members of the household for the next 36 hours. Staff should do rounds of the villages to monitor volunteer progress, to make observations and suggest pointers. They should also organize a collective group project and a thank you community dinner in gratitude and to make a tangible contribution for our visit.

### **ADAPT EXERCISE FOR A SOLO FELLOW OR VOLUNTEER:**

Village stay is difficult to emulate as a solo volunteer. However, a solo volunteer might be able to ask his/her host organization/family if s/he can spend a few days at a source village and shadow some of the villagers for a day. Having a local guide who can help establish a connection to the village, explain the purpose of the exercise to the host family, and put in place basic safety measures.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- How did village stay jive with your initial expectations of a village? What was accurate? What was different?
- What did you learn from your host family?
- What did you learn from observing your fellow volunteers?
- What did you learn about the value of the relationships of the host partner organization?
- How did your relationship with time change during your village stay?
- In what ways did we “take” as individuals and as a group? And in what ways did we make a contribution?
- How will this experience make you more empathetic in your project?

