

#LPRD# A Field Worker's Diary [#Part 40](#) # 25 August 2020

On the first evening of our official engagements in Boston (31st July 2017), I and Khosi, a friend from a small African country called Swaziland, went to a shop called '10000 Villages' on the advice of our coordinator Jennifer.

Since we both worked with women's Self Help Groups (SHGs) and participated in programs in which we provided them training on manufacturing of various products and marketing them, Jennifer thought it would be useful for us to go to that shop. The '10000 Villages' company collects and markets handicrafts made by poor women from different countries through their shops. There were so many beautiful things in that shop! Khosi and I did not feel like leaving. Looking at the beauty of each of the objects and the skill of the hand work, we wondered if it had come to life at the hands of some woman in a remote area of a country.

A short description was also written under each item in the shop. The two of us spent the day reading the details of what each item was made of, what the name of that particular handicraft was, and where it was made, and headed back to the hotel. Globalization has pushed small producers out of the market and ruined their lives. But the same globalization has brought such small producers closer together and closer to the consumer. 10000 villages further strengthened our belief that collectivization is the only way for artisans, rural artisans and other small producers in the face of globalization.

The next day, a Tuesday, our first appointment was with Megan, the Director of the Boston Office of Women's Advancement at Boston City Hall. Megan explained their company's programs to us. In addition to giving small grants to aspiring women entrepreneurs interested in starting businesses, they organize panel discussions and pitch contests here to learn business techniques. Apart from that, they also provide necessary help to other non-profit organisations through giving them grants. After our meeting with Megan and her team, our coordinators dropped us off at the renowned Quincy marketplace in Boston. The market, which opened in 1742, covers a vast area of about three and a half million square feet. With over 70 well-known retail stores, 40 offices, and hundreds of small shops, this marketplace also has many small restaurants. Whichever country's cuisine you want you can find it there. Our coordinators gave us almost three hours to roam around and left us at that place. Everyone started shopping as soon as they

left. Seeing that atmosphere, those crowds and the rush, I was reminded of the Repalle village fest. I could not breathe in that crowd. I wasn't that interested in shopping. I walked alone to the nearby harbour and sat there for a while looking at the ships and the comings and goings of the tourists. For fear of getting lost from the rest of the pack (I can't remember routes easily), I came back early to the marketplace. While wandering there, I caught sight of Hadi from Tunisia and Yousuf from Morocco sitting together. While sitting with them, Hadi said that he was engaged to be married and that he would be married in fifteen days after returning from there. According to their tribal customs, their family had to give 70 sheep to the bride's family, and said that sheep were an integral part of their culture. That evening, as I and Yousuf told the rest of the team about the good news, Hadi had no option but to give us all a party.

Excluding the three of us, the shopping of the other 20 women was not done so fast. Our coordinators returned and entrusted us with the responsibility of bringing all of them back to the bus. Without even wanting to, I have to roam all across the vast place to find our teammates. By the time we found them and brought them to the bus, I had more than my share of adventure for the day. From there, we all went to a home called Rosie's Place. This home provides shelter for victims of domestic violence, as well as women living alone for various other reasons. Of all the organisations I visited, this was my favourite place. Started in 1974, the home is said to be the first women's shelter home in the United States.

Even though there are such organizations in our country, the way they were running that home and its maintenance seemed very professional. Because women who come there experience a lot of suffering in life and come with depression, stress and other mental problems. Instead of asking them various questions that would remind them about their painful past, the management provides them all facilities to stay comfortably alone or with people, whichever way was convenient for them. They try to learn more about the women only when the women were willing to open up about their past. The managers there stated that they named their home 'Rosie's Place' so that the women come there with a feeling of going to a friend's house rather than going to a destitute home. The home, which was run with at most cleanliness and a good atmosphere, provides the women with counselling services and judicial help. Moreover, they provide the necessary help to those who want to pursue higher education or seek employment. After they become a little emotionally and financially stable, they also help the women in building their homes. Many educated young women were serving there as volunteers. There was

also a small departmental store in that home. All kinds of essentials, vegetables, fruits, etc., were neatly arranged in small packets in that store. Anyone in need can come and pick up the goods for free from that store. Needy people select whatever they need from that store just like we do shopping at the supermarket.

All those who get the services of the organization are being called clients there. In the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in our country, we tend to generally use the word 'beneficiaries'. Nowadays, some people have started using the term 'stakeholders'. But seeing the people at Rosie's Place calling those who receive their services as 'clients', we can understand how much respect they have for the people they serve. In a world where there are some who exploit helpless people and others who think that they have done a great favour in the name of help, I felt that we could truly learn a thing or two from these people who showed how honourably help can be provided to a person while respecting the other person's dignity and privacy (no matter how helpless they were). In fact, the women who seek refuge there are fully deserving of that honour. They have come there in severe depression after losing everything in life. I came back from there with a lot of love and respect for them after seeing the unparalleled mental strength and courage they were showing to rebuild their lives based on the small support they found in that place.

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