

**Minnesota Studies in International Development -- India Program  
Report Update  
October 2007**

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The activities below have been initiated in response to the recommendations of the MSID-India Program Review conducted in February 2007.

**Summary of Recommendations**

1. Add to the pre-departure reading a book that begins with the late colonial period, and then gives critical coverage to the economic and political history of India since independence, providing the students with a modern context for the study of Indian development.

*Response:* As of fall 2008, pre-departure books will no longer be required. All textbooks will be purchased in country to alleviate the challenges students have found in ordering books in advance. As a result, the on-site will incorporate the desired breadth in the Country Analysis course.

2. Assemble a short list of films and novels as optional pre-departure readings.

*Response:* A suggested list of films and novels will be added to the resource page of the LAC India web site. The pre-departure readings for all sites only list required readings, and LAC wishes to maintain a similar format of information for all sites.

3. Consider making MAXSA optional rather than required for next year's MSID groups. In the meantime, investigate the possibility of going back to a cross-cultural orientation run by on-site staff, and the longer-term feasibility of altering MAXSA for developing world sites.

*Response:* This is currently being discussed in LAC. No final decision has been made.

4. Advise students to take a term of Hindi before departure if at all possible and explore less formal ways that students in a variety of sites in the U.S. could study some Hindi on their own before departure, by learning "survival Hindi" from phrasebooks and/or learning the script before departure.

*Response:* LAC will offer an 4-week summer Hindi program prior to the start of fall semester. This program will begin in August 2008.

5. Add "Survival Hindi" as a component of the in-country orientation.

*Response:* LAC has informed the on-site staff of this recommendation.

6. Reduce Hindi class sizes to five or six students and consider extending Hindi

instruction to two hours per day.

*Response:* The on-site staff have found it very challenging to identify suitable instructors who understand the interactive US learning style. They will continue to try and identify additional instructors to reduce class size. LAC has reminded the on-site staff that there should be a total of 50 contact hours for a 4-credit class.

7. A dialogue with U.S. Hindi instructors on state of the art language pedagogy may be a mutually rewarding exchange. This is a delicate question: MSID should certainly not impose Peace Corps/Dartmouth language pedagogy on instructors with a different cultural tradition, but should try to make ideas *and materials* available for adoption.

*Response:* LAC has informed the on-site staff of this suggestion.

8. Hindi instructors could make a rough overall course outline of what is to be covered; efforts of host families could be coordinated with the activities of the formal course.

*Response:* LAC has informed the on-site staff of this suggestion and forwarded the University of Minnesota Hindi syllabi.

9. More printed material should be introduced into the Hindi course, whether in the form of a workbook, worksheets, and/or a textbook.

*Response:* LAC has informed the on-site staff of this suggestion.

10. Select a book on the economic and political history of India since the end of the colonial period, include it in the pre-departure readings, and suggest that faculty in both International Development and Country Analysis refer to it as a sort of spine on which other information could be hung.

*Response:* The two courses now have a very different focus. The International Development course is now divided into topic-specific tracks, with tailored readings based on that particular theme. The track topics are:

Education and Literacy  
Environmental Studies/Ecology  
Literature, Arts and Cultural Studies  
Public Health  
Microbusiness/Alternative Economies

11. Place more emphasis on open issues in development rather than on received knowledge. Critical analysis of development's successes and failures in the Indian context should get more emphasis.

*Response:* The on-site staff is aware of the cultural differences in teaching styles and makes every attempt to identify suitable instructors. Excellent instructors are in

extremely high demand in Jaipur due to competitive study abroad programs and the local educational institutional needs.

12. Both Rima and Rakshat Hooja, who possess considerable intellectual resources in this area, should intervene more than they already do, both in International Development and in Country Analysis, to synthesize and integrate, and make relevant (put the pieces together and connect them with a big picture) diverse material from instructors and guest lecturers for the students.

*Response:* LAC has forwarded this recommendation to the on-site staff.

13. The planned restructuring of the International Development course to incorporate two or three “tracks” offers a great opportunity to benefit from the best of Prof Ahuja’s knowledge and experience in the first, most purely economic, segment of the new course, and to tap other perspectives in the tracks. As the content of International Development changes due to the addition of the new “tracks,” it will be important to adjust the material in Country Analysis so that it supports or relates to material in the new tracks.

*Response:* The on-site staff has taken this recommendation into consideration this summer when redesigning the two classes.

14. Use a broader range of self-directed and facilitator-led techniques and practices to help students identify their internship interests.

*Response:* The on-site staff now initiate the internship discussion earlier in the academic semester in order to allow for greater discussion.

15. Consider the establishment of an internship fair where internship site hosts briefly describe the agency including mission, history, and the range of project activities currently engaged.

*Response:* Agencies find it very taxing to accept our students and will not be responsive to a request also to present to our students. The on-site staff does focus excursions around visits to various potential agencies so that students can see their options.

16. It is recommended that opportunities at a broader range of NGO agencies be explored to further the attractiveness of the MSID program. For example, internships in NGOs related to adult literacy, rural tourism, or cultural preservation may be possible.

*Response:* Agencies are identified based on student interest. The on-site staff will keep this recommendation in mind if a student expresses interest.

17. Continue to explore ways to further integrate the internship into the academic program. Having a regular (weekly) discussion where the learning of the past week could be connected into the context of doing field based learning at an internship site could leverage knowledge outcomes. It appears that students on the year long program

have little formal connection with semester program students. The first-hand voice and sharing of experience (the process of finding an internship site, the type of projects engaged in, etc) would potentially be valuable information to share.

*Response:* Beginning fall 2008, MSID will offer a more structured second semester program. This will include more language training at the beginning and a formal course on research methodology.

18. The team recommends that the website more strongly recommend prior Hindi study or clearly describe the reality of being in a predominantly Hindi language environment with no prior language. Spend some orientation time on survival Hindi phrases and oral practice in role plays or other drills. Students should be requested to bring the Lonely Planet Hindi phrasebook, which is available in the U.S. for less than \$10.

*Response:* The students MSID Program Guide recommends that students study Hindi prior to departure. The summer program will also provide an avenue for language acquisition prior to the semester program.

19. Significantly more time should be spent on the realities of sexual harassment of female students on the streets and on public transportation in Jaipur.

*Response:* The on-site staff have incorporated greater discussion into the orientation program.

20. Students on the program routinely have difficulty meeting Indian students of their own age. Orientation could include a gathering with local Indian students from the University in Jaipur. Periodic gatherings at the MSID office throughout the semester would assist students in making friends, which is particularly challenging for female students who face a cultural barrier to simply spending time at the local University campus.

*Response:* LAC has forwarded this recommendation to the on-site staff, although there is little incentive for Indian students to connect with the MSID group at this time.

21. Orientation to the British style of higher education would be helpful to students.

*Response:* The on-site staff incorporate a discussion of different teaching styles into the orientation program.

22. Female participants should be given additional information about the negative impact of ignoring, even occasionally, their host family's cultural norms about arriving home before dark and staying in at night. Pre-departure orientation in the U.S. can begin this dialogue, which can then be reinforced once on-site.

*Response:* The student Program Guide includes greater details on cultural norms for females.

23. The facilities would be improved with a few equipment purchases. The team recommends the purchase of a dedicated fax machine and phone line for the MSID office, as presently faxes are sent to the director's home. The team also recommends the purchase of an LCD projector for PowerPoint and other electronic presentations (presently the staff use their own personal LCD Projector). The team recommends purchase of a DVD player and other audio-visual materials for the course instructors. The Hindi instructor surveys all indicated a need for better audio-visual materials to assist them in their language instruction.

*Response:* LAC has consulted with the on-site staff and budgeted for any equipment needs.