Marudhar Kesari Jain

College for Women (Autonomous), Vaniyambadi

PG Department of Social work

Organized a Field Visit

on

A Practical Glimpse into Social Development with "South Central India Network for Development Alternatives (SCINDeA)"

Activity Report

Date	: 22.09.2026, Tuesday
Location	: South Central India Network for Development Alternatives (SCINDeA); Yelagiri, Tamil Nadu
Participants	: 5 Students (I MSW) and 2 Faculty members
Theme	: A Practical Glimpse into Social Development with "South Central India Network for Development Alternatives

As part of the academic curriculum, the PG Department of Social Work organized a field visit to **South Central India Network for Development Alternatives (SCINDeA)**, Yelagiri. Five students from I MSW were accompanied by Mrs. Anandhi A. and Dr. Sanghamitra Rajnandini Saikia, Assistant Professors in the PG Department of Social Work. The visit provided practical exposure to NGO functioning and community development, enabling students to connect classroom learning with social work practice.

Input of the Field Trip

- To provide social work students with practical exposure to NGO functioning and community development.
- To develop an understanding of SHGs, financial inclusion and rural livelihood support.
- To explore the role of entrepreneurship in women's empowerment.
- To understand community-based approaches to children's education.
- To strengthen observation, communication and community engagement skills by connecting theory with practice.

About the Organization

SCINDeA is a nonprofit development network based in Yelagiri Hills, started in 1993 and registered in 1994. Led by Executive Secretary Dr. Sheila Benjamin, it promotes community participation, gender equality, human rights and sustainable development among marginalized communities. Its work covers 319 villages across 13 districts in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, including 14 villages in Yelagiri Hills.

Major Programme Areas

SCINDeA's published programmes include social education on rights and citizenship; access to government schemes; livelihood and skill development; child development and protection; and networking with government departments and other organizations. Skill training includes tailoring, computer skills, driving, aari work, beekeeping, cocoon rearing, dairy farming and millet value addition.

Its environmental work includes climate change education, climate-smart agriculture, farmer groups, demonstration plots, mangrove restoration and mini-forests. Child-focused activities include life skills, career guidance, constitutional rights education and strengthening school management and village child protection committees. These programme areas provide context for understanding SCINDeA's development approach.

Office Visit and Briefing Session

The visit began at the SCINDeA office, where the students and accompanying faculty interacted with Dr. Sheila Benjamin, Executive Secretary, Mr. Karunanidhi, Programme coordinator. Dr. Sheila Benjamin conducted a detailed briefing on the organization, its activities and its functioning. She also explained the activities planned for the visiting group and introduced the community-based learning opportunities arranged for the day.

The briefing gave students an overview of how an NGO organizes its work and connects development programmes with community needs. It provided the background for the subsequent village visit, helping students relate organizational objectives to the experiences of people participating in its programmes.

Activity 1: Interaction with SHG Members

Following the briefing, the group visited Palakanniyoour Village in Yelagiri and interacted with members of a self-help group. The interaction focused on their livelihood activities and the loan and financial support facilities available through SCINDeA's interventions, as described during the visit. Students learned that members were engaged in farming and animal rearing. A flower garden in the village was also noted during the field visit.

The discussion provided an opportunity to understand the relationship between access to finance and rural livelihoods. Farming and animal rearing formed the practical context for considering how financial support can help households undertake productive activities. The interaction also introduced students to SHGs as a setting for collective participation, mutual support and engagement with development organizations.

Students' direct interaction with community members helped connect social work concepts with everyday livelihood experiences. It highlighted the importance of listening to people, understanding local circumstances and recognizing the community's own knowledge and priorities when planning development interventions.

Activity 2: Real-Life Exposure to Women Entrepreneurship near Yelagiri Boat House

During the second activity, students visited small enterprises operated by women near the Yelagiri Boat House, including tea shops, petty shops and stalls selling toys and decorative items. They interacted with the women entrepreneurs to understand their experiences of running small businesses and earning a livelihood. During the visit, students were informed that these women received financial support facilitated by SCINDeA for their entrepreneurial activities.

The interaction was inspiring, allowing students to appreciate the women's dedication, confidence and efforts towards financial independence. Observing their businesses provided practical insight into how small enterprises create opportunities for self-employment and support family livelihoods.

This activity helped students connect classroom concepts of women's empowerment and livelihood development with real-life experiences. It also highlighted the importance of financial access and organizational support in encouraging women to become entrepreneurs.

Activity 3: Visit to the Study Centre at Nilavur, Yelagiri

After visiting the women entrepreneurs, students visited the study centre at Nilavur, Yelagiri, which provides free educational support to school children from Classes V to X. The visit offered an opportunity to understand the centre's role in supporting children's learning and making additional academic assistance accessible without a financial burden on their families.

The visit helped students appreciate the importance of community-based educational initiatives in supporting school education. It also enabled them to connect classroom concepts of child development, equal educational opportunities and community support with practical social work interventions.

Debriefing Session

The field visit concluded with a debriefing session at the SCINDeA head office with Dr. Sheila Benjamin, students and faculty members. Participants reviewed the activities completed, shared their learning experiences and provided feedback. The session brought the visit to a successful close, helping students reflect on their observations and connect classroom learning with practical social work experiences.

Output of the Field Trip

- Students gained practical knowledge of NGO functioning and community development.
- Students understood the role of SHGs, financial inclusion and livelihood support in strengthening rural communities.
- Students recognized the contribution of entrepreneurship to women's empowerment and financial independence.
- Students gained insight into community-based approaches to supporting children's education.
- Students strengthened their observation, communication and community engagement skills by connecting classroom learning with field experiences.

This activity aligned with SDG 1, 4, 5, 8, 17.

SDG 1 : No Poverty, SDG 4 : Quality Education SDG 5 : Gender Equality SDG 8 : Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 17 : Partnership for the Goals.

Head of Department **Dean** **IQAC Director** **Principal**

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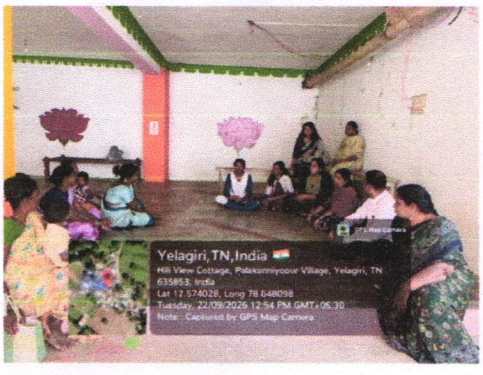
GLIMPSES OF THE FIELD TRIP



Introductory Session with the members of SCINDeA



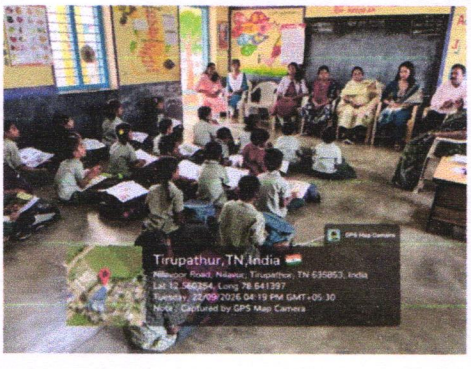
Dr Sheila Benjamin, Executive Secretary of SCINDeA along withMr. Karunanidhi, (Programme Coordinator) briefing about the programme schedule to the students



Students interacting with the SHG menbers of Palakanniyoour Village, Yelagiri



Visited a real scenario: Interaction with the shop owner of "Tea Time" a business supported by SCINDeA



Interaction with the Young learners of Study Centre of Nilavur, Yelagiri supported by SCINDeA



Concluding Session with the members of SCINDeA

Principal

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