

The experiential Journey as a three month intern in Geneva

It was a call from Sr. Susan Chia, Congregational link councilor, who had visited the Sri Lanka/Pakistan province for a workshop on “Participative model of Leadership” which made me realize the need to get experience in relation to the Human Rights Based Approach and the instruments which were available at international level which could assist us to be more effective at the local level. From that day onwards all the arrangement were made for me to have an experiential learning process in Geneva and I arrived here on 10th January 2013. Sr. Clare Nolan, the training facilitator of GS and Sr. Hedwig , GS JP representative of Geneva welcomed me and guided me throughout my journey in Geneva.

My first few days in Geneva were spent with our two sisters Clare and Hedwig. While Clare guided me in organizing my activities, setting goals and having weekly evaluation; Hedwig gave me a full orientation to the UN and its activities. I was indeed very happy to receive the UN badge on the very next day following my arrival. The first few weeks gave me ample opportunities to get familiar with the UN building, with people, and with the committee working on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and also in drafting the oral statement in support of the Draft Declaration on the Right to Peace. Participating as an NGO at the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) helped me to understand the CRC and the way the ratified countries are being evaluated, the responsibilities of the states in implementing the convention and the way NGOs can work towards the rights of the child.

The next focused activity was to participate in the 54th CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) session and Global to Local Mentoring Programme which was conducted by IWRAW (International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific, an international women's human rights organization). The work shop with IWRAW helped me to understand the CEDAW convention as well as the process during the session, the NGO oral presentation, how to effectively lobby committee members and the follow up work that could be done once NGO representatives return home. It was an enriching experience for me. This training helped me to understand how effectively NGOs can work with the CEDAW convention before, during and after the session.

It was a privilege for me to participate in the training course on the Human Rights Council (HRC), International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, International Procedures and Diplomacy from 25th February – 22nd March along with the 22nd Human Rights Council. The training course was conducted by an Organization called Geneva for Human Rights (GHR). There were 25 participants from different countries. The training course helped participants to understand the United Nations Human Rights System (UNHR system), and its mechanisms, treaty bodies, International Humanitarian Law, country specific situations etc. I together with the other participants attended daily morning classes which were scheduled from 8.15a.m. - 11.00a.m. with an interactive debate of the proceedings of previous day of the Human Rights Council and then we proceeded to the UN to attend that day's session of the Human Rights

Council. The course ended with drafting a letter to a Special Rapporteur or to one of the working groups to address specific human rights issues or country situations.

This experience in Geneva has indeed been a grace-filled time for me – to equip myself to be more effective as a Good Shepherd.

“We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives.”

— [John F. Kennedy](#) - At the end of this experiential journey I cannot forget the above words of Sir John F. Kennedy. First I thank God for giving me this experiential journey to be a more effective instrument in His vineyard. I am also grateful to Sr. Susan Chia for inspiring me, Sr. Clare for guiding me, Sr. Hedwig for journeying with me, Sr. Margaret for arranging my journey, Sr. Melitta and the Province of Austria/Switzerland/Czech Republic for accommodating me and Sr. Rohini and my province for releasing me, and for their prayerful sisterly support.

“Experience is not what happens to a person; it is what a person does with what happens to him/her.”

— [Aldous Huxley](#), [Texts & Pretexts: An Anthology With Commentaries](#) The above words are the challenging task before me. Now it is time for me to utilize all my learning and experiences towards the marginalized segment of our present day society.

Sr. Niluka Perera Province of Sri Lanka/Pakistan

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