

THE SOUTH ASIA INITIATIVE AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

2010 STUDENT GRANT REPORTS

2010 GRADUATE STUDY GRANTS

Tatiana Chaterji

LANGUAGE & MUSIC

The South Asia Winter Grant facilitated learning in two arenas critical to my career development: language and music. In Kolkata, I enrolled in Bengali language classes with the American Institute of Indian Studies. With an intensive schedule of 20-25 hours a week, I accelerated from introductory- to high intermediate-level literacy and conversation. On a few occasions I traveled to the countryside of Hooghli District, outside the city, and practiced speaking with monolingual members of my paternal family. The exposure has been invaluable as I make plans toward advanced study and research in greater Bengal.

As a European classically trained violinist, I had the opportunity to explore the rich tradition of Hindusthani (North India) classical music. Previously I had collaborated as a musician interested in fusing Western and Eastern style and technique, but in Kolkata I relished the total immersion. Such a part of living culture, I listened to raags (thematic pieces of a broad canon on which artists interpret and render creatively) on television, in temples, from radios on the street, and on the professional stage. I studied with two masters – Dev Shankar Roy and Pallab Banerjee – and attended concerts and jam sessions with and under their guidance. I was fortunate that my visit coincided with Professor Bose's time in Kolkata. He oriented me to the Netaji Research Bureau, where I had access to archival material on the Rani of Jhansi regiment (women's armed struggle in the Indian independence movement) in particular. I was invited to edit segments of Bose's new biographical manuscript on Subhas Chandra Bose, a project through which I gained enormous insight on the life and history of this legendary leader. The Netaji Research Bureau opened pathways toward my cultural, not only academic, growth, as I observed recording sessions and collaborations of Rabindranath Tagore's poetry and song with Professor Bose and the eminent scholar and musician, Pramita Mallick. I also showcased some of my personal repertoire at the Bureau as part of the festivities for Saraswati Puja, a holiday of which Bengalis are deeply reverent in worship of the goddess of music and learning.

My experience from January to May of 2010 is the foreground for my future involvement in cultural and intellectual activities in Bengal. I have a specific interest in theatre, and with skills in language, I may approach the complicated and elegant literature of Bengal which was formerly unattainable. With a B.A. in government, I am inclined to examine the intersection of drama and people's movements, onwards from decolonization. I am left with a greater understanding of the British colonial moment in India, its political and economic structures and the resistance strategies of freedom fighters, with Kolkata as its center.

Annie Chu

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF CHILD IMMUNIZATIONS ON ADULT HEALTH AND LABOR OUTCOMES

Update: I plan to travel to Matlab, Bangladesh in January, 2011 to coordinate with our collaborators at ICDDR,B and conduct the research outlined in my proposal, which involves implementing the survey designed to assess the long-term effects of child immunizations.

During the summer, I updated the literature review of studies conducted in other developing countries. Currently, I am using expected effect size of the intervention to determine the sample size necessary to avoid the associated costs with over-sampling and ensure that the sample size is large enough to provide significant results. Since a small pilot study two years ago showed that seven out of ten adults who were children during the time of intervention in the 1980's were successfully located through their mobile phone contact information, the sample size will take into account this information. I am also verifying the data and results of a recently published study on the educational effects of child immunizations from Matlab, as the sample size reported in this study is larger than in previous studies.

Jessica Corsi

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

The project was completed. Please note the following publications that the SAI grant supported the writing of. The field research I conducted in January in India made its way into these two publications. In particular, my January 2010 research supported by the SIA grant facilitated my ability to write on evaluating the midday meal programs and assessing the Food Security Bill.

A full length article in the Michigan Journal of International Law

<http://students.law.umich.edu/mjil/article-pdfs/v31n4-birchfield.pdf>

A shorter article in American University's Human Rights Brief

<http://www.wcl.american.edu/hrbrief/17/3corsi.pdf?rd=1>

And finally, the SAI research grant allowed me to gather information that I presented at a conference at Yale Law School on Food Security. I spoke on a panel and facilitated a discussion on the right to food in India in April 2010 in New Haven, CT.

Rakesh Peter Dass

HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL

In preparation for the trip, I have been getting in touch with scholars, libraries, and publishers that work with Hindi theological literature. I have arranged visits to a few Hindi-language seminaries/divinity schools and have arranged a comprehensive interview with Dr. J. H. Anand, Editor of the Jabalpur-based Hindi Theological Literature Committee. I will conduct this interview when in India. I have sought and received clearance to conduct these interviews from Harvard's Committee on the Use of Human Subjects. As preparation for the research, I have engaged the assistance of the New Delhi-based Indian Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, which has seconded one of their staff members to assist my research. As preparation for the trip, I have acquired and have been reading up on background materials related to Hindi theological literature. Finally, in preparation for the research trip, I have also been refining my Hindi language skills by reading and translating from Hindi theological books and articles.

Namita Dharia



Kate Falb, MHS

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN BANGALORE, INDIA: THE ROLE OF MOTHERS-IN-LAW

Research has shown a staggeringly high prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in India, including abuse from in-laws during the perinatal period. This newer evidence calls for including the marital family when addressing GBV and young women's power in the household.

I spent one month in Bangalore where I worked on an innovative randomized controlled intervention trial, *Dil Mil* (meaning “*Hearts Together*”), which seeks to empower mother-in-law and daughter-in-law dyads with knowledge, skills, and social support critical to the mitigation of the daughter-in-law's experiences of GBV and related adverse maternal, child, and psychosocial health outcomes. Due to a variety of barriers, I was unable to conduct focus groups with mother-in-law's -- my original plan. However, the other work I was able to do was extremely valuable. While there, I visited the study sites, observed the recruitment of participants, helped to develop the study questionnaire and train the research staff in GBV and in the study protocol. I hope to continue to provide support throughout the project including data analysis, questionnaire refinement, etc.

I am extremely grateful to the South Asia Initiative for providing the support necessary to travel to Bangalore, India this summer. Although I have managed GBV programs abroad in the past, I did not have experience conducting rigorous research abroad. Working directly with the *Dil Mil* research staff in the field was an invaluable learning experience where I developed skills that will help me throughout my career.

Finnian Moore Gerety

REPORT ON RESEARCH IN PROGRESS: “SOMA SONGS: SĀMAVEDA IN SOUTH INDIA”



I conducted five weeks of research on Sāmaveda traditions in South India. This fieldwork was undertaken in connection with my proposed dissertation on the role of the *udgātā*, lead singer in Vedic ritual. During my stay I focused in particular on the teaching and transmission of a rare branch of Sāmaveda (hereafter SV) found mostly in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the Jaiminīya school. I observed, interviewed, and recorded practitioners of this ancient oral tradition, gathering ethnographic and philological data for my dissertation. In the process, I met most of the active Jaiminīya singers in South India and laid the groundwork for a longer return visit in 2011-2012. I covered a lot of ground this summer in an effort to do a survey of the state of Jaiminīya SV in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, visiting five sites in Kerala and three in Tamil Nadu where Jaiminīya SV is taught. The transmission was not strictly oral at all sites; in some cases printed texts and other supporting media were used.

The venues used for teaching varied widely: from private homes with one-on-one instruction to larger residential institutions where five or more boys might be taught in one sitting. I found that although Jaiminīya SV still survives, in most cases the transmission is narrow and there is local concern that not enough boys and young men are willing to dedicate the dozen or so years it takes to become a proficient singer. This is especially the case in Kerala, where Jaiminīya transmission typically takes place with limited institutional support. The elder generation blames the pressures of modernization: many young men opt for a modern education and better employment prospects over a traditional Vedic education with an uncertain future. In most cases, the Jaiminīya students are preparing for a career as a priest, a teacher of SV, or some hybrid of the two. Such a career could include teaching SV, temple work and chanting, officiating at domestic rituals, and performing in elaborate, large-scale somayāgas, archaic Vedic “Soma sacrifices” which take place in the spring in certain centers of South Indian orthopraxy.

My research interest is in the composition, performance and history of the Soma sacrifice, and especially the role of the *udgātā*, lead singer in the rites. Thus, I spent the largest chunk of time with Nambudiri singers of Panjal, Kerala, one of the few communities that maintain a Soma sacrificial tradition. This hilltop village is home to several households where SV continues to be passed down; the teachers are all veteran *udgātā-s*, and the students expect to eventually serve in such a capacity. Within the context of the Soma tradition, the Nambudiris maintain archaic Vedic elements of transmission, recitation and praxis not found anywhere else on the subcontinent. During instruction, for example, the teacher manipulates the student's hand and head in patterns corresponding to the pitch and rhythm of the chant as they sing. This physical encoding of the SV oral text has not been extensively examined. I shot video of the technique and I will offer a description of it in my dissertation; it is key to demonstrating how a boy acquires the skills he needs to serve as *udgātā*. Near the end of my stay, I sat in on a planning meeting for a Nambudiri Soma sacrifice scheduled to take place in spring 2012. I listened as the attendees discussed what will be a massive undertaking, involving the construction of a bird-shaped fire altar and hundreds of hand-hewn sacrificial implements; more daunting still is the coordination of several priestly teams who contribute suites of recitations and chants for which they will begin to rehearse six months beforehand. The *udgātā* for this 2012 performance has been chosen: he is one of my subjects, a veteran Nambudiri singer whom I recorded teaching his son at home in Panjal. I am currently applying for grants to fund my return to Kerala next year, where I plan to stay for nine months so I may observe and document the 2012 sacrifice in all particulars. Meanwhile I continue to push ahead in my textual research, assembling a description of the *udgātā's* role based on ancient Sanskrit sources; a major goal of my dissertation is to explore the continuities and discontinuities between his role in text and his role in contemporary performance.

Rifat Hasan

HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The funds provided through the SAI Summer Grant Program have not yet been utilized but will be later this year. Preparatory work has continued, though. I spent the summer updating my literature review on (a) the fertility trends in Bangladesh and West Bengal from 1900 onward, (b) population and family planning policies of the past forty years in each setting, and (c) the current state of maternal health in each setting. The goal was to identify any similarities and differences to set up for why the fertility and maternal health patterns have been different across settings. I also started trying to identify potential key informants in Bangladesh and West Bengal to prepare for the interviews that will take place during the academic year and began developing the questionnaire that will be administered. The interview strategy is semi-structured in-depth interviews with an initial ten individuals in each place, using snowballing to identify up to another five. Interviewees will be policy and program experts in the field of population and reproductive health. I will be conducting these interviews in Dhaka and Kolkata (and potentially Delhi) over a period of 8 weeks in January and February of 2011 (using the combined funding from the SAI Summer Grant program, the SAI GSA program, a Population Reference Bureau Fellowship, and an HSPH travel grant). I will, of course, provide a full report upon completion of the project in the spring.

Johan Mathew

HISTORY DEPARTMENT

Thanks to the funds provided by the South Asia Initiative I completed my dissertation research on smuggling and the development of capitalism in the Indian Ocean. I spent 4 months in India primarily at the Maharashtra State Archives in Mumbai. The archives in Mumbai were an incredibly rich source of research for my topic, providing the bulk of my information for my chapter on gold and silver smuggling, and significant sources for the other chapters. I examined volumes from the Government of Bombay's political department for slave trading and weapons trading, the finance department for gold and silver smuggling and the revenue (customs) department for shipping. I also spent several weeks at the National Archives in Delhi reviewing the archives of the foreign department and the commerce and industry department of the Government of India. The merchant shipping division of the commerce department was a very useful archive to study the regulations and state interventions in the shipping industry, while the foreign department files contained considerable information on gold and silver smuggling and weapons trading with the Middle East. While the Bombay records had detailed information on smuggling in the city of Bombay and the Bombay Presidency, the National Archives provided a more high level view and a better sense of the formation of policy at a colony-wide and empire-wide scale.

In addition just being in India provided all kinds of benefits to my research and indeed pushed me to focus my research and argument on smuggling. Speaking to various friends and acquaintances about my topic lead me to realize the centrality of smuggling to the public lore of Bombay city. It was from these interactions outside the archives that I discovered the fascinating stories of Haji Mastan and Dawood Ibrahim their entanglements with Bollywood and cricket and their status as much as romantic outlaws rather than villains. Indeed while I was in Bombay, the film "Once upon a time in Mumbai" opened retelling the story of these two iconic figures. So given all this was occurring around me, I gained a better sense of the texture and public memory of the things I am studying and how to make my scholarship more engaging to a contemporary Indian public.

Andrew McDowell

SOUTH ASIA INITIATIVE SUMMER RESEARCH GRANT SUMMARY, 2010 RAJASTHAN

With the help of the South Asia Initiative Summer Research Grant I travelled to India and conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Rajasthan. Though I initially applied for support to do a follow-up study of G. M. Carstairs' ethnographic work, I soon discovered that the vast majority of his informants were deceased and even many of their children had passed or moved away.

Seeing this, I re-aligned my fieldwork to better suit my dissertation topic. I conducted interviews with government officials concerning the Revised National Tuberculosis Control program. Interviewees included the principal secretary to the governor of Rajasthan, the Rajasthan state TB control officer, the head of the central TB hospital at Jaipur, the executive for TB control at the district level in Chittorgarh, and physicians at block and sub-block hospitals. Each interview abounded with new information and fascinating ways bureaucrats and others implementing a global TB program thought about the human body and TB by integrating a myriad of non-biomedical knowledges. This research was the basis for a radical shift in my Ph.D. project, moving its focus from a politics of dignity and tuberculosis care in a particular community in South Rajasthan to a study of knowledge and its transmission between Delhi, Jaipur, and Bari Sadri but still working to link this flow to a local politics of dignity.

I also used the time to continue to learn Mewari (Udaipuri), work toward securing an academic affiliation, and maintaining contacts in Bari Sadri. Upon returning to Cambridge, I have used this summer's experience to apply for full year dissertation grants, guide my reading of primary texts about tuberculosis care and bodies in India, and as a touchstone for sections I teach in *Culture, Medicine, and Society: Case Studies in Global Health*.

Ramya Naraharisetti

SELF-HELP GROUPS FOR DISABLED PERSONS IN RURAL ANDHRA PRADESH (AP), INDIA AS A MEANS FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Background: According to the 2001 Indian census, there are currently 21.9 million people living with disability in India¹. In the last two decades, the national government has adopted progressive disability law². There has although been a noted lag in implementation especially in the rural areas (Seeley 2001; IDN 2005; O’Keefe 2007). Seventy-five percent of disabled people live in rural areas, while most of the rehabilitation services are located in urban centers in South India (ESCAP 2006).

Relevance of Disability Work in India: Disability rights in India are becoming more important with climbing rates of those that are disabled and relatively few services and facilities throughout the country. In recent news, the 2011 Indian Census question on disability is getting attention. In the 2001 census it was estimated that 2.13% of Indians are disabled, but experts say that this is “off the mark” (Yahoo News). In contrast UN studies say that 10% of all developing countries’ populations are disabled. A later independent study of NCPEDP showed that 16% of Indians were disabled. This means that the government recognizes 20-30million disabled and 50-60million are not recognized (invisible). This leads to serious consequences for distribution of resources. On March 15th 2010 the National Centre for the Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, an NGO, convened a meeting with others to discuss how to better frame questions in the 2011 round of the Indian Census to allow for a more accurate disability prevalence estimate.

Background: In recent years the disability rights movement in India has flourished in response to the gap in services and the expansion of the global disability rights movements to developing countries. Although South India houses agencies active in disability rights, the intervention efforts of small NGOs are piece-meal and small-scale. The last decade has although produced significant strides in the understanding of the lived experiences of persons with disability, especially in rural areas. One of the first studies of this sort was conducted by Harsh Mandir (and team members) to evaluate the conditions of rural disabled persons in AP, India in 2002. The report was first published in Frontline Volume 19, Issue 15. At the times of the report’s publication there were no systematic government led efforts in AP to address the needs of persons with disability. To better address this gap in services the Society for the Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) (an autonomous body of the AP government) established a Disability Unit in 2003. The SERP Disability Unit functions mainly to (1) enhance livelihood opportunities and quality of life for PWD (2) ensure optimum utilization of residual abilities by PWD (3) improve capacities of PWD to access and avail various entitlements and services offered by the government and (4) mainstreaming disability concerns in policy making and line activities (SERP website). Their interventions are taking place in 138 pilot Mandals in 22 Districts within AP (SERP website) in the form of self help groups (SHGs). Through the SHGs, SERP seeks to (1) promote social mobilization and institution building of PWDs and their caregivers (2) provision livelihood support (3) carryout community based Assessment, Treatment and Rehabilitation (ATR) services and (4) encourage convergence with line departments, particularly Health and Education so that inclusive frameworks are created (SERP website). A typical SHG is composed of 10-15 members of a community living in close proximity. They convene weekly meetings led by a group-elected secretary and president. The SHGs are monitored at the Mandal level through monthly Mandal-wide meetings led by a Mandal SHG Project Coordinator. The SHG houses community-based micro-finance, where group members collectively contribute to a pool of funds that is lent out to an individual when financial need or entrepreneurial opportunities arise. Many Most SHGs are composed of both men and women from various social economic backgrounds. Almost ten years after the initial report on the status of PWDs was published, there is a need to update our understanding of PWDs in AP today.

Purpose/Research Question: The primary research is: How has participation in SERP’s SHGs impacted the lived experiences of persons with disability in rural AP? The purpose of this research is to collect this data in order to better inform the expansion of SHGs for disabled persons in Andhra Pradesh by examining the program’s impact on those currently utilizing the pilot version of this program. The secondary research question is: Where are SHGs located in relation to disability prevalence in Andhra Pradesh and where could they potentially be expanded to?

Research Design: There are two levels to this research. In order to address the primary research question, a qualitative analysis was conducted through mainly personal interviews and some focus groups of PWDs who are participants of SHGs in three (well-functioning) pilot Mandals in rural Andhra Pradesh. To address the secondary research question, a spatial analysis of disability prevalence in relation to the location of the SHGs in AP, India was utilized.

Methods for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis: I collected both personal (n=35) and focus group (m=3) interviews of a sample of rural disabled men and women about the changes in their lived experiences³ after joining SERP's SHG in their local community. I focused on their experiences both within and outside of their membership in the SHG. The interviews were conducted in the local language of the participants, Telugu. The content was hand-written in English by the investigator at the time of interview in order to most effectively translate. Often times the content of the conversation was reviewed with the interviewee to assure accuracy of translation. The interviews were not video or tape recorded to avoid discomfort to the participants (many of whom have never taken part in a formal interview process). Sometimes the interviews took place in public areas where the presence of a device would bring more attention to the interviewee from the public. The resulting data did not have any identifier linking the individual to the content of their interview. Because no direct identifiers were used, when disseminating this research alias code will be given to each interviewee. Verbal consent was asked before the interviews were conducted.

Methods for Spatial Data Analysis: The spatial analysis utilizes secondary data on the health and wellbeing disabled persons in rural areas from the 2001 round of the Indian Census in order to identify where the most vulnerable (under-served) disabled persons are located and where this pilot micro-finance program would be most impactful if expanded. This data is made available through the Indian government for public research within geographic information systems. There are no identifiers for this data which link the data back to the individual. The analysis will take the form of mapping disability prevalence by district (and possibly sub-district) and searching for clusters within AP. Significant clusters could be due to several reasons including increased risk of disability, migration or increased genetic susceptibility. Therefore this analysis is not meant to identify prevention efforts necessarily (due to lack of comprehensive data) but rather to identify where large numbers of disabled persons are located. This is then compared to the current location of SERP's SHG. This geographical depiction could inform future expansion efforts of SHGs throughout AP.

Plans for Future Work: Although the qualitative data has been collected, it is currently in the analysis phase. *Atlas* qualitative data analysis software is being used to organize code and analyze the data to look for key themes and anecdotal stories from both the interviews and focus groups. Further, the spatial data analysis will be conducted in the near future once the geographic information systems data on disability prevalence for 2001 is retrieved from the Indian Census Bureau. Upon the completion of both the qualitative and spatial analysis, the results will be written in the form of both an accessible report and an academic paper. The findings from the study are intended to inform the academic community, the SERP staff and the study participants about the role of SERP's SHGs for disabled persons in rural AP.

¹http://www.censusindia.net/results/C_Series/C_series_pdf/data_highlights_c20c21c23c24.pdf?

²India ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Disabled Person in 2007. Two progressive national policies include the 1993 National Policy for the Persons with Disability and 1995 Persons with Disability Act. India is said to have one of the most progressive disability rights policies in the world (O'Keefe 2007).

³Note about lived experiences literature

Jennifer Pan

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT

This summer, I spent over two months first in India then in China to test the hypothesis that social policy plays a role in industrial development. Specifically, I examined the effect of pharmaceutical price controls on strength of indigenous pharmaceutical firms vis-à-vis multinational companies. This research question was motivated by the empirical finding that among developing countries with sizable domestic pharmaceutical markets, there is large variation in the level of indigenous pharmaceutical development, which could not be adequately explained by the prevailing theory of intellectual property rights (IPR).

In both countries, I interviewed general managers and chief executives of multinational and domestic pharmaceutical companies, as well as policymakers, industry association leaders, industry experts, academics, and health-care related NGO practitioners. In India, I was lucky to have been in Mumbai at the beginning of July during a meeting of pharmaceutical general managers, where I was able to gain a wide variety of perspectives on the strengths and challenges facing various types of firms in the industry. In total, I conducted over 45 interviews during my time in the field.

While I found that pricing controls played and continues to play a role in the competitiveness of indigenous versus multinational firms, the effect of pricing controls on the development of local firms appears contingent on the phasing of a country's overall industrial development strategy.

Prior to the 1970s, the Indian market was open to multinational investment and multinational firms dominated many sectors, including pharmaceutical products. Starting in the 1970s, the government's industrial policy shifted toward one of import substitution industrialization (ISI) and consumer protection. Process patents, drug pricing controls, as well as dilution of foreign equity stakes were enacted, and many foreign companies left the country because the loss of control was not offset by significant market opportunities. However, because ISI in India occurred after multinational firms had already made investments, such as building local production and developing sales and marketing capabilities, when foreign companies departed, the majority of their assets were sold to local entrepreneurs and indigenous firms. Building on these assets in the absence of foreign competition, the Indian pharmaceutical industry developed with unique characteristics, for example longer product lifecycles, and much more fixed dose combinations, such that when the Indian economy opened up again in the 1990s, foreign firms were less competitive than indigenous firms. In the case of India, drug control policies were one of many factors influencing the departure of multinational firms under ISI that ultimately led to the dominance of indigenous firms.

In contrast, the Chinese market was not open to foreign investment prior to 1978, and when market oriented policies were instituted, the government strongly favored and worked to actively attract foreign investment in innovative sectors, including pharmaceuticals, where existing domestic capabilities were weak. As a result, multinational firms drove the development of the Chinese pharmaceutical market, and many characteristics of the market today are similar to that of western markets. However, as indigenous pharmaceutical firms began to develop in the 1990s and 2000s, their performance appears to vary in sub-regions of China based on local drug reimbursement and pricing policies. In regions with strong price controls and non-discriminatory drug reimbursement policies, local firms are gaining market share relative to multinationals; whereas in regions where this is not the case, foreign firms remain dominant. In the case of China, export oriented policies led to the dominance of foreign firms, but drug control policies and reimbursement policies are shifting the relative competitiveness of indigenous firms.

The next steps in the research are to examine a broader set of developing countries, to test a joint theory of the effects of social policies and the phasing of economic development strategies on industrial development. Based on what I have found through on the India and China cases, in countries where ISI occurred after export oriented policies, I would expect to see indigenous firms dominating market share, and in countries where export oriented policies were the only strategy or where export oriented policies followed protectionist strategies, I would expect the relative proportion local versus foreign market share to be related to social policies. If there are not a sufficient number of cases that fall into the former category, I may expand the sample to include other sectors.

Overall, it was incredibly beneficial to be in the field to test and refine my theories and propositions. If I had not had this time in the field, I would have been testing incorrect and incomplete hypotheses. Thank you South Asia Initiative for providing the financial support that has allowed me to further this research!

Sasha Prevost

URDU LANGUAGE STUDY

As nearly anyone who has spent time in the subcontinent will tell you, summarizing India is virtually impossible. Nonetheless, after spending almost eleven weeks living with a host family in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, I feel that I at least developed true familiarity with a particular slice of Indian life. Although I had put in hours of studying Sanskrit, Hindu, and Urdu before I ever arrived, this was my first time in India, and I am grateful to the South Asia Initiative for helping me to make the “leap of faith” to live in India and participate in a thorough program of language and cultural immersion.

All of us selected for the American Institute of Indian Studies summer language program arrived in Delhi in early June, where we underwent several days of orientation, as well as a few all-too-brief excursions into the city itself. We then were divided by language so that I and all the other students in the Urdu program flew to Lucknow, about an hour’s flight south of Delhi. Shortly after arriving, we were taken to meet families and rapidly make our home stay decisions. The institute tried to provide us with a balance between cultural immersion and culture shock by placing us within family homes in groups of several students. Living with an Indian family was certainly not without its challenges, from negotiating food to curfew to religious purity issues, but it did provide an interesting further view into Indian domestic life.

The bulk of our time, however, was taken up with language study. While the Urdu program served a variety of language levels, most of us followed a similar schedule. We had class from nine to one each day (with the ubiquitous chai break, of course), then took an hour to eat a delicious vegetarian lunch—cooked by a team of cheerful women named Anita and Geeta, who were eager to patiently help us with our shaky Urdu conversation and insure that we were enjoying the food. During our main classes, we read a variety of fiction, poetry, magazine and newspaper articles, as well as drilling our listening, speaking, and writing skills. After lunch, we often had extra classes, such as film-watching or personal tutorial. Twice a week, we worked one on one with a teacher either on topics that particularly interested us, or areas in which we were lacking. The teachers were very willing to meet us wherever we were level-wise and were patient and encouraging. At first functioning almost exclusively in Urdu was a bit intimidating, and at times exhausting, but the benefits were also high. Even within a week or two of arriving, I could tell that my listening skills had increased immensely.

In addition our program had a cultural component, though ours was somewhat truncated by the heat wave that gripped the area for at least half our trip. We did, however, visit Lucknow’s major historical sites, as well as venturing outside of town to visit several Sufi shrines and other sites of religious importance. This was particularly useful to me as a student of Indian religion, as we were able to meet personally with the *pirs* of several Sufi orders—from attempting to discuss the meaning of life, in Urdu!, to eating kebabs and mangos at their houses. I was also fortunate that my host family lived right across the street from several temples, and I was able to easily spend time attending *puja* (worship) and festivals there. Through visiting both these temples and a local church, I was able to form relationships with locals outside my host family, and in particular with one family who “adopted” me. While Urdu classes and visits to sites of historic or religious importance were certainly informative and beneficial to my studies, it was the formulation of such relationships that truly made my trip memorable. For moments, at least, I felt less an external observer and student of culture, and more a cherished participant.

Julia Stephens

LAW AND ISLAM IN COLONIAL INDIA

I spent December 2009 to May 2010 conducting dissertation research in Delhi, Lucknow, Bombay, and Patna. My project focuses on the relationship between law and Islam during the colonial period, exploring the evolution of the boundaries between religion, economy, and politics. My dissertation seeks to contribute to current debates about the relationship between Islam and state institutions by demonstrating the relatively recent emergence of the system of personal law and the colonial origins of modern conceptions of religion.

In Delhi I used the collection of legislative records at the National Archives, the rich collection of books, historic newspapers, and private papers at Nehru Memorial Library, and Islamic literature in the library of the Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind. In Bombay and Lucknow I consulted records held in state archives in relation to specific legal cases. The Khuda Bakhsh Library in Patna proved an invaluable source of rare Urdu pamphlet literature, especially on debates about *ijihad*, or the use of independent judgment in Islamic legal decisions.

Tom Sannicandro

HA MPA, HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL

As you know, I used the grant to go to Bangladesh to work with members of Parliament, lawyers, families and persons with disabilities to affect change and to help influence the adaptation of laws in Bangladesh as they implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. I was working with the Harvard Law Project on Disabilities and with and NGO in Bangladesh. My wife, who has done work here in the United States on disability issues traveled with me. We toured special education schools, spoke at a couple of conferences and I spoke to a group at the Law School at Dhaka University on disability law.

I am attaching some links to an article that appeared in the MDSC Newsletter, page 9, http://www.mdsc.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=204 and to our photos <http://picasaweb.google.com/tom.sannicandro/Bangladesh?feat=directlink> and to a local cable TV show we did on the trip. http://71.174.230.61/VODContent/2022-1-TWJ_2010-07_SANNICANDROTitle1-Program1.wmv

It was a phenomenal experience, we learned a great deal and we hopefully made a difference in Bangladesh.

Thanks for this tremendous opportunity.

John Wong

HISTORY DEPARTMENT

Thanks to the generosity of a South Asia Initiative Grant, I conducted a research trip to Mumbai this summer. During the trip, I examined the papers of Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, a longtime trading partner of Houqua who forms the focus of my dissertation.

With the help of Johan Mathew who was conducting his research in the city, I settled quickly in Mumbai. Having identified the location of Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy's papers in the library of the University of Mumbai, I set out to examine readily the forty-five volume collection. As the collection comes not with a finding aid, I had to go through the papers volume by volume. The staff at the library, pleasantly surprised that a Chinese researcher would find interesting their prized collection of an Indian merchant, proved to be very helpful and efficient in retrieving this extensive series of papers.

I also visited the Maharashtra State Archives in Mumbai. However, as my examination the catalog yielded no significant relevant collection and my attempt in retrieving some documents relating to the sale of Indian cotton in China failed to turn up the papers listed in the catalog, this collection proved not to be so helpful to my work.

This research trip offers a great comparative framework and helps shaped my thinking on my research of the global trade in early-nineteenth-century Canton. That Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and Houqua aligned themselves with different geopolitical powers influenced the development of their business enterprises. Their divergent paths manifested at the local level the changing international landscape of imperial politics.

Also worth noting is that through this research trip to Mumbai and my work in London, I have developed a better understanding of the work Johan Mathew with whom I discussed in depth our mutual interest in global exchange in the early modern world and the work of Tariq Ali with whom I spent many days of archival research at the British Library. The transnational dimension of our research topics requires not only that our search for historical documents transcend national boundaries but also that we develop dialogues with fellow-researchers exploring similar topics. I look forward to continuing my discussions with our South Asian historians at Harvard.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH GRANTS & INTERNSHIPS

Emily Cunningham

SEWA BANK, AHMEDABAD, INDIA



This summer, I interned with SEWA Bank, a Microfinance Institution in Ahmedabad, India, working primarily to help develop a technology advancement and management department for the purpose of exploring and implementing scalable, open source software modules to facilitate information management, ultimately decreasing interest rates on loans and the price of financial services to women living in poverty. SEWA bank is an anomaly in the world of MFIs. Years before Muhammad Yunus “invented” microfinance, four thousand poor women of Ahmedabad contributed the share capital of 10 rupees each to start their own bank, a bank which would grow to accommodate the specific needs of local women from birth to death: insurance, pension schemes, savings, loans, financial planning, all the while empowering them to grow their businesses and advance the education and prosperity of future generations. This development came not at the behest of the NGOs dictating from their posh offices in Washington, but from vegetable vendors, rag pickers, and seamstresses who collectively raised their voices to say “So what if we are poor? We are so many.” Seeing this homegrown success in action should have been inspiring, but instead it made me frustrated. SEWA Bank worked because its

members were its owners and its founders- because the women of Ahmedabad understood the services they needed and created them by themselves. What exactly did a middle class girl from suburban America have to offer?

On the plane ride to India, I had romantic visions of interviewing women in the field, teaching them financial planning, walking them through the process of taking out a microloan. The project with which my supervisor presented me initially seemed far removed from that vision. I realized, however, that I didn’t want that field experience for the benefit of the women I wanted to serve (they were much better served by the bank employees- natives of the city, fluent in the language, and well-versed in the culture) I wanted it for me. After spending all of my life in the United States never sure if the fruits of my advocacy or fundraising efforts ever actually reached the people on the ground, I wanted to see my impact; I wanted it to be tangible. I realized quickly how selfish this was. I came to India thinking that microfinance was the silver bullet to eliminating poverty. Through my experiences, I opened my mind to the exploration of new fields: communication

technology, innovation, women's empowerment, and computer science.

Taking the lessons I learned at SEWA bank, both those with deeper developmental implications and the logistical approaches to organizing and managing a successful MFI, I will make use of my Harvard career to enhance the skill set that will allow me to succeed in my niche in development work. In my time in India, I have realized what I am good at, what I can become better at, and what I should leave up to someone else who will better serve the interests of that particular niche. I came to understand too that SEWA Bank was adhering to its particular niche, and perhaps some of the project ideas that I had envisioned while spending time in India were better suited to be implemented by another organization. I partnered with a 25 year old student in Ahmedabad who had started an organization to encourage youth entrepreneurship. His team members are excited to help me begin work on some of my ideas. I have initiated three projects that I hope to carry out with my network at Harvard and my contacts in India: a jewelry cooperative which will allow rural craftswomen to access western markets, a plastic bin distribution center that will help clothing vendors prevent heavy rains and vermin from damaging the products, and a network of engineering students in the United States to work on more complex design issues facing rural women.

My belief in microfinance as a successful tool for development remains unshaken- and indeed, strengthened- by my time in India. Textbook cases of its success presented themselves to me in person- a rickshaw driver who beamed as he told me how he had overcome a life of poverty in a village by taking a loan (and working ungodly hours) and how he was now the proud owner of his own home and rickshaw ("I am now success!" he exclaimed at the end of his story), a collective of fifteen illiterate women who crowded into a 12 by 12 foot house to thumbprint their legal documents to expand their craftsmanship business, and a women whose husband was so excited by what she had learned in her financial planning classes that he offered to stay home and make dinner for their house guests so she wouldn't miss a session. I have seen most of the academic criticisms of microfinance -when done the right way- refuted by hard evidence. However, I know that my interaction with the field will be different from what I envisioned and it will include integration with many other fields.

Due in large part to this grant opportunity, I was able to explore my career field, experience a new culture for the first time, and most importantly, to identify the skill set that I need to make a meaningful impact.

Felix de Rosen

INTERNING WITH ASHA 2010

This past June, I had the privilege of working with an NGO called Asha, which works to improve the condition of the inhabitants of New Delhi's slums through education, empowerment, and healthcare. My one month in India was full of surprises. My objective was to get an inside look at the logistics of global health work in the developing world.

I had the opportunity to shadow medical staff in various slums and to learn about the major issues that healthcare workers must deal with in these areas. It was fascinating, as well as disheartening, to explore not only the various health conditions in the slums, but also the social and political environments around them. My knowledge of health issues was further augmented by my contraction of giardiasis. Indeed, I now know that giardiasis is something one should avoid.

Working in the slums of Delhi, I did not see the India advertised in tourist magazines ("Incredible India"). I saw, rather, its darker and often overlooked shadow. I cannot claim anything close to expertise on India, but I can say that I feel I have learned some valuable lessons from my short time there. I would encourage everyone to explore this part of the world and I thank the South Asia Initiative for having provided me with this opportunity.

Benjamin Hand

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL PROJECT ON DISABILITY

In my midterm report, I spoke mostly about my experiences with the culture of Bangladesh, and spoke very little about my experiences as a researcher and intern. So in my final report, I would like to talk a little bit about the work I did and the information that I found to be particularly interesting.

If one set out to identify groups of individuals in societies throughout history that have consistently found themselves forgotten, or at best barely considered in questions of justice and humane treatment, it would be difficult to overlook the plight of both prisoners and individuals broadly identified as being of “unsound mind.” So it should come as no surprise that prisoners with mental disabilities seem to garner little public interest or academic scholarship. Not surprisingly, this appears to be the case in Bangladesh, as I am sure it is in much of the world.

The Lunacy Act of 1912 is the most thorough discussion in the Bangladeshi legal code of what provisions should be provided for individuals with mental disabilities. A remnant of British colonial rule, it lays out the necessary steps the government should take to provide for the well-being of individuals with mental disabilities, or as the act defines it “an idiot or person of unsound mind,” who enter the Bangladeshi asylum system. This is, of course, an extremely problematic definition, for obvious reasons. Not only is “lunacy” a terribly antiquated term, as well as offensive, but also the definition itself is extremely unclear, even when read under the most generous light. It seems to encapsulate a wide range of different possible medical conditions.

However, the execution of the Lunacy Act has exposed numerous problems with the current system. Most obvious is the fact that Bangladesh currently has only one facility dedicated to the role of “mental hospital,” which holds only 500 beds for patients. I was not able to visit this facility, as I was stuck at home with a high fever, but several of my friends did visit. They reported back that it was poorly staffed and over-crowded. Unfortunately, this is probably partially due to the fact that so few doctors want to live far from the luxuries of the capital city or give up their lucrative private practices. Moreover, the act stipulates that prisoners must be treated in centralized facilities, so the ability to rely on expanding mental health services to existing medical centers located in close proximity to rural villages is of little help. This highlights the fact that there is clearly nowhere near the necessary facilities to bring the Bangladeshi asylum system into compliance with the Lunacy Act. And so individuals with mental disabilities are merely being held in the regular prison system, living in separate facilities and receiving medical treatment in some cases but not others (as can be seen from my interviews).

As part of the ongoing High Court Case over the Lunacy Act, Ain O Salish Kendra (The Law and Mediation Center, an NGO I worked with) forced the High Court to conduct a trial attempt at identifying prisoners currently in jails around Bangladesh who should be receiving treatment and care under the Lunacy Act. Because of this, the Bangladeshi prison system conducted a limited survey in which they attempted to identify those prisoners who fit the description of being of “unsound mind.” How and where this survey was conducted remains unclear at this time. However, a list of over two hundred names and demographic information was brought back to the court by the prison system and given to Ain O Salish Kendra. This list has prisoners from districts all over Bangladesh. In order to gain some small amount of insight into the how individuals with mental disabilities are treated in the Bangladeshi criminal justice system, I decide to conduct interviews with a small number of individuals who had been identified in the report given to Ain O Salish Kendra, and when that was not possible (i.e. the prisoner was either deceased or still serving a sentence), I attempted to conduct an interview with their immediate family. The interviews themselves were quite the experience. Often the whole family would take part, and the individuals or the family would often invite over neighbors to help tell the story and fill in details. Even though my experience was tempered by the need for a translator, it was an amazing experience to sit outside a straw hut, two or three hours from “civilization,” down a dirt road, and hear these families tell their stories.

I learned a great deal from these discussions with former prisoners and their families, as did the other local NGO workers I was with. However, several points of interest immediately stuck out. First, it quickly became apparent that individuals were on the list for a wide range of reasons, many of which we would not associate with “mental disabilities.” 5 out of my 10 cases appeared to have involved individuals with drug related problems, not mental disabilities. These interviews, though not exactly what we came to hear, were often humorous. Former inmates took great pleasure in having an audience

to tell their stories and exploits to. One of the last individuals we spoke with took great pleasure in walking us through all of his arrests. Recreational drug use could of course be a sign of self-medication for untreated mental disabilities. But these cases appeared to be straightforward recreational drug users. In more than one case it appears that they were sent to jail in hopes of curing their drug problem when treatment centers were deemed too expensive. Which raises the question of what is meant in the Lunacy Act by the term “unsound mind.” Several of these individuals may well have experienced symptoms, both in jail and out, that could be classified as being of “unsound mind.” But this classification is very different from that of someone with a mental disability. It is very problematic that whatever mechanism was used to identify individuals of “unsound mind” in the prison system, it saw no reason to discriminate between these two distinct groups (allowing for the fact that there will be individuals who fall into both categories).

Secondly, it was also apparent that the prison system is being used as a treatment center, even if it isn’t being accomplished in the proper manner. In at least two cases, individuals told us that their family members contacted the police about a petty crime in hopes that the police would take them into custody. One told us that their family bribed the police to write up a report about property damage because they wanted the individual to go to prison where he would be unable to find drugs, as opposed to a nearby treatment center, which was too expensive (the family confirmed that this was the case with no embarrassment or hesitation). Both of these cases appeared to be primarily drug users as opposed to individuals with mental disabilities. However, in at least one other case it appeared that the family had made only the minimal effort to mount any legal fight because they felt reluctant to have the individual back at the house.

Third, it was very apparent that individuals and their families had little contact or dialogue with their lawyer, if they even had one. Many prisoners had no lawyer, and so received no legal representation or chance for bail. They merely sat in prison until someone decided to let them go. But even those who did have legal representation seemed to know little about how their lawyer had handled the case. Those that did have a lawyer had often just given him the payment and been told nothing of how the case would be handled. This is also an important point because Bangladesh has no public defenders. So if you do not have a lawyer, you sit in jail until someone bothers to send you to prison or sets you free. This often takes months, but some people sit in jail for years without ever seeing a courtroom.

There was, of course, a great deal more that could be said about my interviews. The information we gathered for the local NGOs and law organizations will help them move forward and help individuals who are not receiving the treatment that they need. I was also able to speak with local lawyers and law professors about broad concepts that I took away from my interviews. I hope that the small amount I was able to share with them will be somewhat useful for lawyers and policy makers who are engaged in a larger discussion about disability and the prison system in Bangladesh. My two and a half months in Bangladesh led me to believe that this is an essential discussion that needs to be had, as there is much work to be done.

Emily Harburg & Alexa Rahman

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF PHULKI DAYCARE SERVICES IN DHAKA BANGLADESH-PROJECT OVERVIEW

Our interaction with Phulki began in Spring 2009 after Emily Harburg read about the work of Suraiya Haque on the website of Ashoka, an international organization of social entrepreneurs.¹ After reading about Haque’s compelling work with Phulki empowering the women and children of Bangladesh, Emily e-mailed to ask if there was any way that Harvard students could help. Haque responded saying that Phulki needed help to write an impact assessment of their programs and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the organization. Several months later Emily met Alexa Rahman through the student group Harvard Undergraduate Women in Business in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The pair found they shared a passion for women’s rights, social business, and economic reform and decided to travel to Bangladesh in the winter of 2010 to write an impact assessment for Phulki. Emily and





Alexa embarked upon this journey out of their own free will and personal interest, and did not receive monetary compensation for their work.

During the months prior to traveling to Dhaka, Alexa and Emily met with a number of professors and staff from Harvard and the Boston community to prepare for their work. They reached out to development economics professors like David Laibson, sociologists like David Ager, and psychologists like Richard Hackman. They both took statistics courses in the fall of 2009 and worked with statistics professors, like Paul Edlefsen, to prepare the appropriate statistical tests for their work. Under

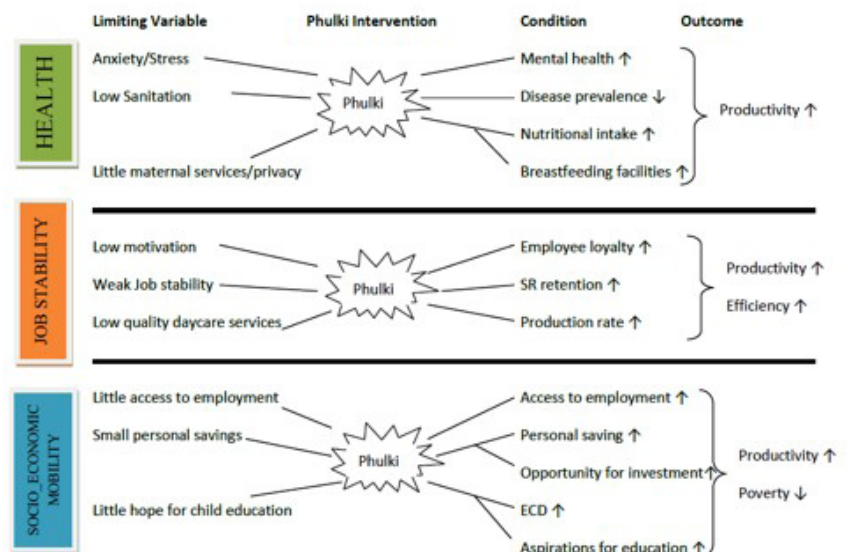
anthropologist Will Day, Emily prepared a document on the population of female migrant workers in Bangladesh who were drawn to garment factories and the challenges they faced. They also received advice and feedback from professors at the Harvard Business School like Stacey Childress and Alnoor Ebrahim. They received helpful feedback from a number of graduate students at the Harvard Business School and Kennedy School of Government, such as President of the Kennedy School Social Enterprise Club, Katie Laidlaw '10. They also received funding for travel expenses from the Harvard South East Asia Initiative, under the leadership of Professor Sugata Bose.

Before leaving for Bangladesh, they prepared surveys and questionnaires with the help of consultants and sociologists, like David Ager. In anticipation of the trip, they were in continuous communication with Suraiya Haque to be sure that they were preparing something that would be helpful and possible upon arriving in Dhaka. Over the course of roughly two weeks (from January 1-15th), Alexa and Emily visited a total of eight (8) garment factories, (2) community-based crèches, and one (1) business, Grameenphone, which used Phulki services.

Our research in Dhaka allowed us to assess the impact of Phulki's factory daycare services on variables limiting mothers' working potential through the following mechanisms. In an environment rife with health hazards and nutritional deficiencies, we found Phulki's intervention improves worker's mental health and family hygiene. Economic literature holds that these fit workers tend to be more productive. In the garment industry where we observed low job stability and satisfaction, Phulki facilitates female employment throughout the childbearing years. Maintaining high SR retention rates is important to factories since women who stay longer at their jobs gain skills, experience, and loyalty to their employers which may make them more efficient workers. Where working-class populations face little hope for education and upward socio-economic mobility, our data show Phulki's ECD programs increasing female worker's educational aspirations for their children and allowing women to save income for personal investment. Expanding childhood education builds "human capital" in Bangladesh, and encouraging savings combats garment worker's poverty. Overall, our impact assessment has found that Phulki programs have a positive impact on female factory workers' productivity, efficiency, and mobility in the workplace by addressing issues which currently hamper women's professional success.

Table 3.
Conclusions summary

This chart depicts the mechanisms which explain how Phulki acts upon limiting variables to produce the desired outcomes.



¹Ashoka's Citizen Base Initiative, "About Ashoka," <http://www.citizenbase.org/en/Ashoka>.

Ellen Johnson

SWIM INTERNATIONAL, INDIA

I spent much of August as a volunteer along the beautiful coast of South India. I traveled between the cities of Kozhikode, Kerala and Baga Beach, Goa with three other girls, teaching drowning prevention skills. The monsoon season in southern India is disastrous and very dangerous to the local population. Between the rain storms and ocean conditions many Indians are caught in terrible life- and death situations, in large measure because they don't know how to swim. My goal was to help inform the locals about water safety to not only help save themselves, but also their neighbors. We had the opportunity to teach some members of the police force, lifeguards, EMTs, and other interested citizens who are currently sharing their new found knowledge with others.

Kozhikode is a relatively tourist free area, so I felt like I was able to really observe the local culture with minimal outside influence. When we weren't teaching, we spent much of our time getting to know the city. I really came to appreciate and fall in love with the fashion of this modest region. Unlike some areas in the northern part of India, all women elegantly wore traditional Indian wear. The diversity in the patterns, cuts, and color combinations of their saris and churidars was breathtaking. Their individuality really shone through their standard dress. I was so impressed that, naturally, I decided I needed one for myself. My group and I went to the market, picked out our colored material and went to a tailor for fitting. Towards the end of my stay, I was lucky enough to be invited to a local wedding, where I proudly wore my beautiful churidar. It was wonderful to share this special moment and to help the people of India improve their drowning prevention awareness and skills.



Jonathan Kaufman

MIMO FINANCE (DELHI, JAIPUR, AND DEHRA DUN)

I committed to eight week with MIMO Finance in the context of general incredulousness regarding the tangible intellectual utility of a short summer internship. On the one hand, there is a thread of truth underlying this conclusion. I worked with the company for a total of eight weeks and yet I still feel relatively ignorant regarding the mechanics of microfinance on the ground (even though, just by being in the office, I've had the "vision" of it pounded into my head on a daily basis). While much of that can be attributed to my linguistic anemia—everything "in the field," or outside of the Delhi headquarters, operated in Hindi—I do imagine a significant reason for my continued shallow understanding of microfinance might have been because of the brevity of my time on the subcontinent. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that MIMO and I made impressions onto one another.

The task on which I primarily focused my energies "in the ivory tower," so to speak—given this somewhat unexpected Hindi hurdle—is a report that analyzes the benefits of dedicating a certain portion of our firm's profits to (re)branding (re is in parentheses because the company lacked an overarching marketing position in the first place) and then continues with a discussion of some possible avenues for that prospective branding campaign. While my work is based more on secondary research (journal articles on microfinance, conversations with the CEO, some cool books on marketing psychology) than on real firsthand experience with poverty, there's a chance that I might actually make a difference with this project; I am still in correspondence with my boss regarding its feasibility and execution. That there are benefits to marketing/branding is certain, and there's no reason for which that shouldn't apply to the development sector at this point, especially given that my firm is for profit. The MFI industry in India is quickly becoming a saturated one, and my firm needs to stand out to investors—and, to a lesser extent, even the clients who make less than 100 rupees per day—if it is to gain the critical mass necessary not only to thrive, but to survive. I've been meeting with the COO regularly over Skype, and the latest report is

that he's going to push hard for my report's conclusions in the next board of investors meeting.

Although I have been back at Harvard for five weeks, it still seems like yesterday that I stepped off of the plane at Jaipur and felt like stepping right back on. India is an assault on the senses, and I was skeptical of my ability to “make it” when I first arrived. I haven't even divulged the details of the start of my work experience, which witnessed the departure of all the other American interns within one week of starting—obviously discouraging for me; needless to say, it wasn't easy to motivate myself to remain for the course of the internship. I'm proud of myself for “making it” to the end, but at the same time, I'm sort of guilty of that pride. I don't think that this can really be viewed as an end. I can't pat my back and move on. My mind has been blown at the country that hosts almost 15% of the world's population, 75% of whom live in impoverished rural villages. There's no way that this can be the “finish line” for me. I haven't “made it;” I've just begun. And while there's no doubt that it has been nice to return home to the states, where I no longer have to worry about whether or not I'll have running water nor have to keep both hands in my pockets whenever in a public place, I'll never feel like I have left India. I don't think that's possible. I'm not saying that I'm going to move to Delhi or Mumbai or some random Punjabi village right after graduation from Harvard; I guess there just something telling me that India (and the world of development economics) will call me back in some way, shape, or form at some point my near future.

Jia Hui Lee

PROJECT/PROGRAM: BUDDHIST ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE INDIAN HIMALAYAS

Class: 2012, Duration: 6 weeks, Report written: Sept. 22, 2010

I spent six weeks traveling by train and jeep through Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir, stopping at Buddhist gompas, or monasteries, that exemplify and continue the practices of Tibetan Buddhism. Throughout many legs of the journey, I was only several kilometers from the Indo-Tibetan border. The journey ended in Leh, Ladakh, where I spent three days near Alchi to conduct a site survey of a cave monastery from the 10th or 11th century.

The road on which I traveled is also historically significant. Many of the roads closely follow the original routes used by caravans traveling in and out of Hindustan on the Silk Road. The regions I traveled in have historically been a meeting point of many goods and people. Indeed, the sharp increase in popularity of Leh as a tourist destination only highlights its history as an entreport between Tibet, Central Asia, the Middle East, and India. Many of the Kashmiri shawl-wallahs, for example, told me stories about their merchant ancestors who traded gold, pottery, precious stones, and metal work. Tibetan traders at the bazaar told me about the fortnight's journey it takes them to travel from Tibet, through Nepal, to Leh to sell their handicrafts. There is also a huge presence of refugees as well as nomadic indigenous groups, whose tents I was able to pass by while traveling on the dirt road to Leh.

The art and architecture of the gompas in the region reflect this rich and complex history of interaction in Ladakh and Himachal. For example, the painted motifs of the ceiling panels mimic the patterns found on Persian carpets and cloths from Afghanistan. The pillars have Ionian influences and they are usually made out of trees imported from Kashmir. In the wall paintings, elements found in China, the Middle East, and India can be found and traced back to their respective dynasties from which they originate (such as the Tang in China and the Pala in Bihar).

For my final project, I traveled out into Ladakh for about 70 kilometers to a village called Saspol, near Alchi. Here, I spent 3 days documenting wall paintings found in a cave-gompa that date to the 10th or 11th century. Through an analysis of motifs, layout, iconography, and whatever little information is available from previous documentation of the cave's wall paintings, I completed a rough site survey while analyzing the relationship of the landscape (a cave in the mountain) to the iconography and devotional/meditational function of the cave. The paper is available if SAI would like a copy of it. The work is very preliminary but should contribute to the little present scholarship available on the cave.

The experience working independently on the cave while coming in contact with a region of the world that I knew nothing about has taught me a lot about surviving by myself. It has also opened up my heart and mind to the different ways that people live. I would thus like to extend my appreciation and gratitude to the South Asia Initiative for opening

up an entire world of interest to me. Being in Ladakh and Himachal has enabled me to realize the immense potential for scholarship that the region offers. The area is so rich in history and culture; it is a meeting point of several traditions and historical trajectories that beg for more investigation into their relationships, movements, and meanings.

Michael Lim

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL PROJECT ON DISABILITY

Through the generous support of Harvard University's South Asia Initiative, I was able to spend this past summer in Bangladesh as a summer intern for the Harvard Law School Project on Disability. As part of this summer internship, I engaged myself in a self-initiated research study on the mental health situation in Bangladesh. This research took me to over six different medical facilities—including the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in Dhaka, Pabna Mental Hospital, Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, Dhaka Medical College, the Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCPS), and the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS)—and four different districts in the country of Bangladesh. In sum, I can perhaps best describe this past summer as my own personal “crash course” in the operations of the country's mental health care delivery system and the developmental context of Bangladesh.

Over the course of this summer internship, I learned a lot about the true nature of research in the developing world. While I initially struggled with the shortage of data that tends to be a common theme among developing countries, I found myself thinking in inventive ways in order to carry out the research task that I had set out to complete. During the beginning phases of my research project, I had originally anticipated that I would conduct an exploratory study on the diagnostic practices of Bangladesh's mental health professionals in order to see which diagnostic standards, if any, they followed in their day-to-day work. Unfortunately, the information regarding this topic was scarce, and the professional body (the Bangladesh Association of Psychiatrist) whose cooperation I desperately sought was unwilling to lend a helping hand in my research endeavors. In fact, one of the most striking memories that I will take away from this summer internship will be being hit with a two-week “ban” from the National Institute of Mental Health in Dhaka after simply inquiring about the diagnostic procedures followed by the psychiatrists who work in that institute. Despite this lack of administrative cooperation, I still found myself with much to sink my teeth into in terms of research. I spent the days following my unceremonious ban researching case studies of various mentally ill patients who had been dissatisfied with the quality and nature of their medical care in Bangladesh. Thankfully, these case studies allowed me to re-conceptualize and broaden my research focus to an even meatier issue: the basic barriers that prevent individuals in Bangladesh from receiving proper medical treatment for their mental conditions. With this new research topic set firmly in mind, I quickly engaged myself in the necessary research to identify these major barriers to access.

In total, I was able to identify ten major barriers from the interviews that I conducted with over 17 mental health professionals and from the 8 case studies that I was able to compile through personal discussions with the family members of various mentally ill persons in Bangladesh. One of the most surprising discoveries that I made over the course of this research project was that, despite the improvement of general health indicators in the country, formidable cultural, financial, social, logistical, and personal barriers likely impede efforts intended to promote the universal provision of quality mental health care services to the entire country of Bangladesh. Through this discovery, I was able to learn that the mental health care delivery systems in developing countries like Bangladesh do not simply suffer from problems on the supply side of things—that is, on the side of the health care delivery system. No, rather, the logistical problems—e.g., the lack of mental health professionals, the inefficiencies of the health care delivery system, and the concentration of mental health care providers in the capital city of Dhaka—are only one aspect of the multiple shortcomings that the mental health system in Bangladesh faces. Beyond just logistical troubles, Bangladesh faces significant and deep-rooted social problems, such as the (1) stigmatization of mental illnesses, which lead many individuals to ignore or deny their psychiatric conditions; (2) the lack of resources of many impoverished individuals suffering from mental illnesses, which prevent many mentally ill persons from seeking costly but necessary medical treatment; and (3) the lack of awareness of basic mental health issues, which blinds many mentally ill persons from seeing that they suffer from conditions that

can be treated by medicine. From my research, it seems as though all of these identified barriers should be considered in the development of viable solutions to the mental health problems of Bangladesh. While the primary intentions of my research were not to provide policy solutions or implications, it is easy to see that a multi-faceted approach must be taken in order to resolve many of the issues with which the current mental health system grapples. For example, simply increasing the number of psychiatrists in the country (a solution posed by many global mental health activists) will not likely resolve the issues regarding the social stigmas that mentally ill persons bear. Unfortunately, this realization suggests that the solutions to Bangladesh's mental health situation are likely to be much more complicated and far-reaching than many individuals believe.

Besides just spending my time in research, I also participated in a variety of cultural activities and attended multiple disability-related conferences. From these experiences, I was provided with a striking impression of the difficulties and the injustices that many individuals living with disabilities endure. Many of my days were spent in the company of disabled individuals who lacked the necessary resources, whether monetary or intellectual, to receive appropriate care or accommodations for their conditions. While my primary research focused on mental health issues, I came across and participated in a wide variety of disability-related activities through my work with HPOD. From visiting medicine distribution programs intended to provide poor village residents with the appropriate medications for their medical conditions to taking part in sign-language training sessions coordinated by local NGOs, I personally witnessed many of the challenges that disabled individuals face in the developing world. In a country without strong legal or governmental support for disability rights, it was heartbreaking to see many of the individuals with whom I interacted not receive any type of reasonable accommodation for their disabilities. For example, in Bangladesh's high courts, an elevator lift was installed to comply with international disability standards. But the biting irony of this "reasonable" accommodation is that the lift begins only on the second floor, meaning that individuals who suffer from ambulatory disabilities are unable to use the lift that was built to accommodate them! I sincerely hope that, with the rapid economic development that is happening in the country, these basic rights will be put into place and upheld across the country for all individuals.

Besides the academic challenges that this internship posed, this summer internship also challenged me on a very personal level. Having virtually no knowledge of the country of Bangladesh or its customs and traditions, I found myself terrified during the initial days of my extended stay. The whole idea of having to haggle for a reasonable price seemed foreign and intimidating to me, especially in light of my lack of knowledge of the language. Unsurprisingly, I spent many of my initial days inside a sparsely furnished flat with my fellow interns and my supervisor, still uncomfortable with the idea of venturing out on my own. Despite this period of self-imposed isolation, I, along with HPOD's other interns, eventually enrolled in a Bangla language class. The fragments of the language that I was able to pick up from this class were perhaps the most important tool in helping me assimilate to the culture. For a country that literally fought for its language (the name "Bangladesh" actually means "country of Bangla") during its independence movement, the citizens of Bangladesh place an enormous amount of pride in their language, and any attempts made by foreigners to learn and speak the language are greatly appreciated. With this summer having been my first time in a foreign country on my own, I made sure to imbibe as much of the culture as possible and the Bangladeshi's love for their language is undoubtedly something that I'll never forget.

In terms of advice that I can provide to future interns, I would say that research in the developing context requires an inordinate amount of patience and creativity and in order to make the most of your summer, you must be flexible in your approach to any given research topic. I have personally found that the ability to readjust one's original research plans when things go awry is almost necessary when it comes to making the most out of your summer research. As mentioned previously, I had originally wanted to examine the mental health situation in Bangladesh through a quantitative lens; but once I found out that there was a dearth of statistical data to support any type of numerical analysis, I quickly shifted my focus to examining the diagnostic practices of mental health professionals to see how much consistency there was in the diagnostic methodologies of psychiatrists in the country. Unfortunately, I found the Bangladesh Association of Psychiatrists uncooperative, and I had to shift my research focus for a third time. I ultimately wound up looking at the mental health situation through a broader lens and produced a pilot study on the barriers that mentally ill individuals

in Bangladesh face in accessing the appropriate medical health care that they need. While the research that I produced was not nearly as polished or quantitative as I would have liked, I found myself deeply interested in the issues that I was researching and I definitely feel as though I came away from this summer internship with innumerable meaningful insights and experiences. All it took for me to realize my own satisfaction with this summer research project was a flexible mindset and an intense passion for work in the developing world.

Another piece of advice that I would offer future interns would be to get to know your research site as well as possible prior to your arrival. I know that I spent a lot of my first few weeks just trying get better acquainted with the Bangladeshi culture, and I feel as though I could have better prepared myself so that I wouldn't have had to waste precious days that I could have spent engaging in research. While it's likely impossible for anyone to completely evade the period of adjustment required for living in a foreign environment, having a base-level familiarization with the customs and traditions before one arrives would greatly enhance anyone's experience and dramatically shorten the amount of time that an individual would have to spend trying to get acquainted with his or her surroundings.

If I could improve this summer internship in any way, I would definitely like to have had more institutional support on the local level. Unfortunately, many of the psychiatrists who represented the Bangladesh Association of Psychiatrists were suspect of HPOD and its intentions. I feel as though many of the psychiatrists who refused to participate in my research study would have been more receptive to the idea had I had ties to local organizations or institutions. With this summer having been the inaugural year of HPOD's Summer Internship Program, my fellow interns and I had to come to this realization the hard way. Hopefully, with the coming years, HPOD will continue to grow and develop a presence in Bangladesh. With all of the fantastic work that the organization is doing, it is my sincere hope that future interns will be able to accomplish their research with as much ease and facility as possible, and local support would be absolutely necessary for this.

In sum, I thoroughly enjoyed my summer internship with HPOD, and I greatly appreciate all of the support that the South Asia Initiative has provided me in realizing my passion for work in the developing context. While this summer internship was not without its fair share challenges and unexpected difficulties, I have grown tremendously from this overseas experience, and I hope to see more students benefit from this amazing opportunity that SAI has made possible for me.

Marena Lin

THE STORIES AND FACES OF AGRICULTURE IN RURAL INDIA

With the Booth Fund Fellowship and a grant from the South Asia Initiative, I wrote about and lived in various parts of agricultural India. There, I got to know farmers and developed a sense of their perspectives on life and relationship with agriculture and climate. This was my second summer in India, and although I had spent a portion of the previous summer in rural areas, I was hoping to spend all of my time in the villages during this journey. Before arriving, I contacted the Rural Development Foundation in Andhra Pradesh, a family-run charity dedicated to bringing quality and affordable private school education to rural areas in Andhra Pradesh. I also contacted Anant Gogte, the trustee of Gramvardhini, an agricultural NGO in Maharashtra which works with the villages around Pune. With international and Indian government grants, Gramvardhini runs women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and constructs water conservation projects to improve food security in these regions, in addition to other projects. These two organizations would facilitate my stays in rural regions, something that was wisest to arrange through an organization because they were familiar with the communities in an area and already had a context for





being there.

Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are better off than many other Indian states in terms of the standard of living of their farmers and the reliability of government aid programs, but both still suffer from socioeconomic problems that are worsened by endemic corruption and lack of available capital for development. Parts of Maharashtra have endured spates of farmer suicides recently and throughout the 1990s, and many rural regions in Andhra Pradesh are simply off the electrical grid and have estimated household incomes of less than Rs 7,000 annually -- not enough to adequately feed a family through the year. In addition to learning about the differences in rural agriculture between these regions, I was also curious how their lifestyles varied across state lines, language differences, and religions. Both regions had also experienced monsoon failures in 2009. In addition to entirely rural areas, I wanted to learn about the perspectives of smallholder peri-urban farmers in Delhi along the banks of the Yamuna river. However, before leaving for India, I had not been able to find an organization to facilitate a stay in these regions. In case working with farmers in Delhi was not possible, I wanted to have other options in northern India, where agriculture might be more difficult and subject to different public assistance (usually less). So I contacted Dr. Suman Sahai of the Gene Campaign, a Delhi-based organization that uses a combination of biodiversity conservation, education, and other rural development programs to improve the lives of India's agricultural population.

I had lived in the Warangal District of Andhra Pradesh during the previous summer, but I knew that my first impressions, although positive and deeply meaningful for me, were insufficient for fully understanding the region and its people. 2009 saw a serious monsoon failure, with grain prices soaring up 40%, and I left before the effects of it had manifested. I was told that the Andhra Pradesh Public Distribution System, which offers rice at 2 rupees/kg at 4 kilograms per person per month could be credited for preventing mass famine in the region. I also had not known the language, Telugu, during the previous summer, but I learned to read in preparation for my second trip. In addition, I had taken an intensive Hindi course during the spring semester before this summer. The subsequent differences between my month-long stay in 2010 and that in 2009 were vast.

In rural areas, people generally only know the local language, but more educated villagers and villagers that have migrated northward will know some Hindi or English. Andhra Pradesh also has a large population that speaks Urdu, which is primarily distinct from Hindi because it uses the Persian-Arabic script; otherwise, it shares its grammar and a large body of its vocabulary. Also, the Warangal District boasts a large population of Banjara tribals, a nomadic population believed to have its roots in the same group that gave rise to European gypsies. Having migrated from Rajasthan generations ago, these tribals speak Lambadi, which is also very similar to Hindi. The previous summer, my year.

Although I was now better able to interact with my friends, I still required a translator in order to ask more detailed questions about agriculture and what had been done in times of difficulty the previous year. However, rather than adding to my interactions, I found that a translator produced an unforeseen barrier between myself and the villagers. Hierarchy in villages in Andhra Pradesh is very evident--everyone of a higher caste or economic capacity than oneself is sir or madam--but whenever I approached someone for the first time, none of this mattered for me. I could walk up to women weeding in a cotton field and spend the afternoon weeding with them and conversations about our families would naturally arise. However, a native translator will fit much more neatly into the hierarchy than a visitor to the area. If someone we were hoping to interview was not home at the time, my translator would call and demand that he return home for the interview. Easy conversations were transformed into interrogations, and responses were fed to respondents. And it was not really the fault of the translator, since he was simply doing what he had perceived his job to be, but I quickly realized that these were not the types of relationships I had hoped to cultivate with these people. Even if our interactions lacked the finer details, it was more important to me that our interactions were an exchange, a trade of ideas and beliefs, a mutual learning experience. My purpose in journeying to India was not to harvest information and leave poor impressions of foreigners in my wake.

In addition to my lack of language skills during the previous summer, I also had not known much about the socio-political climate of the region. During this second journey, I learned of the Maoist-Naxalite movement, which had enjoyed a strong presence in rural Andhra. The Maoist movement follows the tenets of Maoism in protesting the unfair economic conditions of the nation's rural poor; this translates to engaging in guerrilla warfare and domestic terrorism, all for the long-term goal of overthrowing the Indian government and starting a communist state--and supposedly bettering the condition of India's agricultural poor. Days before I arrived in India, nearly seventy people were killed in train that was derailed by Naxalites. Two weeks before I left Andhra Pradesh, a "top Naxal" was killed by police less than 40 kilometers from the village I was staying in. However, I was still relatively detached from the effects of this movement, although the Rural Development Foundation had to have the approval of the Naxalites to open schools in Naxal-affected regions. The reason I had not known of this movement seven weeks into my time in Andhra was that Naxalism was not exactly on the tip of the tongues of villagers who struggle to make ends meet and send their children to school (the language barrier certainly played a part). I was more likely to hear about the ongoing drought (which turned into a late but abundant monsoon after I left) each day and the subsequent lack of work for day laborers. It was remarkable to wake up to a warm dry day in late June knowing that this weather could mean famine in January and an immediate spike in rice prices.

This journey also involved my first experiences in rural Maharashtra. I stayed in villages near Pune, where the local language was Marathi, and farmers grew pearl millet, peanuts, mangoes, and sesame. They would grow rice when the monsoon arrived. Here, I got to know Anant Gogte, who described the work of the SHGs and the kind of empowerment and economic opportunity they had offered women and their families. I saw this firsthand when I visited many of these groups with Shantabai Manjare, who manages them. With loans from self-help groups, essentially a form of self-funded microfinancing, women had begun beauty parlors, mobile phone stores, street food stalls, and even shoe stores. Loans from these groups had also funded college educations and paid for healthcare. Farmers seemed to believe that the key to economic advancement was obtaining a technical degree, so I met many young men and women who were studying to become computer engineers and physicists. In both Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, my experiences were limited to better-off regions that were within 50 kilometers of towns. The part of rural India I experienced still struggled with malnutrition, caste-ism, persisting poverty, and inadequate basic amenities like water supply and electricity, but these areas also had rising literacy rates, visible social mobility, where children of illiterate farmers had even moved to the United States to work with software firms, and were generally improving their standard of living.

I had heard of much more remote regions that Gramvardhini also worked with and that were isolated by rocky unpaved roads and scant electricity coverage. These farmers benefited from education programs related to conservation and sustainable farming. I only ended up spending two weeks in these regions, and my Hindi did not get me very far. When I passed through the villages near Pune a month later, gone were the brown parched hillsides and dry wells. Although the monsoon was also late in Maharashtra, the Western Ghats had transformed into a verdant paradise, where greenery peeked out from every crevice and water burst forth from rocky cliffs. However, despite these rolling green pastures, there was still not enough water for the rainfed rice crop, especially in regions without irrigation. Rice was transplanted late and withered to parrot green in the drought. Although the monsoon would arrive in full force weeks after my second departure (the largest ever recorded cloudburst would occur in Leh in early August, raining down nearly 2 inches of rain in one minute), it would come too late for a lot of early-sown crops. Despite the chasm that separated my lifestyle in the U.S. from theirs in rural India, I had never felt more welcomed and accepted by complete strangers than I did in India. Not only did I never experience xenophobia, but I was always welcomed like an honored relative and I constantly felt at a loss in repaying the hospitality I received. As much as India's problems with religious riots, honor killings, and domestic terrorism are publicized in the international media, the far more common instances of an accepting and open-minded culture will never make the news.

By the end of my two months in these areas, I still had not been able to get in touch with anyone who worked with the peri-urban farmers of Delhi, so I met with Dr. Sahai and decided to venture out to Jharkhand, easily one of India's poorest and most disturbed states. Every day, there were several headlines about another Maoist attack or the occasional capture and surrender of a Maoist commander. Much of the population is below the national poverty line and struggles

to grow and gather enough food. An estimated 4-14% of land in Jharkhand is irrigated, a dismal figure compared to national average of 40%. As a result, there is a single rainfed crop each year, and farmers typically only grow enough for their own consumption. This year, although the rest of India eventually experienced a downpour in August, Jharkhand and much of the northwest remained dry. I stayed within 30 kilometers of Ranchi, which, despite being the state capital, is still no bigger than most Indian towns. My hosts were a family of laborers who each made two dollars a day doing agricultural or construction labor. The only running water was carried on two feet between the water pump and the two-room clay home that housed nine of us, four goats, a cat, and ten chickens.

The contrast between Jharkhand and the wealthier southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra was stark. I was forced to rethink the concept of development. In Jharkhand, I met many college graduates who were still working as agricultural laborers, either tending their own fields or making about a couple dollars a day (100 rupees). They had studied subjects like economics and history and earned degrees that would not advance them unless they moved closer to an urban area. Among the villagers, there was also a common knowledge base of edible plants in the region, and with every rainfall, mushrooms and bamboo shoots would enter into their diets. However, it was a mistake to think that any deficits in cultivated grain could be made up in gathered food -- wild foods were only accessible after healthy rains. Without moisture, tubers could not be unearthed, and mushrooms and bamboo did not grow. The edible snails could only exist in the rice paddies that were flooded; without water, paddy became desiccated pieces of land ridden with pentagonal fractures. I wondered why more attention had not been paid to integrating the indigenous knowledge into developing the region -- for example cultivating mushrooms and bamboo with irrigated land. Living in Jharkhand gave me a very strong sense of the validity of the conserving biodiversity in the region. In fact, the primary reason that the Gene Campaign's seed banks are flourishing is that smallholder farmers have found their services in loaning some of the 800 varieties of rice valuable. Some varieties of rice can grow fast enough to escape rising flood waters; others are drought resistant; and another variety can keep a person feeling full throughout the day, something that is quite important when you are doing eight hours of hard labor.

Basic amenities were also absent: there were no human waste facilities in the village and no water purification facilities (we had to trust that the bore wells were safe), and I met several families who had lost members to dysentery and stomach illnesses. Brain malaria was also a common affliction that was almost always deadly. Certainly, by standards of living and socio-political stability, Jharkhand is a far poorer part of India than Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, but the reality is that it boasts incredible potential in human, ecological, cultural, and natural resources.

My experiences in India this summer have cemented my interests in learning about, researching, and effecting sustainable rural development. Although my primary purpose in this journey has been to write about these regions and help foster a sense of cross-cultural empathy between societies on opposite ends of the world, I have become more interested in taking an active role in rural development. I not only met villagers whose hearts and minds are many times bigger than their wallets but also individuals who have dedicated their lives to the often frustrating task of charity work in rural India. These experiences also would not have been possible without the NGOs that facilitated my stays in these areas and the several families who hosted me into their homes, often having met me only hours before giving me the only bed in the house.

I am currently applying to graduate school programs through which I can better research rural development in India. Many of these programs fall under the umbrella of urban development or land economy. And of course, I am extremely grateful for the support of the Booth Fund and the South Asia Initiative in allowing me the opportunity to pursue interests that do not fall neatly under any one discipline. Thank you again for supporting me in a project and set of experiences that would not have been possible in a Harvard classroom.

These fellowships are also a great part of the reason that I'm not caught off guard when I receive phone calls and videochats in the middle of the night from rural India, which also makes me wonder -- how is it that these regions have better cell phone coverage than access to safe drinking water? theacademicvagrant.wordpress.com

Sara Lytle

BUDDHIST STUDIES IN NEPAL

After one or two near missed flights, many hours of restless sleep in recycled air, and a few excited conversations with fellow travelers, I arrived in Nepal. I was nervous and excited and very aware of the fact that this was the place I was going to be for the next nine weeks. The Boston airport still felt deceptively close, yet at this point, I was far from returning. This was a project that I had been thinking about doing for many years and I was both unsure of what to expect and worried that what I expected was not what I would find. It ended up to be an experience that challenged and rewarded me, both intellectually and personally, in ways that I had not imagined.

Soon after I arrived, I decided to move in with a Tibetan host family. I had planned to stay in a guesthouse, but I soon realized that it would be too easy to fall into similar patterns of my life in America. Though my host mother spoke only Tibetan and I spoke English and a bit of French (not particularly useful in this situation), staying with her was one of the best parts of my project. Having the opportunity to absorb another way of life, to participate in another culture, and to learn what I could about another person's story helped me to understand the importance of cultivating a sense of empathy when learning and studying.

We began our mornings at the Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling Monastery with a class on a Tibetan text taught by an advanced monk. We then had an hour of meditation practice followed by instruction from a professor from Middlebury on Buddhist Philosophy and Hermeneutics. Due to the intensive nature of the program, we often discussed the intersections between the components of the program and the ways in which what we were studying was involved in the rest of our lives in Nepal. It became a program that was both intellectual and personal. Rather than taking things for what they appeared on the surface (both in academics and in everyday life), we learned to examine their causes and their processes. Through this immersion in textual study and meditative practice, I learned to look deeply at the processes by which we gain knowledge, form perceptions, and create impressions.

Following four weeks in the wildness of Kathmandu, we moved to the monastery's retreat center in Pharping for a two-week meditation retreat. Spending hours sitting, many thoughts (some hidden and some already known and habitually pushed away) were given the space to arise. Resting with the mind was difficult. I learned a bit more how to focus, how to let those thoughts arise and let them dissipate, how to simply be rather than constantly acting and interpreting. I began to notice in myself what was described in the texts we were studying: the long habituated tendency to close off, to separate self from other, to cling to my own happiness as central, to consider my own suffering as a depressive obstacle. These tendencies had arisen through repeated perceptions, interactions, and habits. Yet, when given space, they began to become apparent for what they are - not inherently fixed, but constantly changing processes. Thus, with practice in this recognition, positive emotions and interactions - patience, compassion, contentment, generosity - can be cultivated.

For the last two weeks of my time in Nepal, I stayed in a monastery as a volunteer English teacher. The morning of my first day was daunting; the only experience I really had was teaching theater games and I was now in charge of several classrooms and several curriculums. But once I was in the classroom, I realized that simply being engaged in the students' willingness to learn and to talk formed the foundation of my teaching. It was important that they listened to whatever vocabulary I was scribbling onto the board, but it was also essential that I listen to them. Because I was there for such a



short time, the practice of English centered upon sharing our stories. I found that I loved teaching; the idea of being a part of someone else's learning (no matter how brief) became a way in which I could engage in a meaningful connection with not only my students, but also with the other teachers and monks in the monastery. I had come to the monastery at the end of my trip; I was tired from traveling and had already been away from home for seven weeks. Yet, the sense of warmth and welcome that I received living there made leaving at the end very difficult. I had begun to feel like this was a new home and (as many feel after experiences abroad) I did not want to leave it.

I grew tremendously from the formal study of the classroom, but I also found the experience of living in Nepal to be incredibly important. Traveling on my own, I learned not only how to rely upon myself (navigating Nepalese roads and packs of street dogs), but I also learned how to rely upon others, to create new connections and new families. This may not seem so important, but one of the struggles of college has been learning how to leave home while simultaneously creating a new one, how to become independent yet still needing support and guidance. In Nepal, such a drastic departure from where I had previously lived, there were many moments of difficulty. But, the kindness I was shown by my host mother, by my fellow students, and by the monks and teachers at the monastery generated a deep joy in the power of compassion between people. Before I left, I had not fully anticipated the amount that I ended up learning from talking to people, from asking questions, and from simply being mindful as I was living in a place with life that was constantly changing and unfolding. When I simply listened, I experienced the importance of the complexities of the everyday, of human creativity, of storytelling. Through my time studying and living, I saw that, in a very direct way, we rely upon each other. This experience has left a powerful impression upon me. Returning to Harvard this semester, I have found that I think often of my time in Nepal. I am very grateful to the South Asia Initiative for funding and for helping to create the conditions under which I could undertake this project. Thank you.

Francisco Marmolejo

RESEARCH ABROAD FOR COMPUTATIONAL NEUROBIOLOGY IN BANGALORE

As I try to look back and reflect on my summer, I always find that I don't even know where to start! So many things happened so fast as I got immersed in beautiful India, that many times it all seems like a blur of lasting impressions, stacked one on top of the other, as I made my way from the surprise of a completely new world to the sadness of leaving behind a place that has in many ways become a part of who I am.

I was lucky enough not only to have such an amazing opportunity to do Neurobiology research in the National Center for Biological Sciences in Bangalore, but to be able to do so partaking in a lab of such kind and diverse people who personally exposed me to so much of India I had never known before; it was truly a perfect balance. Most of the week I worked on various of the lab's projects, ranging from Moth Electrophysiology and reflex pathways, to behavioral experiments on butterflies through high-speed videography. Yet this work was not only fun (After all, we did get to skip around fields catching butterflies in butterfly nets on many occasions) but also a challenging complement to my undergraduate scientific education. For me it was the first time working in a lab, and the welcoming environment of the lab made it easy to transition into basic lab techniques, such as insect dissection, into the intricacies of recording neuron signals or testing for behavioral changes in butterfly flight in high-speed videos.

What was better yet was the incredibly diverse environment of our lab. My labmates were from all over India, coming from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Punjab, Bombay, Delhi and even Calcutta, and many of them shared similar interests with me—One friend even became my climbing buddy for the summer as we scaled the mountains from the countryside in Ram Nagram, where the ever-famous Sholay was filmed! In this multicultural environment, for me it was the perfect opportunity to use the Hindi I have been learning at Harvard for the past couple of years, and absorb as much on Indian culture as possible, while sharing my occasional Mexican stories to highlight those strangely interesting similarities between our worlds like the resemblance of the tortilla to the roti (a fact one of the Biology professors claimed is evidence to convergent evolution).

And not only did these wonderful friendships help me out in Bangalore, but thanks to them, I was able to travel across the country, staying with friends along the way, getting to know even more of this beautiful place. During my two week trip across India, I was able to see the pristine green beauty of a monsoon-enveloped Maharastrian countryside with my roommate from college and his family, I was able to stay in Lucknow and enjoy the warm company of my climbing buddy's family, and I even got the opportunity to travel alone for some time through Delhi and Agra, making friends with many kind people along the way, always going out of their way to help me out.

There was always the initial reaction of surprise to my broken Hindi, but thanks to my great teachers, I was able to not only communicate, but also make all kinds of friends from rikshaw drivers to Delhi comic book artists, and even some policemen who were even kind enough play some music with me on guitar as we taught each other songs from home. And of course I did get to see many of those breathtaking monuments that we all associate so much with India, yet these everyday moments like joking with auto drivers, exploring new food, watching Bollywood movies until late at night, taking multiple chai breaks, climbing the Bangalore countryside, having some of that delicious pani poori at night, and just simply spending countless hours talking about our different worlds that are some of the dearest memories I take with me after this summer. It is sum of all these cherished small moments with everyone that have created in me a beautiful impression of a country that I will always be eager to return not only to learn more about its incredible culture, but simply to enjoy the kindness of those dear friends who in simply helping me get used to a new place have opened my eyes to the world like never before.

Christina Newhouse

REPORT ON MY SUMMER IN MUMBAI JUNE 2010-AUGUST 2010

This summer, I spent two months living and working in Mumbai, India as a 2010 grant recipient of the SAI summer internship grant. I was working with an organization called Bandra East Community Centre ("BECC"), which is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that works in a community in Mumbai called Bandra East, a poorer neighborhood that contains some slums and is right next to the largest slum in Asia, Dharavi. BECC does many things as an organization, but its primary function is as a center for street boys who are brought in by social workers or found by BECC and who live full time at the center. In addition to the Street Boys Project, BECC also has a Crèche for babies of poor, working class families, a Senior Citizens project for elderly citizens in the community, Computer and Sewing classes for young women and adults who need vocational training, a Balwadi/Preschool for young children who are too old for the Crèche, a working medical clinic, Tuition classes for poor students not in school (and for the street boys), several microfinance initiatives within the community, and various other community work including Women's empowerment groups, workshops, camps, and seminars.

My work with BECC for the two months that I was in Mumbai was mostly spent with the street boys, though I also worked with the babies from the Crèche and the elderly citizens in the Senior Citizen Project. Every day when I got to the center, I would usually go up to the top level where the tuition classes were taught. I was mainly involved in the programs centered around the street boys and in the mornings the youngest of the boys would be taking their tuition classes before they went to school for the day. These young boys (ages 5-10ish) had 'tuition classes' in the mornings with two female teachers, they ate lunch at noon, and then had school from 1pm-6pm. While the young boys were heading off to school, the older boys (ages 11 to 17ish) who have school in the morning were coming back for lunch. After lunch some of them would have their tuition classes at the center in the afternoon with one of two male teachers or just have free time until their tuition classes in the evenings.



My day started out with the youngest boys; normally I would take 2-3 of them aside and read with them or practice the alphabet depending on their skill level. Then, we would all go down to lunch where I would talk with them while they ate, say hello to the babies at the Crèche, and help the boys change and walk over to school. After lunch my day was always a bit more unorganized because the older boys usually had their own agenda or if they were doing their homework it was not in English and there was little I could do to help out. I would try to find a group of boys who seemed to not be doing anything and I would organize something for us all to do; sometimes we would walk around the neighborhood and I would let them take photos of things that they liked, other times we practiced a short skit that we all wrote together called “The Case of the Missing Jewels” and I would film it so they could see their acting and hear their English skills. I got to know a group of these boys especially well – Akshay, Mangesh, Safik, Ishwar, Amar, Yas, etc.

Some of the boys clearly had been at the center for a while, and they looked much better cared for and had clearly had several years of schooling under their belts. Those ones also knew the best English and helped me with the ones who didn’t really know any. Other boys came to the center more recently – for example, these two brother named Hareprasad (around 10 years old) and Omkar (around 5 years old) who had come in the day before I showed up at BECC. Hareprasad left the center after about a week – he ran off back to life on the street – but Omkar is still there today. I heard many different stories about those two boys; someone told me that they were brought in by their mother who couldn’t care for them anymore (some of the boys do actually have one parent left, but that parent just cannot look after them and have brought them to BECC to stay) and others told me they were picked up by social workers and had been living under a bridge.

For Omkar’s first month at the center, he hardly spoke. Not in Hindi and not in English. He was the tiniest, saddest little boy I had seen – his legs were like sticks and his head, which, comparatively looked much too big for his tiny body was always hung directed at the floor. His skin was bumpy and scratched, and among other health issues he clearly had a severe lice infestation as evident by constant itching, which was not helped by all the relentless teasing from all the other boys. I suspected that he was too young to be brave enough like his brother to run away (in fact, no one was forcibly keeping any of the boys there) and yet he was also too young to have really been socialized enough to know how to fit in with the other boys. He also must have been extremely upset to be separated from his brother and possibly any other family he had left, and didn’t know any other life than out in the street. He was just in limbo at BECC; he had nothing to do all day because he wasn’t accepted into the school where all the other boys went and so he spent his day moping in corners or following me around as I did my daily routine at the center. My most difficult challenge and most rewarding success was watching Omkar’s slow socialization over the two months I was there; eventually I got him to speak to me and the other boys, and he even learned the alphabet and a few English words. Most recently, I heard back from BECC’s director Fr. Cyril D’Souza that Omkar is now attending Cardinal Gracias High School, just like all the other little boys.

I traveled all the way around the world to India and spent two months of my life working with boys who come from the streets because I hoped that in doing so, I would find something that I could focus my life on addressing. I wanted it to be something that I didn’t know about before I left, something I couldn’t read about in books or learn from the TV, but rather something that I could only learn from being ‘in the field’ and working with people who need help. I have always known that education is an important tool to lift people out of poverty and that is why I wanted to teach this summer – teaching a bunch of street boys how to learn English, or help them with their math skills sounded like a great way to contribute and find other ways to help and make a difference. The most important thing I learned though in my time with BECC had very little to do with the more formal aspects of teaching and delivering education to those who need it, but rather had to do with what I now consider an even more basic human need for love and nurturing.

The BECC street boys have all of their basic material needs taken care of – perhaps not according to American or upper to middle class Indian standards, but certainly according to the standards of desperately poor Indians. They get three meals every day, they have shoes on their feet and clothes on their backs, they have school books, backpacks and very basic supplies, they receive an education at a government school next door, and they have beds or mats to sleep on at night. Sure, the food is not always very substantial, often they only have one or two pairs of clothes (and sometimes they aren’t even boys clothes), too many of them have broken zippers or straps on their backpacks, and most of the youngest

boys just sleep on the floor, but all things considered these boys are being pampered compared to life on the street, or even in the slums. The thing that I learned – the one thing that I took back as my piece of knowledge that I had gained – was that what they were missing was not material goods, but rather something that does not come with being raised alongside 50 other boys in a center that has only 1 full time caretaker – individual attention and nurturing*. Now that I have been away from them for over a month, I don't worry that they won't have food or that they won't have covers for their books, I worry that they don't get the individual attention that every single one of those 50 boys need. For two months, I was able to try my hardest to give those boys that attention and just spend time being with them.

When I arrived in Mumbai, I had expectations about what I would be doing every day and how my interactions with all the people and boys in the organization would go. I arrived with the expectation that I would be teaching these street boys – I knew that there were Computer classes and Tuition classes that were offered at the center, and I expected to become involved mostly in those. While to some extent that was the case because I did spend some of my time teaching, I was very surprised at how different my trip turned out from what I had planned and imagined.

My first two weeks were quite a shock because basically nothing at BECC was as I expected – and to add insult to injury hardly anyone that I worked with spoke English or could understand my 'heavy' American accent. In my first weeks working with BECC, I really had to learn to accept the fact that I was in India working with a very local organization run almost solely by Indians with hardly any international volunteers (as a matter of fact, there were none there besides myself and I did not get the impression that they have ever gotten any international volunteers who stayed for as long as I did). I had to learn to accept that India does not function the way that the US does, even on the most basic level, and that Indian organizations have very different rules, standards, etc. than the ones that I would normally work with in the US.

Once I was able to accept that – which is much easier said than done – I found that I really enjoyed being with BECC. I did not have formal classes that I taught every day, or certain boys that I worked with every day, but I learned that it did not mean that there was no consistency or meaning in what I did at BECC. I spent most of my time being with the boys. That is, I read with them, talked to them, listened to their stories and problems, broke up their fights, played with them, watched them as they played and interacted with each other, etc. We would eat together, we would laugh about things, we would find games to play and ways to occupy ourselves, and most importantly we would find ways to communicate despite the fact that they did not really know English and I did not really know any Hindi. It was very hard for me as a student who is used to such structure, efficiency, and productivity in my day to get used to such a different pace of life and realize that not every thing has to feel profound to have a significant effect on others and yourself.

* NOTE: I am very careful when I say this because in no way is it a criticism of BECC – I think that BECC is an amazing organization that does amazing work for children who otherwise would have no chances of getting a healthy, happy upbringing. BECC simply does not have the time, energy, staff, or money to be able to provide this particular need to the boys – it is really something that the boys can only get from their parents and families and so this is more a commentary on the situation which allows for these boys to become street boys and really just points out the need for these boys to be raised in homes by their own families and not out on the street or in shelters.

Tasnoba Nusrat

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL PROJECT ON DISABILITY IN BANGLADESH

This past summer I was interning with the Harvard Law School Project on Disability in Bangladesh. My project was led by Hezzy Smith, a former Harvard College 2008 graduate and the home base was in the country's capital, Dhaka.

During my two and a half months there, I worked on compiling a report regarding access to legal justice for female victims of domestic abuse. I would travel to the women's homes and communities and ask them a series of questions about the incident of victimization and other such related experiences. In most of these cases, I also had a chance to interact with their family members which allowed me to develop a better awareness of the internal factors that have shaped the women's personal lives. I recently completed the report regarding the accounts of these women and the data will be presented at an upcoming United Nations conference.

These work-related experiences were extremely eye-opening because they allowed me to get a glimpse into the lives of women in a third-world country. Although they had to endure so many great hardships, they were incredibly warm, welcoming and willing to share their stories with me. It was greatly shocking and deeply saddening that they have continued to endure such discrimination within and beyond their homes, especially after they had been victims of such harrowing crimes.

Being of Bangladeshi origin, I started this summer assuming that I had enough familiarity with the language, people and customs of the land. However, after hearing about these accounts and being in there alone with other interns, my perceptions have definitely been altered. As a result, I have started to think more critically about my identity. However, being back in the United States, I have noticed that this experience has not only made me more open-minded, but much more flexible in both professional and non-professional contexts. I think my approach to college, and life in general actually, have been greatly shaped by the new attitudes I have adopted this summer. I have learned to view challenges and unexpected obstacles with a more optimistic and assertive outlook, while also being more appreciative of all the wonderful things that the world has provided.

Since the completion of this summer's work, there has not been a day I have not thought about my experiences during those months. I have been touched in such a special way that I will not only ever forget the faces and stories, but I will keep the lessons I had learned with me forever. This summer taught me to really live my life and I think those close to me have noticed an evident change in the person I have become. I have the South Asia Initiative Grant to thank for that. You all have made this experience possible for me, so I am eternally grateful. Thanks again for making such great things happen! SAI is truly such a wonderful, wonderful organization.

Smitha Ramakrishna

CENTER FOR SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT, DELHI, INDIA



This summer I worked at the Center for Science and the Environment (CSE) in Delhi, India. CSE is a non-profit think tank with the mission of researching, lobbying, and communicating “the urgency of development that is both sustainable and equitable”¹. I worked a typical 9am to 5pm day for two months. This summer internship was such a valuable learning experience for me: I learned how it is to have a cubicle job, to work in a completely different cultural setting, and to actively engage in environmental policy. My office had a lot of young people, which made it easy to make friends and an overall positive atmosphere which encouraged continual

growth and learning.

During my internship, I worked on three projects under the Industry and Environment Unit. First, I researched and wrote a concise report delineating the methodology and steps being followed by multilateral banks (i.e. the World Bank, Asian Development Bank) for conducting Social Impact Assessment. Then after doing extensive background research on

Social Impact Assessment (SIA), I began to write a module or book on SIA. This module seeks to simplify the process of SIA and dictate the steps one should follow when performing SIA before a development project (i.e. a dam, mining project, power plant) is given final clearance. This module will be used in a CSE training program which will bring together industry personnel, government officials, academicians, and NGO representatives. Finally, I researched the Indian legal provisions under the 1974 Water Act, 1981 Air Act, and 1986 Environmental Protection Act pertaining to the accreditation and recognition of laboratories. In India, labs are officially recognized by the government to enable the lab's research results to be used as legal evidence (i.e. in legislative acts, government publications to monitor national or state water and air quality levels, court proceedings). After meeting Senior Scientists at the Central Pollution Control Board in Delhi and contacting six distinct State Pollution Control Boards in India, I compiled a comprehensive report on the procedures used by government officials.

I would highly recommend interning abroad. It was such a great learning experience to work in a different country, as there are certain nuances which contribute deeply to your understanding of the world. Additionally, it was great exposure to work in a typical 9am-5pm cubicle job and have the ability to reflect on it. Finally, I would recommend specifically working with the Center for Science and Environment in India, since this NGO is very flexible and allows you to work on projects that you are interested in, in my case, sustainable development and social justice.

¹"About CSE." Centre for Science and Environment. Web.

Vidya Rajan

KHELSHALA, CHANDIGARH, INDIA



This summer I worked as Director of Communications for Khelshala, a non-profit organization in Chandigarh, India that works to bring the sport of squash to underprivileged children and to further use the benefits of the sport to expand their educational and other extracurricular opportunities. The organization was founded one year ago in a village called Attawa, and has expanded to serve not only children from that village, but children from other villages and slums who belong to nearby non-profit organizations as well.

As a member of the Harvard varsity women's squash team that visited and did service at Khelshala in January 2010, I wanted to return to Khelshala to aid in its development and to work some more with the children there. Our experience there in January awed and moved me, and I felt that I had to go back to give the organization whatever I could. Besides playing squash with and interacting with the Khelshala children, I had an opportunity to take on the other side of helping the organization's progress, chiefly by creating proposals and presentations for corporate funding, contacting media personnel, and writing press releases.

One of my primary reasons for revisiting Khelshala was because of how much the children there moved and inspired the entire squash team during our first visit. They made us believe that empowerment through sport was possible at any level—even a sport considered as universally elite as squash. In India, for example, children establish their success in squash by performing well in tournaments can go on to obtain sponsorship from major corporations. They can further begin to travel and compete, and eventually can be recruited by a foreign university gives credence to squash ability. Coming from nothing, they can come to have a world-class education.

These are simply some examples of where a sport like squash can take these children. At the very least, they can obtain admission to private schools through their success in the sport. This can come at no cost to their families and can help them achieve higher levels of education than most of their family members. The possibilities are endless.

Rather than promising any end goal, however, Khelshala equips the children it serves with skills that will last a lifetime and that can help them create futures for themselves. There is incredible potential among the children of Attawa, and hopefully they can realize it at a place like Khelshala. For now, it is a haven for them that rescues them from the harsh realities of the lives they lead.

Arjun Ramamurti

SAI SUMMER GRANT REPORT

I used the grant money I received from the South Asia Initiative to conduct two weeks of research in Chennai and New Delhi. This research was one component in my larger thesis project, which examines issues of pluralism in contemporary, multiethnic democracies. Specifically, the project is concerned with justifying liberal, democratic states in societies in which there are a multitude of groups with fundamentally different value commitments. This is a state of affairs that characterizes many of the world's societies today. The US, the UK, France, and Sweden are all examples of societies in which multiple religious and ethnic groups coexist. Recent events suggest that states have not found a convincing way to adequately represent all of these interests. The outcry over the "ground zero" mosque, anti-immigrant sentiment across Western Europe, and the rise of homegrown terrorism are all manifestations of a common sense that some sects are not truly full members of their societies.

India is a particularly rich case to use when studying these issues. India has had a long history of rival groups being forced to live side-by-side. Throughout its history, groups in Indian society have adopted both successful and unsuccessful means by which to accommodate difference. Recent debates about secularism in India, and especially the debate about Muslim personal laws, have led to an explosion of academic writing on toleration in India and the appropriate role for

the state. As a large, extremely diverse democracy, India brings into relief many of the issues that other societies around the world struggle with on a smaller scale.

During my time in Chennai and New Delhi, I had a chance to read much of the work done by Indian intellectuals in this field. Some of this work has crossed over into the debate taking place in Europe and America. Other approaches, notably the consideration of individual psychology and the “subaltern” theorizing of some scholars, are more confined to the domestic Indian scene. Because of my primary interest in philosophy, this literature was also fascinating for its use of Hinduism and Eastern thought more broadly as the theoretical underpinning for much of the work. I became especially immersed in the notion that non-Western thought was more congenial to notions of difference, diversity, pluralism, and toleration than the more universalizing tendencies of the West.

In addition to delving into the local Indian academic literature, I also conducted interviews with prominent Indian intellectuals, most notably Ashis Nandy and Pratap Bhanu Mehta. Nandy has written extensively on secularism in India; indeed, his articles are among the most cited on the subject, both in India and in the United States. He has popularized the notion that ancient Indian forms of toleration are more practicable than modern forms of toleration advanced by a liberal state. Hearing his reasons for this helped to put my project of justifying the state into the proper perspective. It opened my eyes to the existence of a much broader spectrum of views than I had previously supposed. Professor Mehta, now the head of the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi, has written extensively on pluralism, contributing to both Western political philosophical debates and debates about domestic Indian hot-button issues (as a columnist for Indian Express). Interestingly, Professor Mehta was strongly supportive of Western theories to deal with pluralism despite his interest in the relationship between pluralism and Indian philosophy. My talk with him convinced me that deep disagreements within societies do not present an insuperable difficulty and that a solution can be found. In general, my time in India reinforced the importance of dealing with the issues presented in my thesis while exposing me to a new set of arguments, many of which cannot be found in the West.

Shalini Rao

ASHA

Introduction This summer I worked at an Indian NGO called Asha. Asha is a community health and development society dedicated to helping the nearly 4 million people living in slums in the city of Delhi, India. Formed in 1988, Asha works with nearly 300,000 slum dwellers in 46 slum colonies around the city of Delhi, enabling them to transform their lives. “Asha” means “hope” in Hindi and the society aims to give people living in slums the chance to realize their potential, regardless of their ethnic background, caste or religious beliefs. I traveled on the weekends, investigating potential thesis topics that relate both my fields of study—government and medical anthropology. I learned an incredible amount about NGOs, especially Indian.

Teaching I will spend the summer in the Mayapuri slum, teaching English to children, watching clinical work, and helping slum students who, for the first time in history, are able to apply to Delhi Universities. In addition to our work in the slum, I will work in the office starting July when the students go back to school, but I will visit the slum with a doctor a few times a week. The most recent undertaking of the organization involves the former Minister of Finance, current Home Minister, Mr. P. Chidambaram. He created a special loan agreement for Asha slum dwellers, trusting Asha to ensure that the microfinance loan will be paid back.

Thus, I ventured into Mayapuri. This slum is about a 20 minute drive from our house and has over 10 000 residents. The building is a government facility that has been given to Asha so that the organization can provide health and essential



services. It's basically a concrete structure with 6 rooms, and some fans. I do, however, have a classroom, with a lot of Hindi books, and a white board, where I can teach English and spend my time coaching the older students on college preparation. There's a window in the classroom, which leads out to a dusty, dirty area where the children can play. The smell of the slum is indescribable.

Mayapuri used to be a major hub of small-scale industries, but following recent government sanctions, most of the heavy metal industries moved out. The place is now a combination of metal factories, service stations, and the slum houses built amongst them. When you drive through Mayapuri all you see is mud, metal, and people scrapping metal to sell.

The ages of the kids ranged from 5 to 15, which is an unbelievable huge gap in English speaking ability, even in America. Furthermore, I knew no Hindi. These next weeks were going to be really difficult for me. I found myself drawing extensively on the whiteboard to teach words and sounds, and doing hand diagrams and motions with my body. The kids loved it and replicated me and teased me. I quickly learned that the most important part of trying to incorporate myself into this culture, would be to remove those things that made us different: our language, our backgrounds, our perspectives—and root myself to focus on that which made us human and similar.

The past two years has been a joyous time in Asha because it is the first time in Delhi history that slum children were accepted Delhi universities. India is very different from the US when it comes to applying for higher education. In the states we have entrance exams, extracurricular descriptions, recommendations, etc. whereas in India you are only accepted based on your entrance exam. 4 lists come out with names of accepted children, each list accepting a certain range of percentiles on the entrance exam. The first list names all those who got over 90th percentile on the test. After those students have accepted spots in the numerous colleges, the 2nd list (80-90th percentile) is released and so on until the 4th list of 60th percentile and above is released. Everyone at Asha was hoping we would get some students on the 4th list and to our surprise many of the slum kids were on the 2 and 3rd lists. 30 children from Asha slums got in, one girl scoring in the 90th percentile on their entrance exams. Asha is paying for their schooling, books, and clothes and after 20 years of working in these slums is seeing unprecedented educational success. To get into college after living an incomparable lifestyle, is mind-boggling. These students are amazing individuals.

Health Care On July 7th I shadowed a doctor for the first time. She was administering pre-natal care. It was exactly like a case study right out of one of my global health classes. The pregnant woman was currently in her third trimester and on her third child. However, she was very, very frail. Apparently, she told the doctor, by the time she finishes cooking for her other two baby children and her husband, there is either no food left for her, or she is too exhausted to cook for herself. The doctor, who had just met this woman for the first time, urged her to eat and drink more, and to rest. The doctor tried her very best to relate to the woman on a level of humanity that transcended their different places in Indian society, so that the woman would listen to her and take care of herself. While this was all happening, I was holding the woman's youngest child. It was all an amazing experience to witness, and I felt very lucky to be granted permission to sit in the doctor's room.

Another day I went to a much larger slum called Tigri. I saw patients who had tested positive for TB get recommended to a DOTS center (Directly Observed Treatment, Short Course). It's really interesting to be able to actually see the reality of everything I've been learning in my global health courses, and everything I've read about in my books in North America. I was also able to, hands-on, examine the stomachs of pregnant women to monitor the fetal growth. I think this experience particularly taught me about the disparities of wealth within the Indian healthcare system. Asha provides the slum patients with essential care at extremely low costs. However, to attend an Indian hospital, as is necessary for pregnant women and people with severe illnesses, still requires intense wait times and costs that are still relatively high. Moreover, Indian public hospitals are pretty terrible in general—they are dirty and filled with misery, because to wait for that long for insufficient care, requires such a degree of desperation. Contrasted with private facilities—which themselves are quite variant, a public hospital stands as the pinnacle of the lack of development extant within India.

The rest of my time shadowing doctors occurred at the Asha headquarters. Shadowing Dr. Shamilla was great. She's worked for Asha for over a decade so she has a relationship with many of her patients and is extremely familiar with their situations and the health challenges they face. Though the patient visits were conducted in Hindi, the doctor was great

about explaining what was going on. One thing that struck me was how many patients visited the clinic each day, often close to 50 in the space of 4 hours. Of necessity, each visit was quite short. I couldn't help but wonder with these kinds of constraints, how thorough a health evaluation was possible. Many diagnostic tests are expensive or must be done off-site, so the tendency in the slum clinics is to prescribe rather than performing a thorough diagnosis. However, this is not to criticize Asha in anyway: I understand the financial and personnel constraints that make more extensive testing impossible for the time being.

Another aspect that was noteworthy, was the similarity of the problems that many of the patients experienced, many of them direct consequences of their standard of living. Antenatal care was the most common reason for slum dwellers to visit the clinic. Other common ailments were pain in the abdomen assumed to be kidney stones, severe asthma, and open wounds that needed cleaning and bandaging. Contraception consultations were also very popular. While shadowing the doctor underlined all the progress Asha has made over the past few decades, it also highlighted the ongoing challenges facing Delhi's slum communities.

Office Work For the final few weeks at Asha, I worked on a grant report to the Japanese embassy, and on the organization's annual report. This was when I learned a lot about how NGOs are sponsored and how NGOs have to appeal to their sponsors.

Future Plans Spending my summer with Asha has inspired me to write a thesis that pertains a lot to how NGOs function and grow, and the sort of bureaucracy that exists in health care delivery.

Conclusion I think that Asha was a wonderful organization to work for because it is such an established NGO in Delhi. I met a lot of other interns this summer who worked for other various NGOs in Delhi, and their experiences were not even comparable to what I learned from Asha. It was also an awesome environment to work in as someone who had never been to India, because everyone was incredibly welcoming. I think that Mr. Martin could make pretty much anyone feel at home, and this is an incredible pull factor for an NGO.

Nicolas Roth

MY SUMMER IN OMAN AND INDIA

The first stop on my thesis research trip this summer was the Omani capital of Muscat, where I spent a little over a week. Since in my thesis I aim to trace the ideological development of public landscape architecture in India and Oman, including the spread of South Asian architectural and horticultural trends to Oman, I spent most of my time exploring the various public green spaces of the Muscat Capital Region. Not much more than a small port city surrounded by clusters of fishing villages and oasis towns when Oman's current ruler Sultan Qaboos came to power in 1970, Muscat has rapidly developed into a large modern city which stretches along a thin coastal plain between the Gulf of Oman and the Al-Hajar Mountains. As a result, distances within the city are vast and I had to rely on public transportation to get around. In the absence of trains or extensive local bus service, I ended up shuttling around the city in taxis most of the time, which had the benefit of giving me ample opportunity to practice my Arabic as I had to explain to drivers time and again that rather than going to some well-known place commonly frequented by foreigners, I wanted to be dropped off at some park or garden. Apart from visiting relevant sites, I also spent some time searching book stores for any helpful materials, coming away with a few books in both Arabic and English that should be quite helpful. However, the most important part of my stay in Oman apart from seeing and documenting the actual spaces in question was my meeting with Sarah Kneebone, who is in charge of communications and education at the Oman Botanic Garden, an ambitious project of the



Sultan's government intended to preserve the country's agricultural, horticultural, and medicinal heritage and promote the use of its indigenous plant species in contemporary horticulture and landscape architecture. Ms. Kneebone not only furnished me with ample documentation of the unique botanic garden project but also made many helpful comments regarding my observations up to that point and alerted me to various angles of the profound South Asian influence on Omani urban green spaces of which I had hitherto been unaware.

From Muscat I traveled on to Delhi, where I began my seven-week stay in India. As I had done in Oman, in Delhi, too, I spent much of my time visiting relevant parks and gardens, ranging from unknown neighborhood parks to well-known sites such as Lodi Gardens or the gardens surrounding the Tomb of Humayun. In addition, I spent the better part of two days at the library at the School of Planning and Architecture reading archived Master's Theses and other documents pertaining to my thesis topic and taking copious notes. However, apart from my research I also found time to explore Delhi. While I had been to Delhi before, on this trip I was able to see many sights I had not previously had a chance to visit, such as Purana Qila, Birla Mandir, Hauz Khas, and perhaps my favorite place in the city, the Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. Navigating Delhi more or less on my own was also a new experience which has left me much better prepared for the many visits to the city that I hope I will be able to make in the future.

Leaving Delhi I eventually continued on to Chandigarh, where I repeated my regiment of site visits and extensive searches for helpful textual materials. Comparatively small but affluent and built on a modern grid pattern, Chandigarh was much more pedestrian-friendly than Delhi and Muscat and I largely explored the city on foot, both when surveying the parks relevant for my thesis and when visiting the city's main attractions, such as the famous Nek Chand Rock Garden and the government buildings designed by Le Corbusier. I grew fond of Chandigarh very quickly and I enjoyed learning my way around the city; when the time came to travel on I was sad to leave and I hope to return soon, despite the fact that there is little of the city that I have not seen.

My next stop was Lucknow, where apart from touring the parks and examining the way in which the current Uttar Pradesh government under Mayawati is utilizing such spaces to communicate political ideology, I also visited the main historical and architectural attractions of the city such as the Bara Imambara, the Chota Imambara, and the Residency. Furthermore, I met up with a friend currently studying Urdu in Lucknow as part of an American Institute of Indian Studies language program.

After five days in Lucknow, I left for Hyderabad, the final major stop of my research trip. There I repeated my usual routine of park visits and city exploration, as well as buying many more books – some relevant for my thesis, others helpful for my further study of Urdu and Indian history and culture. I also visited the city's main sights, such as Golconda Fort, Charminar, and the Chowmahalla Palace, and just generally reveled in the city's fascinating mixture of North Indian and Islamic influences and South Indian culture. Having never been to that part of the country before, Hyderabad in many ways struck me as a different world and I was very happy to discover and explore a side of India that at once has so much in common with northern cities such as Delhi and Hyderabad and yet is so different. After leaving Hyderabad I spent a few more days in Delhi before returning home, already sad to be leaving the country and wishing to return soon while I was still waiting to board my plane at Indira Gandhi International Airports glimmering new terminal.

On the whole, the trip was an amazing experience both intellectually and emotional. Having had the opportunity to visit in person all the sites relevant to my thesis will help me to give it an immediacy and depth I would never be able to achieve otherwise and has allowed me to unearth materials and make connections that would have eluded me had I merely done research from afar. I will now proceed by organizing my findings from the trip as well as the results of the library research I have done here and doing my best to synthesize them into a text that is cohesive and organized, focusing on those sites in both India and Oman which I found most interesting and complex and yet most reflective of the larger development I am trying to illustrate. In a broader context, I believe that this time spent traveling by myself in places as diverse and complex as Muscat, Delhi, and Hyderabad, has made not only made me a more experienced traveler and a more independent person but has also given me a more complex understanding of all that human beings share in spite of cultural differences which in our contemporary world are all too often made to seem insurmountable and bound to clash. Perhaps more than anything, however, this trip strengthened my love for the part of the world I have chosen to

study and the experiences I made will continue to feed my passion for my work as well my hopes to contribute to greater understanding and appreciation between cultures that have much to say to each other.

Isabel Salovaara

CROSS-CULTURAL SOLUTIONS INDIA
PALAMPUR, HIMACHAL PRADESH

Interning with Cross-Cultural Solutions India was a challenging, edifying, and highly rewarding experience. As a health care intern, my main responsibilities included conducting health screenings on young children in the state-sponsored daycares, referring sick children to physicians, and entering the results of these screenings into an electronic database that several of the other interns and I developed. We also visited local hospitals and health sub-centers to observe medical practice in the area. Occasionally, the interns attended meetings of the women's groups in nearby villages to make a presentation and answer questions on health-related topics. Each of these experiences challenged me to rethink my assumptions about the developing world and to broaden my perspective of health policy.

I spent much of my day crouching on the cement floors of the small, government-sponsored daycares scattered throughout the villages of Himachal Pradesh. The typical daycare or *anganwadi* consisted of a small room near one of the villagers' homes. Two large metal canisters for storing government-provided food rations stood in a corner of every daycare, and alphabet posters—for both Devanagari and Roman letters—often hung on the walls. The children, mostly one to three years old, sat on the floor of the room. They sang nursery rhymes or played with a few rudimentary toys. When our medical team arrived, however, all jollity evaporated. Children dissolved into tears when we peered into their ears with the otoscope and clamped their mouths shut against our probing tongue depressors. The stethoscope and the scale were objects of fear, and we—their bearers—must have seemed, by association, equally frightening.

Despite the children's tearful resistance, the CCS medical team completed over 300 check-ups during the course of the summer. We saw many ear infections, widespread severe tooth decay, and numerous underweight children. But we also experienced the generosity, hospitality, and eager curiosity of the villagers in the rural area of Palampur, and in my visits to local daycares, hospitals, and health centers, I also witnessed a small part of India's impressive network of health and social services. Having been repeatedly frustrated by the lack of coordination between health systems and social services in the United States, I was awed at how well-attuned to the population's needs India's health promotion policies seemed to be. The children attending the *anganwadi*, run by India's Integrated Child Development Services, received pre-school education and free, nutrient-fortified meals. Tuberculosis patients received free medication, and a local health worker right in their village monitored their directly observed therapy. Pregnant mothers received pre-natal supplements and infant vaccines for free at their health sub-center, and the local health workers were available to provide counseling. Although waits for complicated procedures at larger regional health centers are apparently very long, the basic systems of preventive



medicine and local social services seemed highly satisfactory, at least in the relatively affluent state of Himachal Pradesh.

One of the most eye-opening experiences I had this summer was working with women's groups at a couple of the daycares. As a student of public health, I am accustomed to think of health problems in terms of population-level issues. I was excited to have a conversation with the women in the groups about their opinions concerning health issues that impacted their community as a whole. I prepared a list of discussion questions about sanitation, hygiene, and health services. Once the groups arrived, however, it quickly became apparent that the questions I wanted to discuss were not at all suited to the way these women thought about health. The older women were not interested in assessing the accessibility of health professionals—they wanted instead to know about the pain in their backs and joints because that was what they felt most directly. An unexpected blight of gray hairs in a few adolescents seemed more alarming than the ubiquitous poor oral hygiene and tooth decay. It mattered less to one pregnant woman that government policy provided pre-natal iron supplements for free and more that those iron supplements made her feel nauseous. For these women, health and sickness were individualized issues. Speaking with them added the depth of practical perspective to my theoretical notions about health policy.

In the classroom, health policy discussions often concern abstractions, models, and statistics. Doing check-ups and speaking with the women's groups in India this summer reminded me that ultimately, the success or failure of health policies must be measured not just by data but by the impressions and experiences of individuals.

Nandini Sarma

ASHA, NEW DELHI, INDIA

This summer I worked in India on two different topics, in two different regions, with very different results from my initial expectations, but the differences eventually converged to a truly inspiring experience. My experience as whole greatly enriched my understanding of the numerous sides of working in “global health”, and led to changes in my academic and personal goals as well.

For the first part of the summer, I worked with Asha, an NGO in New Delhi, working on education in slums. My fellow teaching partner and I would go to Zakhira (the slum we had the privilege of working in) every day and do a variety of projects. Whereas I went in to the internship expecting to work on a project about chronic and non-communicable disease prevalence and nutrition/sanitation issues, we quickly found out that for Zakhira, those issues were not as important. Although Asha had only been working in Zakhira for 6 yrs, there had been a large number of systems put into place (such as sanitation, and trash-collecting, as well as water distribution), and the medical treatment system run by the Asha site coordinator, Shaini, was extremely effective. I looked over the health statistics and data gathered from past years, and found that while chronic illness was already being monitored and treated, the real issue to focus on was family planning. After doing more research into what types of programs Asha has, and taking into account the fact that Zakhira is a majority Muslim community, we decided to create a peer education program for adolescent males. We used Asha's peer-educator curriculum (which dealt with issues such as puberty, safe sexual practices, reproductive health, etc.), and trained a core group of adolescents about the information, but also about how to teach the material to their peers. We would go through practice teachings, workshops, plans on how to organize groups/teachings, how to answer questions, and more, with the eventual goal that they were armed with the information and the ability to successfully convey that information to their peers. The group actually did their first teaching at a cricket field, teaching over 20 people, and now that school has started, they are creating groups at their respective schools as well.

At Asha, I also taught English classes to children ages 9-19, trying to implement creative forms of expressing the material as well as ways to increase participation. The Indian public school system teaches English to all students, but the emphasis is placed on memory instead of usage, so we tried to focus on how to use English most effectively in their lives. For older students, we went over interview situations, how to search for jobs, etc. We also had the students write and present their own plays. This was a wonderful exercise in creativity, team building, and of course English. The younger classes were

extremely empowered by the fact that they were able to completely autonomously write their own scripts and eventually perform them in front of about 50 people. The older students created a play about the importance of education, and how education should be accessible to all, regardless of gender. This was a very interesting process, because for many of the girls (and boys) it was a very real issue. They were addressing issues they faced every day, such as abusive and alcoholic fathers, gender inequality, early marriage, abusive treatment at school, an inability to pay tuition/buy books because of their financial status, etc. But within the play, they created and proposed a solution to these problems; in a way, they were trying to make a statement to their community and to the younger children about what they believed in.

I also taught dance classes at the Asha community center in Zakhira. While this may seem like a frivolous activity, it actually was one of the most instructive experiences I have ever had. I taught classical Indian dance to the older girls (17+), Bollywood dance to the younger girls (11-14), and Hip Hop to the older boys. It started out as a fun activity for them to pass time, but I realized that they all had immense capabilities but did not think that they had the legitimacy to choreograph or dance in front of others. I had the younger group of girls choreograph their own dance (with some of my help) and then perform it at our big celebration day at the end; the change that each girl experienced over those weeks was absolutely amazing. They transformed from being too shy to dance in front of others and not having enough self-confidence to choreograph, to practicing and performing a perfect dance in front of a large audience. Not only that, but their individual self-respect was clearly changed as a result. Dance classes also affected gender dynamics; instead of the previous separation and delineation between boys and girls (which is a part of much deeper and complex issues that I won't go into), they now work together to teach each other dance moves and perform. It is amazing how my experience at Asha ended up being so different from what I expected it to be, but still was an immensely enriching internship.

During the second half of my time in India, I worked in Guwahati, Assam with the Dr. B. Borooah Cancer Institute. This was another story of how things never go as you expect them to, because I expected to do research on habits and use of tobacco and alcohol as factors for the sharp rise in non communicable, chronic illness, especially cancer, but this is not what I ended up doing. After working at the Institute with the doctors and others in charge of their community programs on tobacco and alcohol usage, I realized that attempting to conduct a questionnaire survey during my short stay there would not be utilizing my skills as effectively as they could be. One thing I realized while working in New Delhi, was that I really love teaching and more importantly, working directly with people. While at Asha, I helped run some financial empowerment sessions with women in various slums, and I also shadowed a very strong female doctor at one of the clinics. Both of these things confirmed my interest in women's health and empowerment and how they are linked into so many of the issues of development and health that we face. As a result of this, I worked on developing the community outreach program at the Institute. This meant teaching sessions and workshops that they would have for people who were visiting the center for medical help, as well as trainings for community health workers (both in the city as well in the rural villages where they worked), as well as behavior change sessions and addiction classes. In my work with the Institute, I also met and consulted with the Indian Council of Social Science Research to analyze the impacts of NGOs in rural areas, and how these issues change from the city to the majority agricultural and ethnically diverse rural areas that are often devastated by flooding every year, with the eventual analyses of these impacts on health and delivery of medicines.

These two experiences were clearly very different, but both were extremely enriching. I learned so much about health, development, social empowerment, religion, and other issues, but I also gained a much deeper understanding of the bureaucracy and structural barriers that NGOs often create within communities and how often although there are many positive results from their actions, there are unintended and often unseen or ignored negative consequences. Working in Assam confirmed that I want to go back and continue my work there and most likely work there long term. I hope to use these experiences in my endeavors here at Harvard and in the future, and I have no doubt that will happen because they truly made a deep, essential impact on my life.

Jordan Sessler

FOUNDATIONS FOR JOY, INDIA & SRI LANKA

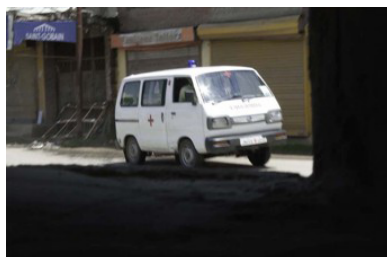
This summer I was lucky enough to travel to Sri Lanka and India for several weeks to work for the nonprofit organization that I direct, FFJ (Foundations For Joy), to improve the lives of orphans, refugees, and at-risk students in Sri Lanka. My work this summer helped to secure a new deal with the Government of Sri Lanka to keep thousands of war-affected students in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province in school for the next few years. In addition, I was able to travel to various sites of FFJ's operations throughout Sri Lanka and explore opportunities for expansion in the future. It was a truly life-changing experience for me and helped to expand FFJ's operations to serving over 10,000 children in Sri Lanka every year.

Funds from SAI helped to cover my airfare (about \$1700), my flight to Chennai from Colombo (about \$400), and some of my hotel costs along the way. Since it was only a grant for \$2500, it ran out very quickly and did not have a significant impact on my daily activities or costs such as food. However, it played a vital role in allowing me to travel to the region and complete my NGO work. Moreover, it provided a valuable opportunity for me to practice speaking the Tamil language, which I am currently taking at Harvard.

Thus, thank you so much for providing me with these funds. They provided me with a much-appreciated opportunity and allowed me to do some relatively consequential work. If you want to see more details of pictures from my work this summer, please see foundationsforjoy.org or visit Foundations For Joy's facebook.

Mahum Shabir

JAMMU AND KASHMIR COALITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY



I reached Kashmir on the June 2, 2010 and the standoff between the civilians in Kashmir and the government of India began on June 11, 2010 with protests over a fake encounter in district Kupwara. It still continues with death toll reaching 109 over the past 4 months. All of those killed are civilians who were protesting and pelting stones at a paramilitary equipped with guns and backed by laws that give them the power to kill with blanket legal immunity.



I got in touch with Parvez Khurram, my contact for the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCSS) in the couple of days of getting there. I met him at the office of JKCSS where I was introduced to the staff members and we discussed our work plan. The fieldwork and data gathering had been completed. Now, the next part was the analysis. In the meantime, protests had started it was getting increasingly difficult to commute with protestors blocking roads and declaring strikes. On June 11, The SangBaz (Association of Stone Pelters) came out with a calendar- a program of political action for self-determination of Kashmiri's or Azadi (meaning freedom). The government responded by imposing curfew.



On the first days of the standoff I thought that things would be better in a week or so as has been the case in previous years. What followed were days and days of curfews and bandhs the whole time I was there sometimes without respite for as much as whole week when we could not go outside our gate. I have grown up in Kashmir but in terms of how forceful the curfew was and how mass sentiment was raging, this is something that I haven't seen before. I wasn't able to do my internship and there was little I could have done to change that. I want to work with JKCSS and

I think I will do that in the summer after graduation. Despite this, I have learnt from my experiences in different ways and this has strengthened my desire to contribute to affected people there.

This summer has been the most trying and frustrating time that I have had on a personal front. I lost my cousin, Mudassir, in the protests in Sopore but our family certainly wasn't alone in suffering. The paramilitary did not spare even 9-year-old children who were beaten to death for the most absurd reasons. The Indian State had literally let its military loose. Through this time offices and schools were closed. In early September my family had to send my sister to a boarding school in another state to study after the schools remained shut for 3 months. Kashmiri's were prisoners in their own houses.

However, my experience there has made me better understand the value added to society by grassroots initiatives of the smallest capacity. I was able to grasp this when during one of the long curfews without relaxations (and there were many) boys in another neighborhood organized an effort by gathering essential food supplies-vegetables, oil and rice in a cart and went door to door delivering them. I think that it is because of efforts like these that people with low income have not starved in this struggle that is ongoing.

My time there has been revelatory of the challenges that people face at the basic level-access to medicine, food, education and more so of the assistance they require. I was struck by the fact that many of the protestors who had been shot died en-route to the hospital because the only two critical care ambulances were assigned to the Governor and the Chief Minister of the state. I wrote an article about this in a local daily, along with 2 others about Kashmir and its relationship to a supposedly democratic India.

I am committed to working in Kashmir in the long term on issues such as these. This semester I am taking a class on the 'Policy and Legal Challenges in Humanitarian Aid in Armed Conflict' at the Kennedy School. The final project requires the use an interview with a human rights worker working in an area of conflict to write about the challenges they face. I am getting in touch with Parvez Imroz who is the head of JKCSS to use his experience as a human rights worker to inform my understanding.

During one of the protests that got dispersed due to police firing, the boys jumped over the walls of our house into the garden. Through the window, I saw two teenagers 15 or 16 years old sitting on the porch and eating apples oblivious to the firing all around. I opened the door, let them in and asked them how they were not afraid of being outside. One of them had lost a parent and a brother to the struggle and the other boy was his friend. Since then, when I have to do something that I am afraid of but something that is important I try to remind myself of that surreal moment and go ahead.

Upasana Unni

RESEARCH ON THE POLITICAL METHODOLOGY OF SRI LANKAN TAMIL DIASPORA ACTIVISTS

I am carrying out my primary research this fall because I was working full time for almost the entire summer. Unfortunately, I did not have enough funding to pay for a trip to Sri Lanka as I originally planned in my proposal, so I have modified my project to exploring the political methodology of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora activists in Toronto and New York. Below is an explication of the significance of my project and my methodology for the research I plan to conduct in the next two months.

My research question is the following: how have Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora activists embraced political methodologies to campaign for a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka? The importance of this question lies in the history of the Sri Lankan civil war and it's aftermath. When the Sri Lankan government decisively defeated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009, the members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora who supported the LTTE through financial and other means lost their only military hope of establishing a Tamil homeland on the island of Sri Lanka.¹

But since the end of the civil war, many Sri Lankan Tamil activists have not given up hope for the creation of an independent state for Sri Lankan Tamils. The LTTE's military defeat has split the Tamil diaspora, with one camp advocating cooperation with Sri Lanka's government to protect Tamil rights and interests, while the other continues

seeking the establishment of Tamil Eelam.² Some activists have set up groups such as the Tamil Solidarity Movement to campaign for non-violent approaches to gaining awareness for the Tamil separatist movement.³ From late 2009 until early 2010, Tamil activists across the globe organized a series of referenda on the creation of a homeland in countries now home to large numbers of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, including Canada, France, the United Kingdom.⁴ Referendum voters (mostly first and second generation Sri Lankan Tamils) voted on whether they supported the Vaddukkoaddai Resolution, originally written by all the Tamil political parties of Sri Lanka in 1976 to endorse the creation of an independent state for Tamils in Sri Lanka.⁵ This resolution crucially links the current calls for a homeland to a democratic political process that was occurring in Sri Lanka before the emergence of the LTTE and the outbreak of the civil war. This vote was covered in the Economist and several national newspapers in those countries as the harbinger of a radically different approach to Sri Lankan Tamil politics.

After the resounding approval of the referenda earlier this year, members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora have taken the additional steps of organizing the first Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam. Neither the formation of this de facto government nor the election of its representatives has received any coverage in the Western press. I believe the formation and election of the TGTE represents a fundamental, unstudied turning point in the activism associated with the Tamil Eelam homeland, and so I seek to question activists associated with the TGTE with the purpose of uncovering what their goals for the TGTE are and how they believe they can harness a democratic process to achieve those goals. Focusing primarily on the TGTE, but also interviewing activists associated with other groups such as the Tamil Solidarity Movement, my research will contribute to the body of knowledge on the dynamic political environment in which Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora members operate in today.

Currently, I am recruiting approximately 15 subjects through diaspora websites to interview in Toronto. My funding will go toward paying for airfare (approx \$389), hotel rooms (\$150 per night over 5 nights), food (approx \$300), and internet (\$72) for the week I will be staying in Toronto and \$150 for hiring undergrad help to conduct transcription rapidly when I am back.. In addition, 2-3 secondary interviews will be conducted with academics specializing in Sri Lanka, such as Dr. Francis Boyle of the University of Illinois. But I anticipate that these interviews will be conducted over the phone and not require travel.

¹Joe Leahy, "Tamil Rebels Concede Defeat in Sri Lanka," Financial Times, May 18, 2009, p. 2

²DeVotta, Neil. "The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Lost Quest for Separatism in Sri Lanka," Asian Survey 49:6 (Nov. - Dec., 2009), 1021- 1051.

³Shyamantha Asokan, "Young Tamils Swap Bombs for BlackBerrys," Financial Times, October 17-18, 2009, p. 19 (Life & Arts).

⁴Jones, Sam. "British-based Tamils vote for independent state in Sri Lanka," The Guardian, Feb 1, 2010. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/feb/01/british-tamil-state-sri-lanka>> Accessed Sept 20, 2010.

⁵"Referendum 2009 Background," Coalitions for Tamil Elections Canada. Accessed Sept 20 2010. <<http://www.tamilelections.ca/eng/background.html>>

Cait Visek

**ASHA HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY, NEW DELHI, INDIA
SUMMER 2010**

Working with Asha was a wonderful experience. Asha is an NGO that works in Delhi's slum communities, focusing on health, education, and environmental improvements for the slum dwellers. It has centers in 50 different communities scattered around the city and employs a large staff that includes teachers, doctors, and community health volunteers.

As a summer intern, I spent my first few weeks teaching English to children in one of the organization's slum centers, which was incredible. Occasionally the staff would take me on visits into the slum itself, which allowed me to get a more complete picture of life in the slums and the work that Asha does. It was amazing to get to know the kids and to get a glimpse into these people's lives and the challenges they face. Since Asha's primary focus is healthcare, I also had opportunity to shadow doctors in Asha's clinics, which is a great experience for anyone interested in medicine, public health, or health policy. Shadowing gave me a firsthand look at the health problems slum dwellers face and the barriers, like poverty and malnutrition, that often prevent them from being healthy.

During the second half of my internship, I began working more in Asha's main office rather than in the slum itself. I helped write a grant proposal to apply for funding to purchase new mobile health clinic vans and also worked on the organization's annual report, which involved working with many of the other staff and even Asha's founder herself. In addition, the other interns and I designed and held a workshop for slum students who would be beginning college in the fall, to prepare them for university life. We also got to meet the Home Minister of India, a very important politician, who has collaborated with Asha in the past to create opportunities for slum dwellers in Delhi.

My experience with Asha was great because I had the opportunity to learn about so many different sides of the NGO, from fieldwork to organizational logistics. More importantly, I really got a sense of the challenges faced by the slum communities and the kind of change needed to ensure development and empower India's poor. Even the simple experience of living in India for two months was rewarding in innumerable ways, as I learned about Indian culture and a way of life very foreign to my own. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to learn so much and make so many powerful and wonderful memories.



Katherine Warren

HOME IS WHERE YOU HANG YOUR ORNA



Our last day was a quiet day for a departure. No one was out on the streets. Our beloved 7-11 stand was boarded up. If I had not known any better, I would have taken Dhaka as the ghost town setting of some strange science fiction film where entire cities disappear. It was a special prayer day and people were inside. Businesses were closed and therefore energy preserved. It seemed the World Cup Final and the Muslim day of prayer were the only two occasions worthy of extra power expenditures.

Funded by the Harvard South Asia Initiative and University Committee on Human Rights, I worked as a research intern for the Harvard Law School Project on Disability (HPOD) during the summer of 2010. Spearheaded by the adoption of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006, HPOD does research, litigation assistance, and advocacy around disability issues. In my research, I used an ethnographic case study method to focus on access to justice for women with disabilities. Though Bangladesh ratified the CRPD in 2007, little work has been done to improve quality of life and access to justice for the estimated ten percent of the population living with physical, mental, intellectual, and sensory disabilities today. The frequent convergence of poverty and disability has resulted in a population much more vulnerable to abuse and yet much less able to access available legal resources available.

Drawing from an admittedly meager base of past case studies, research, and pilot interviews, I developed a 30-question survey instrument with both quantitative and qualitative measures. Empiricism, after all, only goes so far in a country that derives truths from storytelling. The most valuable nuggets of information often came from impromptu and unstaged questions. In this pursuit, I completed 14 pilot meetings and 25 full interviews with lawyers and judges. Two other interns looked at a similar set of issues from the point of view of the family system and from social movement theory.

The last few weeks were a chaotic blur of research compilation, presentations, and departure preparations. Back from my last field visit in Faridpur, I tagged my interviews and tallied the results. With the help of massive tea consumption and sustenance from my new favorite fruit, guava, I pounded out a 43-page final research paper. After a series of reviews and rewrites, the presentations began. We presented our findings to lawyers and policy makers at a set of disability study groups and seminars. The Independent University of Bangladesh, the top private university here in Dhaka, then hosted us as ‘guest lecturers’ for their Centre for Health, Population, and Development seminar series. Then we had goodbye dinners to attend and gifts to buy for various colleagues. All in all, there was not a lot of sleep involved but quite a few satisfying outcomes in the end.

A central theme that emerged from my prong of the project was that resources for women with disabilities in the justice sector, whether financial, human, and procedural, exist, but the country lacks both a social movement and the institutions to create an infrastructure to properly distribute them. I met countless individuals who believed in working for access to justice for women with disabilities on a very personal and fundamental level. But at the end of the day, the cases fall within a welfare-based legal system in which ‘public interest litigation’ is often pushed aside for more profitable clients. The results highlighted quite a few central barriers in the legal system for women with disabilities. Corruption in all levels makes everything from filing a police report to collecting a settlement nearly impossible for women with disabilities without support. Those with communication or intellectual impairments often do not report rape until the family notices pregnancy at four or five months. The medical certificate, required evidence in a sexual assault case, is a moot point months after the initial 24 hour window. No translators or interpreters are provided by the government. Public prosecutors often do not know that their client is intellectually disabled until she is on the stand testifying. Perhaps most chilling of all, social stigma means that most unmarried women only take a rape case to court if she is pregnant, leaving most cases unreported.

One of the most striking things to me was the lack of even adequate language to discuss the issue. In districts outside Dhaka, the public prosecutors I interviewed had taken on the cases of many women with disabilities. And yet, they did not initially understand the term ‘protibandhi’ or ‘disability.’ In order to proceed with the interview, we had to explain it

as a “problem of the speech,” a “problem of the mind,” etc. Without a rights-based conceptualization of access to justice for women with disabilities, those lawyers did not even know to access the reasonable accommodations available in the court since 1872. With the exploratory study we put together, lawyers and other involved people will take this information and use it in the upcoming disability law and a law review that will be done in the next year. Further studies can then be carried out in this realm.

The insights were certainly not limited to my research however. I stayed with three families in three districts and learned to barter for everything from tomatoes to toothpaste. Thanks to pigeon Bangla and friendly vendors, I now know that mangoes should cost no more than 60 taka, green apples no more than 120, and pineapple not more than 10. Dust, thieves, and humidity claimed my phone, digital camera, and laptop (though the last may be resuscitated yet). I saw police officers beat boys with shovels, rickshaw pullers attempt to strangle one another, and security guards pummel the intellectually disabled. Stranded in Pabna for a national strike, I ended up in the nation’s mental hospital only to see disabled patients kept like zoo animals behind bars.

The day before my departure, I made the rounds to my favorite fruit vendors, searching out those who migrate from road to road each day. By the end of the adventure, I was stuffed full of guava and pineapple and had a dozen invitations for dinner during my next stay in Dhaka. Even more than the fruit itself (though it comes in at a close second), those were the smiles and the *eyee bondhu*, ‘hello friend,’ that I missed the most upon leaving.

It is ironic, perhaps, that I spent my time studying the inaccessibility of the legal system and yet learned so much about personal accessibility in the interactions beyond the office. The focus on the collective, the community, and the family facilitated generosity literally incomprehensible to me as an American. I watched the street kids near our office divvy up scraps of food that one had found on the ground. I slept on a family’s bed while they slept on the concrete floor. In the individualist tradition that I was taught, such experiences were mindboggling in their simplicity and asceticism.

Such exchanges, particularly with women here, marked my summer most profoundly. In the series of home stays that I did while out in the field, I progressively became more aware of their impact and will consequently share some of them. Because the nature of my work involved Bengali women, these anecdotes both describe my personal and professional lives while abroad, while respecting the confidentiality that I promised research participants.

Around midnight two months ago in a dark road outside of Rajshahi, I met my first home stay host, Sonia. Our dinner had run late and she had been up waiting for me. I asked her age. Bangladeshi women were shy to reveal such information, she replied. As we settled into the room, Sonia asked Hezzy, “How will I speak with her and know what she wants?” Hezzy just laughed.

In a fanless room on the lake, we spent the night giggling as Sonia tried to fan me in her sleep. It seemed a little excessive, and I tried to convince her simply to go to sleep. Finally, a cousin with a few more English words was called to tell me not to protest. We woke a few minutes before five to begin family introductions before the day’s work began. The cousins fixed my orna, or scarf, around my shoulders before we left the house.

A week later on the eve of the long-anticipated *hortal* or strike, we made a rather bedraggled appearance at the Pabna house of Saifur, his mother, and his sister. Wilting from a crowded bus ride in, we were quick to collapse cross-legged onto the bed. As we traded World Cup bets, Saifur’s sister, Shohana, arrived with *cha*, freshly baked cake, and several tutees in tow. The girls peered shyly out from behind the salwar of their English teacher.

When Saifur’s mother, Sufia, arrived from work, it was quickly decided that we *must* stay the night at their *basha*. After a taste of the delicious cake and conversation, none of us put up much of an argument. Neighbors and uncles in the area had gathered around the television, awaiting the first of the evening’s football matches. Stranded in the awkward place between my privileged foreigner’s position and my gender, I jumped up all too enthusiastically when Shohana gestured for me from the kitchen. I followed her to a room of spare pillows and half-finished tailoring projects.

We sat on her bed and began to speak in a gestural English-Bangla combination. How many children were in my family? Did I have a boyfriend? A *boyfriend*? When would I marry? We both agreed that waiting until we finished our studies to marry was the best choice, lamenting the Bangladeshi social pressure to pair off as quickly as possible. We compared marriage rituals, mine taken more from Hollywood chick flicks and my parents’ old wedding photos than anything else.

As the talk turned to celebrations, Shohana dug out a neat stack of folded paper bags. They all held beautifully crafted salwars and saris that she and her mother had made together for family gatherings and religious holidays. She showed me the progression in stitch work and complexity as their expertise had grown. I must have looked like a child with gaping mouth in front of a candy store, dressed in rumpled cotton.

Pulling me to my feet, she said, “You will wrap sari.” What followed was perhaps the most intricately difficult dressing procedure that I have yet to witness in my twenty years of experience clothing myself. Her mother was called for assistance. Knots were tied and skirts were wrapped. Mother and daughter twirled me this way and that, fussing over each tuck and fold. The two tutees stood on tiptoes to add a large, red flower to my hair.

Ready for the upcoming *Eid* holiday, I was paraded around in front of the gathered cousins and uncles. A few glanced up. Another intern laughed and snapped a few photos. Most continued watching the football match. But I felt giddy with the feeling of inclusion.

Several weeks later in Faridpur, I sat with Nipa and her sister-in-laws in their joint family home. They chopped vegetables and prepared dishes for the upcoming meal while trading stories of work life, and children. As my slow, amateur lack of cooking skills became apparent, I was soon banished to the washing of peeled eggs and potatoes. I squatted on the ground working with the rest of them, not always sure of what was spoken but laughing along nonetheless.

Soon came an out-of-town visitor of one of the men in the house. I suspected he had been ostracized from the men smoking and talking next door. The grandmother of the house fluttered around trying to find a stool for him close to the functioning fan overhead. As he lectured me on the correct pricing of rickshaw fares, the women continued chopping, stirring, and washing. But I could see their furtive glances and smiles being traded around the room strewn with cucumber peels and fish bones.

I suddenly felt myself in the middle of a Bengali *Pride and Prejudice* scene where the cousin Mr. Collins had come to dinner. Though the intrusion came from a rice-bellied bachelor instead of a nineteenth-century English parson, the dynamics felt deliciously similar. As the matriarch of the group flitted about trying to please the egotistical guest, the younger women were silently poking fun at their unassuming preacher. The quiet, unperturbed grandfather sat on a chair in the corner.

In a country where men can relieve themselves in public and women cannot shake a man’s hand, I felt the immense satisfaction of acting as a *community* of women as opposed to an individual. From eight-year-old laughter at my mango-cutting ineptitude to the sari fashion show extravaganza, my hosts had left me with new lessons on the power of *bon*, sisters, and an excellent eye for Bengali fashion to boot.

The world is an intricately fascinating place at times. I can sign ‘air plane’ in Bangla, text my dear high school friend in Ghana from rural Bangladesh, watch the World Cup match alongside ardent Bangladeshi Argentina supporters, and still go home to a mat on the floor without electricity or indoor plumbing. Globalization and its eccentricities never cease to bewilder me. All truisms and grant reports aside, this is the kind of hands-on development work that I would like to pursue. As themes from my research begin to take shape, I feel increasingly that effective disability discourse must intersect those of poverty, gender, and class.

“When will you come back to my country?” many asked, which appeared to be the question of my last month. *Abar ashbo*. I will come back. Much to everyone’s dismay, I could not say when or for how long or whether I would come to their house and eat their mangoes next season when they are ripe. But I do really feel that I will be back. There is always more work to be done, more fruit to be eaten, and certainly more experiences to be had.

Sophia Wen

**UNNATI – ORGANIZATION FOR DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION
JODHPUR, RAJASTHAN - INDIA**

Unnati means progress in Hindi something that is very urgent and necessary in bettering the condition of the countless Rajasthani villagers that I have met during my internship. It has been challenging, frustrating and inspirational. My day starts with a sore back from staying in the humble home of my host family, a one hour bus and rickshaw ride away from the remote location of Chopasi where my office is located. Every day I get there to scramble to find my supervisors, hoping they haven't left for the field yet – any member of the team who speaks English. After reading through some background documents on- going projects like the Dalit Rights Campaign, Untouchability Study and Disaster Risk Reduction in Western Rajasthan I get to sit on meetings that discuss actions to be taken on the field to conduct studies and expand the organization's scope. Most events are planned by the day and new events pile on sporadically. The disorganization and lack of knowledge in Hindi made the experience challenging.

This summer I spent most of my time with Unnati going on field visits and understanding their newest project – Social Inclusion and Empowerment of Drought affected Districts of Marginalized Dalit and Tribal Communities. It is a 3 year plan to radically improve the lives of 2,500 households in areas such as health, governance (accountability to government schemes), water, and education. A field visit for the base-line survey consists of a minimum of 2 hour drive on a single lane road and dirt road to a villager's center (sometimes educational or just someone's house), where sheets are laid out and village leaders and the like circle around to draw the village map, rank their wealth and later are surveyed separately on their received benefits from government plans, overall access to health, education and water. It was frustrating to see the deteriorated health of a widow who lives on people's charity, the 7 children under the age of 7 which one women cared for by herself while her husband worked in the city, and the man who has to take herbs every hour to stop the pain on his broken back while his 6 children starve because he can't work anymore and to know that the government had promised pensions to these people but they were unaware and they never distributed them.

At the end of the day, we all go home tired, to where hospitals are close, and people are literate. However we don't forget the constant pain in the field. The employees at Unnati are like a family, with a team meeting every morning, a song or prayer at the end and shared lunches at noon. Everyone works together and everyone keeps in contact with everyone else and even as a non-Hindi speaker I felt very much included and a strong effort was made to help me feel that way. It was inspiring to talk to the staff and locals who had worked in the development sector for years, who found the strength to see how beautiful the small things can be and who fight with passion for people who can't fight for their rights themselves even if it takes years. Interactions had been colored and limited by not knowing the language. Now, with my rudimentary grasp of Hindi, it was as if someone had unmuted my interactions with these people. Personalities and senses of humor emerged from people with whom I was essentially cut off from the previous

