Final Report

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My internship at the Center for Reproductive Rights will be the icing on my college career. I have been educated about social justice, learnt to perform in a demanding professional environment and met powerful women who have been making a difference for a lot of other women.

Projects and tasks performed:

I worked eight hours a day, four days a week during my ten week internship period. My projects were divided into two subgroups: administrative tasks (30%) and substantive tasks (70%). Following is the details of the projects I performed.

- **Administrative Tasks:**

  1. **Mailing** - Occasionally, I had to send out mailings (which include briefing papers, reports, abortion kits, books, etc produced by the Center) to international partner organizations and other organizations within the US.

  2. **Copying/Scanning/Printing** - I prepared hardcopy and softcopy for numerous official documents, fact sheets and letters for mailing purposes and for future reference. I had to systematically divide and organize documents and file them in cabinets in the office. My supervisor would ask me to do such tasks whenever needed and I enjoyed them as a break from demanding substantive work.

  3. **Briefing Papers** - The Center produces Briefing Papers with information about exemplary international cases, reproductive health statistics, international
covenants and reports. I scanned master copies of all the briefing papers the Center had produced and arranged them in an online library. I printed numerous copies of Briefing Papers which were sent to conferences and partner organizations.

4. **Event Organization** – We organized two events in the United Nations Plaza this summer to launch a new report about Maternal Mortality in Nigeria – “Broken Promises” and another one was the Center’s informative lunch followed by discussion on the situation of reproductive health in Nigeria with 28 CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) members. I, along with another undergrad intern, had to arrange the guest list and invitations; food and location setup; information distribution through flash drives and folders; and represent the Center at the venues.

- **Substantive Tasks:**

1. **Fact Checking** – I had to fact check the foot notes of two briefing papers about an adolescent health and contraception ban in the Philippines. Initially, the project was daunting as some cited sources were difficult to access but I got used to such research as the work progressed.

2. **Translation** – I translated a couple of documents from Nepali to English in order to record the Center’s works in Nepal. I translated the proposed Abortion Draft Bill to be included in the new constitution of Nepal. I also translated a petition filed by the Center and its partners in the Supreme Court of Nepal demanding recognition of reproductive rights as fundamental rights.
and affordable and accessible access to reproductive health care. Later, I translated written responses submitted to the supreme court of Nepal by the defendants of the case, including various ministries of the Nepal Government.

3. **Fact Sheet** – I summarized the petition and responses from the *Lakshmi Dhikta* case which will ultimately be presented in a fact sheet by the Center.

4. **Research** – I assisted my mentor, senior advocate Melissa Upreti, in the Center’s Nepal project by doing research on the proposed Truth Reconciliation Bill; effects on maternal health care during and after the armed conflict; condition of obstetric health care, safe abortion services and emergency health care. The process involved reading various reports from the UN and other development agencies; emailing different organizations for fact finding; finding potential case stories through news articles, documentaries and further research.

5. **Lobbying and comments** – Eventually I had to boil down all my research and understandings to a fact sheet explaining “Why reproductive rights should be included as fundamental rights in the new constitution of Nepal?” Advocate Upreti and an Asia fellow from the Center were visiting Nepal to have a lobbying session with the Constitution Assembly members for advocating Reproductive Rights as basic Human Rights of Women and I had done insightful research for them.

One of the legal interns was writing a memo on the proposed Abortion Draft Bill; I helped her in finding comparable abortion laws from other parts
of the region. I also developed points for the Abortion Draft Bill which would be presented to the Constitution Assembly.

The skills that I needed the most were being organized and clear about the tasks, being attentive to the instructions, having excellent research skills and being able to communicate effectively with my supervisors and other interns. Initially, it was difficult to find latest materials on political and legal developments in Nepal but as I approached officials and other professional people in various fields, research became much quicker and more convenient. Also, the projects were often times intense and time sensitive, I was very organized and finished assigned tasks as per the demand. It has definitely enhanced my organizational skills.

There were only two undergraduate interns along with a number of law students in the international legal program at the Center. I was overwhelmed by their experiences and the kind of work they had done in the beginning but eventually we became friends and I got to learn a lot from them. My internship experience has connected me with other powerful social justice advocates in the form of lawyers, law students and office staff.

I got a first-hand experience of administrative tasks that one has to do in all kinds of organizations; I had the opportunity to improve my communication skills by having to interact with people within the organization and from various other places; I have developed event management skills and patience required while organizing a big event. I have learnt to be more professional in my work and have become even more passionate about social justice.

It took me a while to get used to legal literature. Had I been acquainted with basic English and Nepali legal terminologies before the internship, I could have used the time doing more productive works.
Researches and papers I wrote for my Macroeconomics, International Nutrition and Cultural Anthropology classes have helped me better understand the situation of women from different parts of the world. Writing and intensive readings in classes prepared me for rigorous work throughout the internship.

Ultimately, I aspire to work for economic development and better health policies in the developing world. I learnt that in a bigger picture there is always a gap between foreign aid-based development work and government policies. This implementation gap can be leveled by using litigation as an important medium to hold governments accountable whenever it fails to provide human rights to its citizens. After the internship, I have grown an immense desire to learn law along with development studies after college.

Initially, I would confuse Reproductive Rights with Women’s Rights or Violence Against Women. After this summer, I have learnt how Reproductive rights of women are linked with other human rights of women like right to health, right to confidentiality, right to decide number and spacing of children and ultimately the right to have control over one’s life and fertility. I am extremely delighted that I got the opportunity to spend a fabulous ten weeks at the Center for Reproductive Rights. All the legal staff, assistants and legal interns were always willing to help, and it was really comfortable working in the friendly atmosphere there. Often times, my projects would be challenging but the difficulties were so intriguing that they urged me to take further steps bringing out the best from me. I definitely learnt a lot more about social justice for women in the US and around the world.

Prospective interns at the CLPP should choose their organizations carefully according to their interests. I recommend The Center for Reproductive Rights to everyone who wants to understand reproductive rights in the human rights frame work and learn about reproductive
rights of women around the globe. One should to the Center with open vision and opinions and learn as much as they can from materials, events and supervisors at the Center.

Last but not the least; I extend deep gratitude to CLPP for educating and preparing me for social justice through the golden opportunity of interning at the Center this summer.