

## Reflection of Filed Work in Ghana

Going to Ghana was easily one of the greatest experiences of my life. Not only was the Human Rights Advocacy Center working on an amazing project, but it was made up of amazing people. I am so grateful for their hospitality. The entire trip the team ensured that I felt comfortable and included, and I wish that I could have spent more time with them! The entire time that we were there, I could not believe that this experience was actually happening. It was even greater than I had imagined it would be. One thing that really stuck with me was how prepared I felt for the experience. While I would never claim to be an expert on advocacy campaigns or how to run a project like this, I felt that I immediately understood their approach and why they made the choices that they did. Everything that we did fell in line with the things that we are taught in the International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic.

An overarching theme from the clinic was that successful campaigns involve leveraging different relationships and pursuing a number of avenues to raise awareness. Here, there were three targets: (1) the local radio station; (2) local leaders; and (3) schools. So much preparation went into ensuring that we could have scheduled and meaningful conversations with each target. This was certainly not something that we could just show up and do, and so I really appreciated how well everything was coordinated for our three day stay. Additionally, I really appreciated how intentional they were in choosing where to focus their efforts. Miss Mod spoke a lot about how many other advocacy organizations in Ghana are just focused on Accra and only do work at the surface level. By contrast, HRAC recognized that while change is easier to see in the city, to actually make this affirmative

action bill effective, the only way to make meaningful change in the country was to take initiative in the rural regions. Jasikan was chosen in part because this was where Miss Mod's mother was from, but also because this is where there was likely to be some resistance to the bill. However, Miss Mod was confident that we could make a real difference and convince people to care about the bill and take action.

To start, we visited the local radio station, Dream F.M. When we arrived, 3 members of HRAC, including Miss Mod, were interviewed about the affirmative action bill, as well as why they chose to come to Jasikan. This was critical because at least 1000 people listen to this station. During this, I thought about how in the clinic the use of media is a huge part of successful campaigns. People cannot take action for a bill that they have not heard of. This was one way to reach many parents and leaders that were not going to attend the other session that we had planned or that did not live nearby.

The second day, we reached out to community leaders, including local representatives, teachers, religious leaders, and even a female judge, and parents to come and learn about democracy and this bill. As with other campaigns, connections to those with power are fundamental to a campaign's success. By having powerful voices advocate for change, those who are reluctant are more likely to be forced to action. Additionally, the voice of a leader is often a signal of what that society is choosing to value. There is also great power in getting influential people from different sects of life because it ensures that the problems are tackled from many different directions. Here, families will not just be encouraged from schools to push their daughters towards opportunities, but they will hear it when they go to church and local meetings. This puts the pressure on for change and

makes it harder to ignore. This event also gave women the opportunity to educate many of men in the room about the struggles that women face when trying to access positions of power. Having these open discussions ensures that the issues are understood by all so that they can collectively create solutions targeting the realities around them.

During this event, the role of interpreters was highlighted. In both cases, some members of the HRAC team knew pieces of the dialect, but none of them knew it fluently. Though they had tried to prepare for this trip, they knew that they may not be able to fully communicate with their audience. As a result, they used a translator. Here, I saw some of the same issues that arose in the clinic. For example, the translator had to ask the presenter to slow down and speak in shorter sentences so that he could accurately make the translation. Another thing that I had noticed was that there was a sign language interpreter for a deaf woman attending. It made me realize how much information that HRAC had to get on their participants in advance to ensure that everyone could engage in their material. Finally, at the end of the event, all participants were given lunch and transportation. This was another important reminder of how intentional one must be when planning a project like this. It is one thing to invite a group of people to attend, but it is another to ensure that they can actually make it there. Also, it is important to show your appreciation for their time.

Finally, by going to the school, we were able to target the demographic that we were trying to help. This part of the project was really focused on ensuring that these girls knew that their voices deserved to be heard and that they had power within them. We wanted them to know that it was ok to have dreams and that they have opportunities to pursue

them. Just within four hours we saw the girls' confidence rise. They were so quiet at first, but by the end the room was loud with chatter and excitement. The hope is that they will carry this confidence and enthusiasm with them long after we are gone. I felt like this was reflective of the saying, "You can give a man a fish and he will eat for a day, or you can teach a man to fish, and he will eat for life." These girls will only seize these newfound opportunities if they are taught that they can take them. They need to feel strong and confident, and they need to be able to advocate for themselves when no one else is around. While HRAC will be communicating with some girls that they hope to help mentor, they are not going to be physically there all the time. The girls need to learn to be persistent in their efforts on their own. Aside from that, the girls that were not chosen need to hold on to that confidence so that they too can pursue their dreams in the absence of an outside source advocating for and pushing them. That is why this personal outreach is so important. It is one thing to tell girls that they are powerful and that they can do things, but it is another to teach them how to use their voice and to show them the path to success.

To conclude, this has been one of the greatest experiences of my life! Not only was it interesting and fun to see the ways that our classroom lessons reflect real life field work, but it was so personally rewarding. It also has given me a lot of clarity on the type of work that I want to do in the future. I have decided that I think I am best suited to be running these sorts of projects, rather than the traditional firm life. Therefore, those are the types of opportunities that I will be exploring in the future.