

## **IHRP Summer Internship 2008 - Final Report**

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My IHRP Internship experience was fantastic. I definitely gained the practical on-the-ground experience I was seeking – I was able to use my legal skills and knowledge to help an international NGO which lacked significant legal experience to successfully create a legal advocacy and education project. Because my NGO was volunteer-based with little funding, every ounce of help I could give was hugely appreciated, and I could see the considerable positive impact of my work; this also meant that I was constantly challenged to surpass my limits in order to meet their needs. As a result, I built upon my existing skills and developed new ones in areas I'd never imagined – it was a huge growing experience, both professionally and personally. It also showed me just how many opportunities there are for lawyers in the world beyond private practice – our skills are invaluable. I would absolutely consider working for this organization again, or for the international non-profit sector as a whole.

My internship was with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), at their headquarters in London, UK. Currently, WAGGGS is trying to expand its global advocacy role, since it is the voice of 10 million girls in 145 countries. I was assigned to take their global anti-human trafficking project from the brainstorming stage to the point of implementation. They had two aims – to create an education and empowerment project to prevent girls from being trafficked, and to advocate for national and international policy change to more adequately protect victims and prosecute offenders.

My work involved conducting an in-depth analysis of international legal instruments and work currently being done in the prevention field of human trafficking by other NGOs and international actors, and to critically assess the resources and capacities of WAGGGS to see what they could realistically contribute and achieve in the field. This was not an easy task, given WAGGGS' large ambitions but lack of experience in the field of human trafficking and legal advocacy in general. I conducted a multi-stakeholder analysis by consulting with National Organizations of WAGGGS from all over the world to assess their goals and needs for the project (as this would be implemented at a national level), and facilitating numerous focus groups with teenaged Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to get their thoughts and ideas. At the same time, I provided technical assistance to National Organizations who were already running their own projects, and in my focus groups with girls I taught them about the issue of human trafficking and empowered them to start their own advocacy projects at home. I also sought out potential institutional partners and funders, and spoke with several experts and consultants in the field (including meeting with UN representatives in Vienna) to get their feedback on WAGGGS' proposed project. At the end, I produced a report with recommendations and began collating program materials that would allow WAGGGS to implement a successful and achievable project.

A highlight of my internship was representing WAGGGS at an international policy conference held in Vienna on child trafficking, hosted by the Organization for the

Security and Cooperation of Europe (OSCE; one of the most important inter-governmental human rights bodies in the region). In a room full of over 300 policymakers and NGO representatives, I delivered a speech on behalf of the 10 million girls I was representing, urging them to put their words into practice to make concerted efforts to end child trafficking. Being the only young person there (odd, considering the topic), and speaking as a law student, my address was very well-received – I was the only voluntary speaker to receive applause. It was an incredibly empowering experience – not only did I help WAGGGS gain much-needed recognition as being an important actor in the field of children’s rights, but I also definitely improved my oral advocacy skills!

As could be expected, there were challenges in my internship. Because my skills and experience were respected, I was given a great deal of independence and control over my project. But single-handedly taking on a project of such large scope was challenging and lonely at times, and I was given very little direction. Being an intern, I was asked to contribute to many different projects, such as assisting the Editorial Board of an official UNICEF publication. These were amazing opportunities, but often meant I had less time to devote to the project I had come to complete. Being new to the team and having been a Girl Guide my entire life, my ideas and perspective “from the ground” were welcomed, but I faced considerable opposition when trying to deviate from the way things had always been done (sometimes ineffectively). There were large financial and personnel constraints that made me worry that my project would not continue as I had recommended after I left (although I tried to make the project as realistic as possible). Even being in a Western country, I faced cultural challenges in the workplace, especially since WAGGGS’ staff is very international.

The overall experience was hugely rewarding. I gained incomparable work experience in the human rights field, and learned firsthand about the challenges faced by international NGOs and how they overcome them. But more than that, the experience solidified my desire to pursue a career in the human rights field, and I am now more driven than ever to do everything I can to make this a reality. I can’t wait to see what other opportunities the rest of law school holds for me, and I know that the education and experience I will gain as a graduate from the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Law will set me far on the path to becoming a successful defender of international human rights.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison Sephton  
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