

## **#LPRD# A Field Worker's Diary [#Part 41](#) # 28 August 2020**

On our last day in Boston (2<sup>nd</sup> August 2017), our official engagement was at the Simmons College Graduate School of Management.

Founded in 1899, the college had been the only women's college in Boston for nearly a century. Elisa, a Senior Director there, explained to us about the Masters in Business Administration program in their college that was specifically designed for women. The college also offers a number of executive education programs for women who are already employed. Further, the programs are very flexible and tailored to their needs; keeping in mind the women's time and resource constraints. Even though there are many distance education programs for employed people here in India as well, only a person who has/is studying under it will know how extremely tough it is to accommodate a time for studying in our daily schedule while working, and getting the leaves sanctioned from the companies we are working in for preparing and attending exams while at it. Looking at the various long term and short term programs designed by them keeping in mind the limited time available to working women so that they don't face difficulties in taking care of both job and household responsibilities while, I felt really happy. While most of our women's movements have revolved around women's individual freedom, social liberty, sexual liberty, I wondered why they didn't concentrate in this way on providing opportunities for women to study at any stage of life, employment opportunities, political representation, etc.. I observed that the scope of our women's movements seemed to be very narrow, and I strongly felt that there was a big need to broaden the scope of those movements and women's empowerment programs further. After finishing our program at the Simmons College, we had lunch and went to the Social Innovation Forum office. Wendy, who works as a consultant for several charities there, conducted a workshop for

us on the topic of Women Leadership. Just like those we met in Washington had said, Wendy also talked about the need to do in-depth research on any issue and collect statistics before working on any issue. Wendy was of the opinion that statistics speak for themselves.

Early the next day (August 3), we traveled in four groups to four different places. Until then, a total of 23 members from different countries and four coordinators attended all the events as one team. The journey then was in different groups to different places. The four teams planned to finally meet again in Seattle on August 8. Along with me, our group consisted of Matcha from Thailand, Melinda from Liberia, Sandra from Haiti, Elenora from Moldova, and Hadi from Tunisia. Voytek was the coordinator for all of us. The seven of us boarded a flight to Chicago as there was no direct flight to Kansas City. From there, there was a connecting flight. However, our flight didn't get landing permission in Chicago due to inclement weather, our pilot had to circle the plane in the air for a while. After landing at Columbus Airport and waiting there for a while we finally reached Chicago safely with a five hour delay. During this trip, I had the opportunity to talk with Macha for a long time. Matcha is a girl belonging to a tribe in Thailand. She founded an organization called Sangsan Anakot Yawachon Development Project and works with youth from backward tribes in North Thailand and helps them avail education and employment opportunities through the organization. Matcha, a lesbian, married another woman, and the two of them adopted a baby and live together as a family. Whenever she went anywhere with our team and had to introduce herself she started by telling everyone her name, native place, what she did, that she was a tribal youth and also a lesbian. When I asked her why she was introducing herself this way when it was not necessary for the other person to know, she said that it is a part of her identity. In order to get rid of the discrimination against the community, people like me have to talk about our identity, she stated smilingly. Though everybody else was tense on that flight, I spent the journey happily talking with Matcha and playing with a doll-like baby on the flight. By the time we landed

in Chicago, our connecting flight to Kansas City was gone. As soon as we landed there, Voytek informed the American State Department about our delay, so they had booked a hotel for us to stay in Chicago. That day was a Thursday. Our return flight to Kansas was for Saturday morning. Therefore, we had to stay in Chicago for two days without planning.

Just after reaching our hotel in Chicago, a skater came in front of me on the road just near the entrance. In confusion, I tried to move aside to avoid a collision with him, instead, I skidded and hit my head on an iron pillar beside the road. I injured myself on my forehead and my nose. When I went back to Seattle with those wounds, the rest of the team was quite worried about me. They all came to enquire about my health so lovingly. I don't know if the International Visitor Leadership Program had taught us anything, but it gave me friends from all over the world. In our WhatsApp group, we still try to learn about each other's latest work and continue to learn from each other.

During Wendy's workshop in Boston, she asked us all to write what we thought of the rest of our group members on a piece of paper. Later, she took those papers and sent them in the post a few days after we arrived from the US. Here are the words I wrote about the friends I met there.

“I have seen emerging leaders from across the world and trying to understand what made them the leaders in their own areas of work.

Some of them have come from difficult backgrounds and enduring those difficulties made them strong and lead the changes they would like to see

Some have seen the sufferings of others and wanted to make a positive change in lives

They are empathetic

They are passionate

They are curious

They ask intelligent questions

They are not afraid to initiate

They are not afraid to fail'

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