

SESSION 3

Additional Activities Supported by Sylff

Isamu Maruyama, Program Officer, Tokyo Foundation

I would like to briefly introduce you to Sylff Plus, as there are some Sylff colleagues here who are first-timers to the Administrators Meeting and those who are relatively new to the Sylff program itself. I also thought that my brief introduction would give you some context for the fellows' presentations to follow.

In addition to the Sylff fellowships that are offered by the Sylff institutions, the Tokyo Foundation provides a set of programs for fellows and other members of the Sylff community called Sylff Plus. It aims to offer opportunities for academic advancement and leadership development, as well as for networking among the fellows.

Our basic stance is that we value and encourage initiatives and leadership taken by the Sylff fellows themselves, rather than having the Tokyo Foundation arrange everything for them. We are open to proposals and strongly encourage Sylff fellows and Sylff administrators to take the initiative.

Sylff Research Abroad (SRA) offers opportunities for currently enrolled Sylff fellows to elaborate and enhance the quality of their dissertation and research studies at a Sylff institution abroad for up to three months.

The Sylff fellows should be the ones taking the initiative in the application process, such as consulting the Sylff administrator at their home institution and finding an academic supervisor at the host institution.

For SRA, the application should come from the Sylff steering committee of the sending institution, because SRA supports up to two fellows per institution per year, and so the Sylff steering committee needs to do some planning and coordination.

Let me stress that the primary objectives

and proposed research activities should be directly related to the fellow's dissertation, the host institutions be carefully selected, and their activities at the host institutions be well focused. An academic supervisor at the host institution is required.

Primary objectives include data and resource collection, fieldwork, and discussion with faculty members of the host institution who are experts in the fellow's research field.

Other activities can be incorporated, such as auditing courses and seminars and making a presentation in an academic conference at the host institution, only if the primary objectives are met.

This also gives them an opportunity to form networks by meeting with the Sylff administrators and Sylff fellows at the host institutions. Today, Sreerupa Sengupta and Cannon Awuor Ponge will talk about their SRA experiences and accomplishments.

The Sylff Leadership Initiative (SLI), meanwhile, is open to any member of the Sylff community—that is, not only current and graduated Sylff fellows but also Sylff steering committee members and Sylff administrators.

It supports Sylff members with ideas and visions in undertaking joint initiatives and in planning and implementing projects that will contribute to society.

Examples include social action projects that have a great impact on the local and global community, as well as forums, seminars, and workshops that address contemporary issues of social relevance. We believe organizing and implementing these projects help develop leadership. Projects involving Sylff members from multiple institutions and from multiple countries are also possible and encouraged.

Today, Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen will present her SLI project in the Amazon region. Citra Wardhani and her team was an award recipient in the Joint Initiatives Program, which was the predecessor of SLI; they implemented a waste management project in the Jakarta area.

The Sylff Prize is designed to recognize Sylff fellows who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and have brought positive changes to the local, national, or international community.

No one was selected for the third prize this year, unfortunately, but we would like to continue to look for exceptional Sylff fellows, and we ask for your cooperation in this endeavor. We are delighted to have some promising fellows with us this time.

The fourth component of Sylff Plus is the Sylff Website and Sylff Connect. The Sylff Website (www.sylff.org) is a communication tool to bring the Sylff community together and showcase fellows' outputs. Sylff Connect is a social networking service exclusive to Sylff fellows.

The fellows can use Sylff Connect for communication with fellows from different Sylff institutions, putting up announcements, exchanging academic information and insights, sharing their experience with visual images, and casually meeting with new Sylff fellows.

I hope these will help empower Sylff fellows in their academic and professional activities and help them to connect and collaborate in the global network.

PRESENTATIONS BY SYLFF FELLOWS

Gender and Human Rights in HIV and AIDS Communication

Sreerupa Sengupta, Jadavpur University (SRA)

I utilized the Sylff Research Abroad program to conduct research for my PhD dissertation, studying at Howard University in Washington, DC, for two months and at American University in Cairo for one month.

Gender and human rights are concepts that have a very critical role in HIV discourse. A Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS was issued at the 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, outlining the importance of the full realization of gender and human rights.

The 2008 *Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* published by UNAIDS addresses long-term responses and cites ongoing human rights abuses. In this context, I chose to investigate HIV prevention activities with a focus on AIDS communication.

SRA gave me the opportunity to make first-hand studies of cross-cultural realities and to develop better global understanding. At both universities, I conducted field work, gathering information and interacting with global experts. This was a good academic exercise but also a tremendous cultural experience, being exposed to the international student community who were also involved in similar research.

I studied the politics of intervention and explored the ways in which religious leaders are engaging in HIV discourse, since religion significantly shapes gender roles and sexuality. While I was in Washington, the Obama administration was formulating its national HIV strategy, and I had a chance to speak with many members of this team.

These experiences will help me to propose an interfaith framework of action for HIV and AIDS communication in my dissertation, especially with regard to human rights and the role of the religious community.

*Research Abroad for Academic Excellence:
My Experience at the Institute of Development
Studies, University of Sussex*

Cannon Awuor Ponge, University of Nairobi
(SRA)

This research was undertaken as part of my master's degree dissertation on indigenous knowledge and sustainable crop production. I undertook a study of the model Millennium Village Project at Bar-Sauri village of Nyanza Province in Kenya, initiated by the United Nations in 2004.

In Sauri, agriculture was identified as holding the key to eradicating poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. My hope was to identify indigenous knowledge of crop production that could contribute to sustainable development and integrate them into current farming methods.

I hoped to show that the implementation of development projects must take due regard of indigenous knowledge of the local community in order for it to be sustainable.

To conduct this research, I used the Syllff Research Abroad program, studying as a nondegree student for several months at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, which is one of the world's leading institutes for development studies with an outstanding faculty and library. With the help of faculty advisers I was able to make a presentation



Cannon Awuor Ponge, left, and Sreerupa Sengupta

in front of IDS and the Science and Technology Policy Research Unit (SPRU) faculty.

I also attended an international seminar on sustainable development, where I met many internationally renowned development professionals. I also tried to interview farmers in Britain to ascertain indigenous knowledge, but I was rather surprised to be told that the only “indigenous” aspects of farming in Britain were the sheep.

My experience at Sussex allowed me to adjust my analytical framework and improve my research methodology and literature review sections, which contributed to the success of my final dissertation.

One of my main findings was that there was extensive level of integration of indigenous and modern farming techniques even for farmers in the Millennium Village project who were farming not just for subsistence but also for cash. It is therefore important that indigenous knowledge be given due recognition when initiating international development interventions.

*It Takes a Step Forward:
Waste Management Education and Capacity
Building Program for Action Implementation
in Waste Management in Indonesia*

Citra Wardhani, University of Indonesia (JIP)

My project was undertaken as part of the Joint Initiatives Program and covered two terms, 2006 and 2007.

I worked as part of a seven-member team. During the first term, we focused on Jakarta by adapting best practices in Central and East Java, and in the second term, we extended the program to West Java.

We initially planned to work with fellows from the Philippines, but because this required the allocation of funds for transportation, we decided to devote our funds entirely to the project.



Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen, left, and Citra Wardhani

We decided to address the issue of waste because this suffered from a case of “out of sight, out of mind.” We chose a site with waste-management problems, high social tension, high unemployment, and lack of final disposal sites.

A big problem in Indonesia is that the local government doesn’t provide sufficient sanitation services, so some people simply throw their waste into the river or vacant lots. We studied earlier attempts to address this issue and decided to create educational materials that can be understood by everyone in the community. We conducted community meetings, which were attended by members of the local government, to decide what actions to take, followed by a number of workshops and training sessions for the community.

In addition to waste management, ideas were suggested for the greening of the environment, and this led to a launch of a composting program. These meetings were well attended, which was very important because this in itself can help lower social tension and heighten awareness of the problem. Members of the community produced biofertilizer and other products for sale from recovered materials.

We received comments from river scavengers—who didn’t know that we were the leaders of this project—complaining about the drop in retrievable waste from an average of four bags to just one bag. This shows how effective the program was!

There was also considerable greening of the environment in the form of home and

community gardens, which was not part of our project but something that the residents initiated on their own.

In our second year, we invited people from other countries in an attempt to raise this issue to a higher level followed by national and regional level workshops. We produced how-to posters and brochures along with two booklets and composters to help people launch similar projects in other communities. We provided training for six communities in West Java to help them initiate similar projects.

Our activities were introduced in national and regional newspapers, and it also led, indirectly to the enactment of a national waste management act that had been pending for so long.

Tradition in the Present: Amazonian Oral History at Schools

Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen, University of Helsinki (SLI)

My project, which was carried out last year, involves indigenous education and cultural diversity in the Amazon Basin, where there are around 300 indigenous languages. Many Amazonian Indians dream about better possibilities for participating in school education. They want to fortify their own languages and traditions at school but also wish to learn new skills and knowledge from the dominant society, to which access is still limited.

This social action project had the aim of giving new tools to a Brazilian Amazonian indigenous people, the Manchineri, by creating a publication in their own language and in Portuguese about the history and myths of the Manchineri people. The Sylff Leadership Initiative assisted in the preparation of this publication by providing participants with boarding, transportation, and recording equipment and also covered the publication

costs of the edited material.

The Manchineri live in Brazilian Amazonia, in the state of Acre and number some 900 people. Community members had expressed their desire to register their history as educational materials for their schools: some elders remember well the mythic narratives and the ways the group lived in the past. This became possible through SLI.

Manchineri teachers from different villages were invited to participate in a workshop in a municipality close to their reserve. Participants were introduced to older documents and recordings, discussed different versions and revised the language, and transcribed the recordings. The participants also documented some new narratives by old people through digital recordings that were also transcribed.

As the aim of the project was to give new possibilities for the Manchineri to reflect on and document their own history, tradition and myths, during the workshop the community was given a mini laptop computer, two digital recorders, and two cameras.

The name of the 140-page book that was

produced is *Tsrunki Manxinerune hinkakle pirana* (Stories of Manchineri Elders), published by the Tokyo Foundation. The photographs from different archives and the Manchineri teachers' drawings comprise the visual content of the book. In each oral history, the authors mention the person from whom they heard the story, as stories vary from person to person.

In April 2010 the work was taken to Manchineri representatives for feedback. The texts were once more revised by the Manchineri teachers, and the book was finally printed in October 2010. The thousand copies are available only for the Manchineri community and the promotion of indigenous education.

The publication has strengthened the Manchineri language and contributed to the standardization of its written form. The project has buoyed the Manchineri's self-esteem as indigenous people with a living tradition.

As a Sylff fellow, this social action gave me an opportunity to contribute to society and offered a way to respond to the needs of the indigenous people that I had studied previously.