

Over three years ago, while studying a chapter on the treaties of the European Union I felt my miniature existence and the tiny dots on the world map suddenly began to grow in its entirety! Studying them more closely I learnt what lies beyond geographical discoveries: different constitutions, languages, lives, cultures and relationships that run through them intrigued me. I developed a dream of becoming a global citizen someday. Just like our lives, cultures are dynamic and they create and resolve conflicts, sometimes unconsciously and the only recourse is bridging them.

The whole of humanity, keeping aside geographical boundaries and ethnic distinction must come together to take up the fundamental global challenges collectively. The only antidote to the ever growing cycles of conflicts is to unite youth across the universe and exchange ideas.

What concerns me is the level of illiteracy of my country that would probably never let some sections of our society to see beyond their own moral principles, religion or faith and hence fail to create an understanding.

At 18 with these ideas and a pinch of wanderlust I looked for an opportunity that would empower me to take concrete initiatives to address global issues from a global platform. I managed to find myself as a participant of a cultural exchange program with United Kingdom and it is being an experience of a lifetime! In our journey to become global citizens, I with 16 youth ambassadors from India and UK have been exploring issues like food waste, healthy eating habits, and sustainability of the ecosystem. We worked in the poorest neighbourhood in London (Haringey Borough), learnt carpentry skills to produce furniture's from wood waste that would otherwise go into landfills, organizing local farmers market to empower local farmers, encouraging fair trade and above all community development, building relationship, and bridging culture.

I write this from my thatched roofed mud house in the solitude and vastness of a desert in Phalodi, Rajasthan which I share with my host family and my British counterpart. I have been here for a week now and the first time I met my host family, they were astonished to know that I am unmarried at 18 and I was similarly astonished to find out that my host sister is married at 14! A week ago I would have never believed that this world existed in which I am living now. Here began our endeavour to uplift the Phalodi community, empower women and children, encourage local weavers – a dwindling profession, horticulture and help them see the bigger picture.

With our 'Act Local, Think Global' motto we began our journey of rediscovering ourselves and the world around us.

The exchange ambassadors on return to our home countries will spread their intercultural experiences in their local community and thereby build a bridge and reconcile the differences! I see a world enriched with passionate youth propagating global peace and understanding in their own unique ways and creating a civil world in its real sense.

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