



Gita Beker Busjeet Fellowship

Academic Year 2016-2017

Rochana Cooray (Rochi) from Colombo, Sri Lanka obtained her undergraduate degree in Economics and Global Studies from St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York in 2014. During her time at St. Lawrence Rochi interned with the United Nations Development Program in Sri Lanka, on issues related to disaster management in rural communities. This internship increased her interest in the field of development which let her to apply for the Davis Projects for Peace Grant which she was awarded in 2013. Through grant, Rochi and three of her classmates built a sustainable health clinic in a rural Himalayan village, Nar, that is functional to date. Working on this project inspired her interest in issues regarding gender equality, education and economic development in developing nations. These interests culminated in her senior undergraduate thesis on Free Trade Zone Workers in Sri Lanka.

Upon Graduation Rochi took her passion for development work to the American Institutes for Research in Washington D.C., where she worked as a Research Associate within their Special Education Research Program for two years. During her time at AIR, Rochi was able to work with State Departments of Education and universities in Ohio and South Dakota on education policy reform as the Technical Assistance (TA) Specialist for a national TA center. She also worked on a large-scale policy evaluation study of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), monitoring implementation fidelity of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Behavior in two school districts. Rochi's work at AIR allowed her to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges associated with implementing complex systems across multiple contexts. In addition to her work at AIR, Rochi developed and maintains the official company website for PASS Accounting Solutions, a payroll management firm based in Colombo.

Her work experience in the development and education sectors let her to apply to the Johns Hopkins SAIS M.A. Program where she will be concentrating in International Development. Upon graduation she intends to work in the impact investment sector. Rochi's long term goal is to return to Sri Lanka to start an Impact Investment firm to fund social enterprises and and grow minority and women owned businesses around the island.

Rochi speaks English and Sinhalese fluently, is conversational in Hindi and has a basic understanding of Spanish, which she plans on studying during her time at SAIS. During her free time Rochi enjoys singing, reading and programming.

