

IHRP Internship 2014- Final Report

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Through the generosity of the International Human Rights Program and the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, I had the honour and privilege of working at PEN International, a globally recognized NGO. This summer, I spent ten weeks as the International Policy and Advocacy Intern at the International Secretariat of the world's first and oldest association of writers. Founded in 1921, PEN International works to create a community of writers, utilizes literature to foster understanding and development, and fights for the right to free expression on behalf of writers who are threatened, exiled, imprisoned, and even murdered for expressing their fundamental rights. PEN International's work, to name but two, has included a global campaign to support author Salman Rushdie after he faced lash back (in the form of a fatwa calling for his death) for his novel *The Satanic Verses*; as well as attempting to find justice for Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who received death threats for reporting on the war in Chechnya, and was found murdered.

At the International Secretariat, I worked primarily with the very passionate and highly intelligent members of the International Programmes team on three different long-term projects: the UNESCO, the Commonwealth Foundation, and the PEN Africa Network projects.

Funded by the UNESCO International Fund for Cultural Diversity, the purpose of the UNESCO project is to strengthen the minority language creative publishing industries in Kenya, Serbia, Haiti, and Nigeria. Although international in scope, the majority of this work will be done in a very local manner, with each country's respective PEN Centre carrying out the research within the country. Collaborating with national PEN Centres serves to strengthen the Centres capacity to do this kind of work on their own, fortifies the civil society voice in the country, and as a result helps make linguistic rights matter. Since the project takes place over an 18 month duration, my work entailed laying the groundwork to get the project going. This groundwork included mapping the questions that will be asked to determine how cultural policies and barriers impact writers from minority language backgrounds, liaising with PEN Centres and in-country experts, attending development meetings, exploring the existing national education and linguistic rights, researching current advocacy initiatives, and synthesizing and compiling all information into briefs.

Funded by its namesake, the Commonwealth project arose out of the worrying increase in legislation that suppresses free expression and/or fails to promote linguistic and cultural rights adequately. This project also has to do with research and capacity building in six countries with PEN Centres (Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zambia). Lasting three years, this project examines Civil Society's voice and engagement with the aim of increasing participatory governance and policy-making at local and national levels across PEN's policy areas (free expression, linguistic rights, education, advocacy & policy). As with the UNESCO project, my work in relation to this project, has consisted of examining current advocacy strategies, researching existing legislation, attending development meetings, mapping the project's outcomes/activities/, revising the methodology, and essentially helping with structuring the project so that project goals will be met in three years' time.

As part of the Commonwealth project, I was heavily involved in PEN International's submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Malawi. During the UPR, NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are encouraged to present reports on the situation of human rights in the country that is up for review. PEN International proudly holds consultative status with the UN, and has highlighted freedom of expression concerns in its submissions since 2007. For this project, I was given the task of collaborating with the PEN Malawi Centre to construct a draft submission. I looked up the recommendations accepted by the state at its last UPR session and researched any developments over the past 4 years, specifically looking at the situation for freedom of expression, assembly, and access to information, sedition, criminal defamation laws, and the penal code. I then used this research to write a draft submission. The strength of a submission is amplified when it has the support of reputable CSOs so I was also responsible for researching potential partnerships and collaborations for this UPR submission.

Both the UNESCO and Commonwealth projects are unique because a lot of the hands-on work will be carried out by the PEN Centres themselves, rather than the International Secretariat. This capacity building strategy, while beneficial also carries a potential risk that projects will not be conducted in a manner that is required by funders, will be ineffective in addressing the project goals, or will fail to achieve PEN's goals, not to mention time, resources, and finances wasted. So the International Programmes team (myself included) has been studiously structuring the projects so they can be run effectively by facilitators at the PEN Centres. Needless to say there is a lot riding on getting the wording right and making the expectations clear so that the projects will unfold as planned. Thus, a lot of the groundwork we are doing consists of carefully outlining the expectations and methodology. This translates to labouring over, drafting, and revising documents that are to be sent to PEN Centres overseas, communicating with facilitators to ensure project expectations are understood, and dealing with finance to finalize contracts. Some of the documents I have worked on in this capacity are Terms of Reference documents, press releases, research methodologies, timelines, funding summaries, budgets, and doing so in the language of international advocacy.

The PEN African Network (PAN) Development Meeting is a project that aims to strengthen the ability of the PEN Centres in Africa to carry out advocacy at local, national, regional, and international stages by strengthening the network. Since the meeting was to be held in December (a mere 4 months away), much of the work consisted of developing a programme that would address the current issues in Africa. I liaised with PEN Centre presidents from the region and used such communications as the basis for organizing the conference. My work for this project included synthesizing Centre responses in spreadsheets and briefing documents, taking minutes during meetings, partaking in Skype meetings, and building up the program. After all the groundwork, three weeks before my internship came to an end, it came as a surprise to learn that due to a myriad of reasons, the PAN meeting would be postponed until 2015, while a scaled down version of the meeting would proceed this December. The change in timeline presented a challenge in mitigating the impact of the change, tasks for this included drafting official releases informing participants of the change and examining ways to utilize the smaller meeting to extract the necessary results. The PAN project was not only the most difficult to get up and running, but the most rewarding because I have been able to spend quite a bit of time toward structuring, tweaking, and reworking it. As my internship nears an end and the project is postponed to next summer, I regret that I will not be able to see how the project will ultimately turn out.

Aside from these three projects, I was responsible for writing a press release for the one year anniversary of the Snowden revelations and Commonwealth project (which can be found here: <http://www.pen-international.org/newsitems/on-first-anniversary-of-snowden-revelations-world-governments-urged-to-end-mass-surveillance/>). I was also responsible for improving the PEN International website. To be more specific, I submitted mock-up models, adjusted format, worked with coding, and redesigned the Policy and Advocacy sections. I am proud to say that my work is now reflected on the organization's website. As well, I worked with the Writers in Prison Committee to administer surveys, collect data, and amalgamate information for research analysis.

By far one of the most (and there have been many) exciting things I was able to partake in as part of the International Programmes team, was attending the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee (TLRC) meeting in Spain. At the meeting, I had the chance to meet PEN members from around the world, witness global perspectives, become aware of the issues with language rights, and gained an understanding of how such rights should be advocated for. It was particularly fascinating to sit in on the meetings where members presented and debated resolutions and the best direction to take for the organization.

One aspect of this placement that I found particularly engaging was that, whether located in the heart of the city of London or the along the Spanish rivers, there was always both an international and local scope to the organization. There were ways to work from the top down, as with the United Nations, but also from the bottom up, with local members. By working at PEN, I learned that it is possible to work within existing mechanisms, like the UN UPR, to advocate and affect change; while also witnessing how one can create the very mechanisms needed to affect this change, like with the Girona Manifesto created by the TLRC. PEN International gave me the opportunity to hone my skills in research, writing, and advocacy while also giving me a greater understanding of the many freedom of expression issues rampant in the world today. The experience has informed me that time and time again, the restriction of the right to free expression is an indication of far greater abuses to human rights taking place. Through this internship I have developed a strong network of relationships with people who have broadened my horizons and worldview.

By working at the International Secretariat, I was able to observe and actively participate in the inner workings of a globally recognized NGO, and gained an understanding of what working in the international human rights field would entail. My experience at PEN International was incredibly rewarding and I am truly thankful to the IHRP and UofT Law for allowing me to spend a summer gaining such an experience.



Preparing for a planning and development meeting with staff members of the International Secretariat. From L to R Congress Officer Jena Patel, Researcher for Africa and the Americas Tamsin Mitchell, Europe Researcher and Campaigner Cathal Sheerin, and Communications & Campaigns Manager Sahar Halaimzai.



TLRC Committee Chair Josep-Maria Terricabras; Simona Škrabec of Catalan PEN, and Acting Executive Director of PEN Carles Torner at the TLRC welcome reception in Girona, Spain.



Mayor of Girona Carles Puigdemont and myself following the TLRC welcome reception at City Council.



Introducing the International Secretariat team at the Assembly Opening session of the TLRC conference in Girona, Spain. From L to R: International Policy and Advocacy Officer Sarah Clarke, Director of International Programmes Romana Cacchioli, TLRC Committee Chair Josep-Maria Terricabras, Acting Executive Director of PEN International Carles Torner, Centres and Committees Officer Paul Finegan.



Travelling to the venue for the last day of the TLRC conference in Girona with Centres and Committees Officer Paul Finegan.



Congress Officer Jena Patel and myself working at the PEN International offices in London.



Acting Executive Director Carles Torner and myself at the PEN International offices.



Farewell pictures with my supervisors Paul Finegan and the amazing Sarah Clarke, International Policy and Advocacy Officer.