

FIN Interns (2018)

Our interns introducing themselves and sharing their experience at Kameshwaram.

1. Elodie (March 02, 2018)



I am Elodie (22), I grew up in France and moved to the Netherlands to study EU law, about 4,5 years ago. An attraction for the field of taxation brought me to enrol in a tax law Master. In the framework of this programme, my interest lies principally in (tax) ethics and international tax policy. At the present, I'm actively broadening my knowledge on these topics in order to write my final thesis!

My presence in Kameshwaram in March has not much to do with the latter though, so let me tell you what brings me here.

Having both French and Dutch roots, I was raised in a multicultural family. It opened my mind and showed me how fascinating cultural differences can be. This led me to travel across several countries, not only to discover places, but also to get acquainted with new ways of life. The diversity encountered made me want to work in an international context. Additionally, I felt an urge to see how life is for the developing world. While aspiring to contribute to the improvement of life conditions for those whose basic needs are not always met, I would like to see in how far it is possible to move a community towards a certain threshold of development and dignity. When looking for possibilities within this context, I came across articles related to FIN and got to know about the proposed internship. It seemed not only to satisfy the aforementioned interests, it would also enable me to dive

into development research and to look for a comprehension of the way in which knowledge can be shared. That is how I became interested for what was happening in Kameshwaram.

Important to mention is, I had been to India before, and I was captivated by what I had seen from it. The idea of being introduced to the way of life in an Indian village, trying to connect with the people, getting to know their culture and understanding them as individuals as well as a community, attracted me.

Above all, I'd say my upcoming Kameshwaram experience is a middle to pursue my own development as a person. I have no doubt that working in a team consisting of various kinds of people will help me to learn a great deal about myself and human behaviour in general.

Therefore, for all these reasons, I really look forward to be working with the FIN team in the village!

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2. Swathi (March 15, 2018)



Hi! I am Swathi R S, a final year graduate student pursuing Masters in Social Work at Madras School of Social Work, Chennai. I hail from Virudhunagar district located in the southern part of Tamil Nadu. My father retired as an Office Superintendent at VSVN Polytechnic College, Virudhunagar. He is a hard worker and my inspiration as well. My mother who passed away during my childhood was a passionate teacher and always my source of motivation.

I love my hometown, Virudhunagar and many of my relatives still reside there. I like riding bicycle with my cousin and it is always fun to go

2

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fintrust.india@gmail.com

around the streets of my hometown. The Mariamman temple festival celebrations in my hometown which happens once in a year really excite me.

I love listening to music. Fast beat songs and instrumental music interest me the most. I also like dancing to the tunes of my favorite songs. I have a keen interest in playing badminton and follow major sporting events like Olympics. My favorite touring spot is Kerala and I have visited the places in and around Trivandrum, Kochi and Wayanad.

My biggest strength is being socially adaptable and amicable. I have chosen social work for my Post Graduation because I want to contribute for the betterment of our society and I like engaging myself in fieldwork. My concern for the environment pulled me to this internship with FIN.

Follow this space for more news from Swathi and her projects in Kameshwaram!

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3. Vijaya (April 15, 2019)



Hello! This is Vijaya from Tirunelveli (southern part of Tamil Nadu), India. I did my schooling in Tirunelveli and completed my Bachelors of Science degree in Computer Science from Coimbatore. I'm now pursuing Post Graduation in Masters of Social Work at Madras School of Social Work, Chennai. I've worked for various causes associated with children, women and people with disabilities so far and I love working with children.

My hometown Tirunelveli, is known for its hospitality. The life there is integrated with nature and that is what I love the most about it. Windmills, Kuttralam falls, Tamirabarani River, Nellaiappar temple and not to forget the famous "Irutu Kadai Halwa" (a traditional sweet) are some of the highlights of this part of the state. Memory is the diary we all carry with us. I

3

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4. Abhishek (April 20, 2018)



Hello everyone! I am Abhishek. My formative years were spent in Hyderabad, and then I moved to Delhi and Chennai to complete my educational odyssey. From the biryani of Hyderabad, the bustle of Delhi, and the beaches of Chennai; every city has been a delight to experience, and exposed me to diverse cultures. I enjoy playing outdoor sports as they challenge me both physically and mentally- I do not restrict myself to a particular sport, but enjoy playing basketball, football, and cricket. I am also an avid follower of football, and ardent follower of Chelsea Football Club- in fact at times I view their matches late at night, despite having exams on the next day.

Economics has fascinated me since childhood, and I have always been attracted to its scope and richness. As a young 14 year old, I was introduced to economics through the newspaper- The Economic Times. Initially my knowledge of economics was restricted to the confines of the financial markets, but gradually I realized the depth and pervasiveness of the subject. As an economics major, I have always tried to analyze affairs from an economics perspective.

I enjoy following world affairs, social and political developments, and the financial markets. It is fascinating to apply my economic concepts here and observe the interlinkages between these subjects. I am especially attracted to its applications in public policy. Living in India, I understand the imperative of broad based public policy that generates dividends for the broader populace. Despite enjoying high economic growth in the past decade, India is grappling with serious development issues, and needs to restructure its public policies to ensure more inclusive growth. I would love to involve myself in the formulation of sound and egalitarian public policy that will eventually lead to development of the country and empowerment of the masses.

Dr. Shyama had visited our institute, the Madras School of Economics to deliver a lecture on a comparative study on the status of sanitation in Nilgiris and Jalpaiguri districts. After the lecture, she talked about her work in Kameshwaram through Friend in Need, and how she planned to use Kameshwaram as a model for improving sanitation and hygiene conditions in rural India. Her idea of a research project that would have considerable impact on the lives of common people- “action- based research” was truly inspiring and exciting. I felt that working with her would allow me to explore how research can influence and improve lives. After the talk, my classmate and I mailed her enquiring about opportunities to intern with her. We were fortunate to land ourselves an internship with Friend in Need.

Our objective is to evaluate how effective the conventional licensing regime is for grassroots, pro-poor innovations. We also plan to study licenses issued by an international non-profit organization- Creative Commons, determine their suitability for FIN’s products, and evaluate their cost effectiveness compared to a conventional licensing regime. By gaining Creative Commons Licenses for our products and content, we aim to increase their reach and ensure that other organizations can easily utilize them for their own projects.

The internship with FIN is thoroughly professional, and intellectually engaging. Although Dr. Shyama is not present with us physically, she regularly stays in touch with us through internet- training us on Skype, challenging our notions, and pushing us to perform better by giving us honest feedback. Her method of teaching is Socratic- rather than easily giving away answers to problems, she asks us to think ourselves by prodding us to the possibilities. This technique demands extreme patience and persistence, but once we arrive at the answer it is deeply satisfying.

In the past, I have visited rural areas as part of my corporate stint with ‘WaterHealth International’- an organization that provided clean drinking water to many rural and semi urban areas. Travelling to these places gave me a deep insight of the glaring inadequacies in rural areas, and it was really disturbing that even after 70 years of independence, India was unable to provide something as basic as clean drinking water to a majority of its populace.

This experience left an indelible imprint on me about rural India's pressing problems, and to be given an opportunity to involve myself in the rural landscape through Friend in Need was irresistible. At times research feels cut off from the real world, but FIN's concept of an "action-based research project" brings a researcher closer to the practicalities on ground, and gives him a chance to apply his ideas, and principles to create social impact in the real world- an opportunity desired by any public policy enthusiast.

Travelling to a new place is always an exciting adventure, and an unforgettable experience. Kameshwaram's remoteness and limited connectivity interest me, and I look forward to travelling to Kameshwaram for our presentation, so that I can experience and understand the culture of the region, and observe FIN's practices in empowering the community there.

FIN's internship program's uniqueness lies in its efforts to improve Kameshwaram's community through constant research and action in order to build a benchmark rural model that can be replicated across rural spaces in the world. Through this opportunity, I aim to broaden my perspective, improve my understanding about rural India, and develop my research skill set. I hope to learn as much as possible from FIN, and contribute as much as I can to its growth.

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## 5. Pranav (April 27, 2018)



Hi Everyone,

My name is Pranav. I was born and brought up in Chennai. I love meeting new people and making new acquaintances. The quote that inspires me the most is “Be so good they can’t ignore you” by Chris Martin. I am studying integrated M.Sc in economics from Central University of Tamil Nadu where one has to study the initial 3 years in Central University of Tamil Nadu campus located in Neelakudi village in Thiruvarur district and the

final two years in Madras School of Economics located in Chennai. I have completed my three years of study in Thiruvarur and now I’m back to Chennai, also known as the gateway to South India.

Studying in a campus situated in a rural area exposed me to a different kind of lifestyle. All the shops would close by 9 and you could actually experience pin drop silence, this was actually very intimidating to me in the initial stages as I was used to living amidst hustle and bustle of the city. However I got used to the silence and now trying to adjust to the cacophony of the city given that I have come back to Chennai for my studies.

I had attended Prof. Shyama Ramani’s lecture in Madras School of Economics organized as part of the silver jubilee celebrations of the institute. After the lecture madam had mentioned about Friend in Need in Kameshwaram, located in Nagapattinam district, towards the end of the lecture. I realized that I could do something for rural India by involving in an organization which specialized and largely succeeded in spreading Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH) awareness among the residents of Kameshwaram by using innovative methods. I realized that this was my chance to give it back to the rural community which had given me a lot in the past 3 years of my study in CUTN. Also Kameshwaram in Nagapattinam district is located quite close (about 40-50 kilometres) to the university

8

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campus. My friend Abhishek and I were particularly interested in intellectual property rights and we were curious to know how proper knowledge of intellectual property rights would be helpful for pro-poor innovations financially.

We had then interacted with Prof. Shyama Ramani over Skype and then realized the main aim of the pro poor innovations of Friend in Need was the diffusion of knowledge. With no financial motive, applying for patents would be prove to be futile as they cost a lot of money and we weren't expecting any monetary gain from it. We were enlightened about the Creative Commons platform by madam. We then realized that obtaining a creative commons license for pro poor innovations would help in better diffusion of knowledge since Creative Commons licenses have become the global standard for sharing across education, culture, governments and more, thus enabling a far reach of innovations through the platform.

Abhishek and I were encouraged to be more inquisitive during our discussions over Skype and we were completely enthralled by what we had experienced during our conversations. Our main objective was to see how non- conventional methods of licensing like Creative Commons license was better than conventional methods like patenting and copyrighting in promoting diffusion of knowledge of grassroot innovations, also we had the objective of obtaining license for frugal innovations like Household waste bin, Public waste tin, ecosan toilets and a bus stop as a nudge strategy to reduce littering. We were introduced to the Socrates method of teaching where we were encouraged to think critically through questions posed during our conversation on Skype and it was a very pleasurable experience.

During the past three years I had got a taste of rural life by residing in a campus that was located in a secluded rural location. The Central University of Tamil Nadu(CUTN) campus is located in the rice bowl of Tamil Nadu, the delta region, amidst lush green fields had given me exposure to rural lifestyle. I came to realize there are indeed two Indias, the urban India and rural India and there exist large differences between the two. One disturbing feature I saw in rural India, not just the village surrounding the campus but also other villages where I had visited was the lack of adequate sanitation facilities. While going on a morning jog

outside the campus, one cannot help but notice a large number of village folk with lotas in their hands going for their “morning routine”.

I was part of the National Service Scheme in the university and we had to undertake a huge range of activities which involved interacting with the people in the villages in and around Thiruvarur district. We had undertaken various surveys and conducted awareness campaigns regarding cleanliness, afforestation and a number of topics. I had also volunteered in the medical camps conducted by NSS-CUTN along with Thiruvarur Medical Centre in Achutamangalam and Sri Vanchiyam villages in Thiruvarur district.

Staying in Kameshwaram wouldn't be an altogether new experience because I've stayed in a similar location for almost 3 years albeit this time I wouldn't be having the luxury of hostel accommodation which was provided by the university. Also I know Tamil, the local language which I think would definitely enable me to make new acquaintances with the people I would meet in Kameshwaram.

I hope that I would gain a lot from FIN internship by being a part of an action based research project, mingle even better with the rural community of the delta region. I would be very pleased if the project would enable the growth of the rural community.

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## 6. Giridharan (May 28, 2018)



Hi everyone,

Professor Shyama has put me in a tough position. She asked me to write a self-introductory essay, but actually I'm a person who doesn't believe in telling things about self. So I have decided to let you discover me through the things I love, and my principle of love.

My city that I love! I come from the city called Tiruchirappalli @ Trichy @ Trichinopoly which is geographically situated at Centre of Tamil Nadu State. While Trichy is renowned for its beautiful architecture, wait guys, I am not going to describe any temple, but a Dam called Kallanai, which is the world's oldest surviving Dam and I'm still wondering how that famous king, Karikala Cholan built the dam over the swiftly flowing river of Cauvery. Imagine, advanced technology about 2000 years back i.e., 2nd century AD. Wow! Just amazing isn't it? Even now, it's in use and farmers benefit by this dam which diverts river water and passes it onto agricultural land.

And cricket .. why cricket? Because of this Guy.. Sourav Ganguly. He was born on July 8th and I on January 8th. He was born in the year 1972 and I in 1992. He is affectionately called by the name of dadagiri and my name is also Giri! He is a left-handed batsman and right-handed bowler and so am I. You guys don't know how much I love him; I stopped watching cricket after his retirement, and also got the maturity of understanding in the year 2009, that cricket was no more a sport, but an entertainment like a movie, which is pre-scripted and telecasted in the name of IPL. Wait IPL fans, that's about my view on IPL.

11

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## 7. Prince (June 2, 2018)



Greetings! I am Prince Manuel. G from Madras School of Social Work, Chennai. I was born in Kuttralam region of Tirunelveli district and brought up in Chennai. Kuttralam is an amazing tourist spot surrounded by hills and wrapped in nature's greenery. Falls, lakes and trees makes the town an amazing place to live in. I visit Kuttralam once a year

to enjoy the nature.

I love playing music and started learning keyboard when I was five years old. I completed my second grade practical exam from Trinity School of Music, London (conducted in Musee Musicals, Chennai). My deep interest in music, lead me to successful completion of my final eighth grade in keyboard practical and fifth grade in theory. I play keyboard, guitar, rhythm pad, harmonium, piano, bongos, Triple Congo, Cajon, accordion and melodica. I started getting various opportunities to perform in concerts, recordings and programs when I was in class 10. Later, I started teaching music to children and now I train 25 children at my house and tutor 30 children at Divine School of Music. Music is my passion and I would never give that up for anything.

Next to music, comes my passion for riding bikes. I own a KTM Duke with which I love to explore and adventure. It was my dream to get this bike from 12th grade. After I started earning through my music, I was able to own this beast. I have travelled and explored various places like Pondicherry, Cuddalore, Villupuram, Kodaikanal, Yelagiri and Bangalore

13

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with my bike. It is very adventurous and the sight of nature excites me. Safety always comes first and I always wear a safety jacket and helmet while I ride.

My passion for social work, started when I joined MSSW. I met Dr. Sarah Karunakaran, Head of the Department of Development Management at MSSW in my Church and pursued Bachelors in Social Work there. I love the wonderful campus at MSSW. I was interested to learn about social work and how it helps people to help themselves. I started to learn the art of mime, street play, parai dance and later I became the theatre artist trainer in BSW. After successfully completing my BSW, I'm studying Masters in Social Work in Community Development as I wanted to bring about a change in the community. I have done various community organization programs for the slum. Also, I have 6 months of experience as a training counsellor at Rajiv Gandhi National Government Hospital.

I never judge a person by their appearance as everyone has their own story. I work hard in the present to make my future bright. I love socializing with people and enjoy spending time with my friends. I'm sure my work in Friend In Need will help me and the people in the beautiful village of Kameshwaram!

Watch this space for more news on Prince's work in Kameshwaram!

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## 8. Kishore (June 24, 2018)



Hello! This is Kishore. I was born and raised in Kumarapalayam, a busy town in the Namakkal district of Tamilnadu. So what's famous here? Kooduthurai or Mukkoodal, a holy place situated near my town. This place is a confluence of three rivers - Cauvery, Bhavani and an underground stream called 'Agaaya Gangai' - also known as Triveni Sangamam.

I am pursuing B.Com (Honours) from Shri Ram College of Commerce, New Delhi.

The journey from a small town in Tamil Nadu to the capital city of India gained me a lifetime of experience. All credit goes to my dad who has always given me the extra push and supported me through every thick and thin situation, though he had no luck to survive in this world. When I feel weak to negotiate tough situations in life, his words guide me and make me strong enough to handle them. The film Vaaranam Aayiram which beautifully portrays the relationship between a son and his dad is very close to my heart. The crux of the film, 'Whatever happens, life has to go on' inspires me always.

I love to interact with people, especially children and I love spending time outdoors, rather than spending time on social media. Volunteering for NSS gave me numerous opportunities to visit orphanages, cancer institutes, and old age homes situated in Delhi. These experiences had a great impact on me. Getting to know the condition of people there, made me feel grateful for what I have in life. This experience and satisfaction cannot be substituted with any materialistic pleasure and I would suggest everyone reading this to visit such places to know the value of the lives we are leading now.





## 9. Anupam (July 03, 2018)



Hello! I am Anupam Saini from Ambala, a small town in Haryana. I'm pursuing Civil Engineering at PEC University of Technology, Chandigarh. Just like

most of the teenagers, I too had dreams of landing a high-paying job and settling in Europe. But things changed when I entered college. I joined NSS and our project AABHA was to coach the children of nearby slums. That's when I interacted with a diverse group of people. I noticed that these children are actually more interested in learning than most of us and all they need is proper guidance and nutrition. Now, I'm working in the direction of improving the lives of the financially weaker people so that I can help them fulfill their basic needs.

You would ask, why FIN and not the other NGOs or MNCs? When a senior of mine introduced me to FIN, I got to know about Prof. Ramani and was inspired by her work. This made me think and I realised that if an Indian who is living abroad can do so much in India, isn't it my duty to contribute my bit for the society? I strongly believe that the progress of a country depends on its under-developed section and I'm working to improve the standards of these people.

I always wanted to be a civil servant and FIN has provided me an excellent platform to get an insight into the work done by government officials. Here at FIN, we closely interact with the people to understand the problem from their point of view. This helps us draw practical solutions to day-to-day problems. Like every other human being, I have my own strengths

and weaknesses. But what differentiates me from others is that I grow with time and with every passing day I work on my weaknesses. I also try to be more compassionate towards others to become a better version of myself.