

Press Release of WANGO Regional Coordinator for Africa, Mr. Mohammed Attah

For six weeks this summer, from July 4 until August 12, Mr. Mohammed Attah, WANGO's Africa Regional Coordinator, attended a training in India at the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (<http://www.ediindia.org/>). Here he joined NGO leaders from various parts of the world in the Management of NGOs program, where he also served as a group leader and offered talks on networking and volunteering. He was sponsored by Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Division (ITEC). The following is his press release, presented in India at the successful conclusion of his program.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE OF INDIA Ahmadabad, Gujarat – India

Wednesday, August, 12, 2009

Media Release

My ITEC Experience at EDI

For me, coming to India is a dream come true. Though I have visited some Asian nations around this largest country in the region – Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand – the thought of staying in India for a period exceeding one month was never envisaged. For the first time in my life, I saw in real life, those beautiful scenes and people of India: The rich, the poor and the middle class. I witnessed also the unending flow of human heads that indeed makes India the second most populated nation on earth.

And arriving at the campus of the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) was another exciting experience of my life. The Institute itself is an epitome of structural layout, with the serene environment including wailing animals and birds. For me and many of my colleagues, EDI (as it is fondly called) was a very environmental-friendly place. The regular visits of the monkeys, the wailing of the peacock, and the undying chanting of the birds are quick reminders of the African deep jungle. For me it is like '*a home away from home*'.

NGO governance and management

And for the main business, it is most rewarding for me to be at EDI studying **Governance and Management of NGOs**. Though I work with the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO), an umbrella organization serving and connecting NGOs worldwide, and tour many nations across the globe talking about NGOs, I experienced here a more structured academic exercise that only few individuals or institutions have offered in the past. The course content was arranged in such a manner that it suits all strata of participants – the beginners, intermediate and the professionals – taking back home, one of the most important aspect of human endeavor: learning to serve others.

One of the greatest opportunities I gained from this six-week exercise is sharing with 26 participants from different nations and backgrounds. They represent in my mind the 'United Nations of EDI' from Africa to Europe to Asia, to South America and to the Persian Gulf. As a mixed bag of ideologies, cultures and traditions, one cannot but appreciate our differences. I know many (if not all) remain grateful to the Government of India, through its Foreign Ministry, and EDI for this epoch visit. And choosing and working with them as the Group Leader is one phenomenon that will ever remain green in my mind. Our associations these past weeks are better summed up as participants, colleagues and a family.

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of this trip will be my inputs to whole program and exercise. As a charity volunteer, I saw many gaps that need to be filled. The opportunity to teach one of the subjects on **Networking and Volunteering** and serving as one of the ‘faculty members’ is for me a fulfilled dream. I am particularly grateful to the Course Director; Dr. Santosh Kumar, for the encouragement and support. Dr. S. Tripathy was also an inspiration to note. Also is the opportunity to share my knowledge and authority about English language with fellow colleagues from non-English speaking nations and the India students at the campus. Again, the opportunity to share WANGO’s ideals, especially the international **Code of Ethics and Conduct** for NGOs, with participants and faculty members alike are satisfying gestures. The stay was also an avenue to meet with few and discuss WANGO with over 100 member NGOs here in India.

Study tour

Adding life to the ever-crowded lectures is a heart-warming study tour, which took all the participants to about three (3) different states in northern India. After a hectic three-week academic exercise, the study tour, no doubt, serves as a refresher for most of us because as it is said “*All work and no play...*” EDI provided us one of a rare opportunity to visit some of the best scenes in the world, including the ‘The 7th Wonder’ – Taj Mahal – and the residence of Mahatma Gandhi, The Great Ahimsa of India. From Ahmadabad to Udaipur to Jaipur and Agra are sites upon sites to behold. And rounding up at Jodhpur and Mount Abu is for me a ‘deliberate attempt’ to make everyone comes back to India. It is unimaginable how human beings had lived with so much knowledge, exposition and mastery in the era when no technologies exist.

Visiting in India such outstanding NGOs such as SAATH, SEVA Mandir, GRAVIS and others added more value to the entire program as it was a time to experience the issues practically as they were taught in the classrooms. Again, meeting such great Indian human rights activists, Gagan Sethi, Dr. Rajesh Shah, and Sachin Oza among several others inspired me greatly.

Future opportunities

My conclusion is that with this type of Bilateral support coming from the Foreign Ministry of India, there are great potentials for better diplomatic relations with all countries of the world. The Special Adviser to the Executive President of Nigeria, Prince Chineme Ume-Ezeoke, on whose directive I came, and the WANGO Secretary General, who incidentally shares his first name with the ‘7th Wonders’, Mr. Taj Hamad, and the teeming society of non-profit leaders worldwide are very pleased to learn about these positive developments since my arrival here. And connecting with others such as my Coordinator at the WANGO United Nations Office of Affairs in New York, Dr. Frederick Swarts and Mr. Jean-Jacques Schull, the IDAY (International Day of the African Child...and its Youth) Coordinator in Belgium were all at hand to provide support for my work here.

My future plan will be to visit India again, share my experience and network with more NGOs towards solving India basic problem of poverty, reducing the menace of caste system and more integration of the people into the 21st century world. EDI could be encouraged to engage more female faculty members. Such good outing by Ms. Meena Bilgi, the only female faculty member, is something to serve as a reference point. The Institute should also take into consideration that the world is larger than India, and as such resource persons from other nations should be engaged to share their experience with others. This way, the program will no doubt be recognized as truly international.

However, I will be guided by the fact that India remains one of the largest nations in the world, second largest in population and the best in terms of communication technologies, with huge human and material resources. The best way for accelerated development may be for the intellectuals of the nations, particularly the human right activists to look beyond their borders.

Mohammed Bougei Attah

Group Leader

**Attah is the Africa Regional Coordinator for WANGO and the Managing Editor of NGO Network, a general interest magazine for the non-profit sector in sub-Saharan Africa.*

*Visit www.wango.org and www.ngonetworkmagazine.net
Email: attahmb@yahoo.com OR mba1@email.com*