

Personal Statement

Following COVID-19 and the Ukraine war, global challenges such as inflation, climate change, income inequality and supply chain disruptions have been triggered in such a way that everyone has been affected. In order to combat these pressing issues, we must share the limited resources that we have, understand the humanitarian problems irrespective of cultures or identities, embrace diversity and harmony, and engage with communities worldwide. In this regard, the relevancy of the global citizen approach is highest than ever. Currently, I am pursuing MS in Agricultural Economics in the US. Being an international student and non-native to the English language, it is a step toward my vision of being a global citizen. In my department, I have friends across the globe with whom I have discussed on many occasions the socio-economic and ecological aspects of their countries. These engagements have helped me to think about the reality of the world through a multi-dimensional lens rather than the parochial view of communalism. In this globalized world, I believe that no citizen has grown up in isolation but rather been integrated through the advances of digitalization and connectivity.

To turn the global citizen approach into reality, the combined efforts of everyone are crucial. In essence, it is team leadership. Recognizing the differences between people as their strengths should be a starting point for it. To embrace diversity and advance ahead with collective actions, policymakers, developmental practitioners, think tanks and eminent groups should focus on building harmony across people from different parts of the planet and letting people engage and compete on fair and even ground. With the spirit of team leadership, I am serving the Graduate Students of the Agricultural Economics Association (GSAE), an organization consisting of more than 30 members, as a secretary. In the meetings, my efforts have been to bring the discussions to recognize the academic, professional and social excellence of graduate students and engage them to conduct the events such as Thirsty Thursday, Risk and Profit Conference, Brown Bag Seminars and so forth. This idea indeed created an opportunity to hone the inherent skills of involved students. In addition, the meetings have become a learning platform for other members and overall, has increased the performance of the event.

Though the need for a global citizen approach and collective leadership is unquestionable, the harsh reality is the deepening rift between countries at the price of social justice and welfare. The ongoing fierce competition between global powers like USA and China and other allied countries has led to the necessity of mainstreaming the vulnerable into development being overlooked. I believe every person around the globe should be provided

with equal access to resources, opportunities and privileges. For this, meaningful participation of the vulnerable in decision-making, maintaining diversity and giving higher preference to basic human rights are crucial. Unfortunately, the philosophy of social justice and equal rights is on the edge amid different layers of conflicts. There is a silver lining, however, when new generations take responsibility for social justice. In this light, I was involved with a bilateral aid organization KOICA¹-funded project a year back. As an Agriculture Officer for the project, I helped to design agricultural interventions for vulnerable and landless farmers. I feel proud to share this now that farmers of remote hills of Nepal are receiving the benefits of those interventions. In addition, I volunteered as a member of “Equity Advisory Circle” of the US-based journal- JAFSCD² focused on agriculture and community development research. Through this circle, I played an important role to construct the equity indices for the journal so that the voices of researchers from the underrepresented scope of the food system could be amplified.

Thus, having already a couple of experiences spanning from volunteer to leadership, I am very motivated to serve this diverse and changing world with the spirit of globalism, collective actions and social justice. In my view, International Service Team (IST) represents the best opportunity for me as an international citizen to collaborate with diverse teams and community partners around the world. So, I am looking forward to visiting the Panajachel, Guatemala, where I want to understand the leadership model and initiatives taken by Tejiendo Futuros to develop the resilient and sustainable communities. Besides, I am excited to work with communities and learn from Tejiendo Futuros regarding the development of the local sustainable agricultural system, which I believe, would be a unique experience to add a new dimension to my academic and leadership career.

¹ Korean International Cooperation Agency

² Journal of Food System and Community Development:

<https://foodsystemsjournal.org/index.php/fsj/about/editorialTeam>