

Exploring Primary Health Care in INDIA:

My experience with the NIHR GHR SPARC

Introduction: A Journey of Purpose

My name is Nataly Bailon, a biologist and master's student in Primary Health Care (PHC) from Peru. Supported by the NIHR GHR SPARC grant, I undertook a transformative one-month placement at The George Institute for Global Health in Hyderabad, India. My goals were to gain practical knowledge in PHC research, qualitative methods, and community empowerment, while also expanding my professional network.

The George Institute (TGI): A Hub for Global Health Innovation

TGI is an independent medical research institute focused on addressing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and advancing health systems. As the NIHR GHR Centre, TGI offers an ideal setting to explore innovative PHC approaches. My placement aligned with TGI's mission to improve global health outcomes, focusing on community-driven strategies in rural and underserved areas.



COHESION-I: Connecting Research with Communities

The COHESION-I project was central to my placement. Operating in India, Mozambique, Nepal, and Peru, the project focuses on co-designing interventions to strengthen PHC and address rural healthcare challenges.

During my placement:

- ✳ I participated in workshops carried out in rural communities across the districts of Surguja and Siddipet, where barriers to healthcare access were identified, and tailored community-driven solutions were co-created.
- ✳ I attended in-depth interviews with key stakeholders that explored chronic disease management and systemic barriers to healthcare delivery.
- ✳ I observed the interdisciplinary team engaging participants, facilitating discussions, and collecting data, gaining hands-on experience in community-driven research processes.
- ✳ I observed the team's thorough preparation for fieldwork, including logistical planning, meetings, gaining valuable insights into the planning process.

This immersive experience deepened my understanding of how global initiatives like COHESION-I foster impactful solutions in underserved communities.

Achievements

- ✳ Practical Knowledge: Gained hands-on experience in PHC research, community engagement, and empowerment.
- ✳ Skill Development: Trained in NVivo for qualitative analysis.
- ✳ Professional Growth: Presented on the Peruvian health system, thesis protocol, and collaboration opportunities during TGI meetings.
- ✳ Collaboration: Supported the research team during fieldwork.
- ✳ Cultural Immersion: Celebrated Diwali with the TGI team, strengthening bonds and expanding my professional network.
- ✳ Field Visits: Visiting PHC centers, a district hospital, and a rural school provided insights into healthcare and educational challenges in rural communities.
- ✳ Time constraints and language barriers in rural areas, where Hindi or local dialects were predominant.

Conclusion: A Transformative Experience

This placement expanded my understanding of global health challenges and strengthened my ability to lead collaborative research projects addressing real-world issues in underserved communities. It motivated me to continue pursuing impactful research and foster international partnerships.



Through this journey, I hope to inspire others to explore opportunities like the GHR SPARC grant and take bold steps toward advancing health equity worldwide.