

Alumna of the Month

Expressing her concerns about different marginalised groups of the society, Aastha Maggu said – “Groups such as women, dalits, and adivasis among others still have to struggle harder to ensure their views are heard and represented. I am hopeful that in the coming years, the policy landscape will become responsive to their needs.” Her journey to the field of Public Policy to address societal issues kicked off through an interaction with Public Policy as one of her courses during her undergraduate studies in Political Science at the Miranda House, University of Delhi. This influenced Aastha to take up the Master’s Programme in Public Policy at NLSIU, Bangalore as it felt like a good opportunity to get trained to address the challenges of exclusion that emerge in our society.

Graduating from the MPP in 2018, Aastha is currently working as a Communication Consultant with the Communication team of the Wipro Foundation. She works on capturing the journeys and insights of the partner organizations in the domains of education, ecology, and cities and public spaces among others.

She is keenly interested in sectors such as public education, gender equality, and the pastoral production system. She is also passionate about learning the potential of communication tools to enable social change. Talking about the MPP course, she remembered how she enjoyed the rural immersion fieldwork with PRADAN in Purulia district, West Bengal. She added that it helped her to learn more about vulnerable groups whose lived experiences and access to opportunities were starkly different from her own. Further, she added that the modules on research methodology, group inequality and policy clinic and action proved to be helpful in her career. Specifically talking about the course on group inequality she opined that it encouraged her to critically understand the systemic gaps in people’s access to services and opportunities and the course on policy clinic and action equipped her with the skills to succinctly communicate policy problems and solutions. She also added that her interactions with her peers and the faculty, helped her realize the importance of the underrated value of keeping an open mind about differing opinions.

Building further on the skills she received through the MPP course, she said that the training during MPP enabled her to listen, reflect and write about her work for varied stakeholders such as government officials, funding organizations, and community members. Her stories carrying reflections from her work with pastoralists and fieldwork in Rajasthan got featured in varied publications and news platforms such as the Indian Express, The Hindu, Down to Earth, Mongabay India, etc.

Concluding her thoughts, she took the example of her work in Rajasthan. In the context of the dwindling population of camels, she spoke about how camel-herders were further discouraged from camel rearing due to a policy by the state government that recognized camel as the state animal and banned the slaughter, trade and unauthorized transport of the animal. This severely impacted the income of camel herders as they were not able to meet the costs involved in the upkeep of the animals. She concluded the conversation by providing this as an anecdote to highlight the necessity for all policymakers to develop a framework focused on bottom-up approach than a top-down approach.



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