

Pearl Mar

## Internship in Taiwan

This past summer, I was given the opportunity to intern for the non-profit organization, Taiwan Fund for Children and Families, under the direction of the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy. I spent two months working in Taiwan with the majority of my time in Taipei, and an international work camp in Tianzhong, Changhua, Taiwan.

Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) focuses on strengthening their democratic network around the world with other related organizations as well as their commitment to human rights domestically. At the beginning of the internship, we were able to take classes on the history of Taiwan's democracy, the different political parties, and their current actions and movements in Taiwan. The organization invited professors and other speakers to give presentations on these topics. We also participated in a discussion and lecture with international students, in which some were visiting Taiwan for the first time.

After a couple of classes, all the interns were separated into different non-profit organizations, the locations where we will be interning at for the rest of the summer. Because of TFD's focus on domestic human rights, the NPOs were mostly related to children's rights, women's rights, and people's rights. I was sent to an organization called Taiwan Fund for Children and Families (TFCF).

TFCF dedicates itself to award needy children and families with welfare and benefits, providing many different programs and services such as financial assistance, education scholarship programs, foster care programs, and others. They also hold many events to raise awareness about issues such as child abuse and raise money for the children's scholarship fund.

At this organization, my main role was to research and translate the policies, laws, and actions of United States' and Japan's government and organizations into Chinese in order to provide a comparison for Taiwan and help them improve their implementation strategies. I learned about many different issues that children and families go through and what actions the government and organizations are taking to improve it. It was interesting to see that Taiwan and United States governments do not intervene as much in protecting children from getting abused, in caring for children who have incarcerated parents, or in providing financial assistance. It is mainly done by non-profit organizations that care about a specific cause. On the other hand, in Japan, the government is very involved in providing children and families with welfare and benefits, implementing many different programs to teach parents and teachers how to provide for the children, teaching the community what they can do to help, and finding strategies that can improve the lives of children.

During my internship at TFCF, I was also given the opportunity to participate in a 2-week long international camp. This camp was located in central Taiwan in a city called Changhua, and more specifically in a very rural town called Tianzhong. At this camp, 11 international volunteers and 9 Taiwanese volunteers came together to help the children of Changhua TFCF through interaction using English, culture learning and exchange, and outdoor charity events. The international volunteers came from many different countries including France, Spain, Korea, Hong Kong, Russia, and others, so our main communication language was English. My main role here was to serve as a translator between the Taiwanese locals and the international volunteers. For many of them, it was their first time in Taiwan, and every day we were able to do cultural exchange activities by talking about and cooking foods from our countries.



With all the volunteers, we were able to work together to help the children and community of Changhua. Many of these children come from low income families, single parent families, or they are in foster care, live with foster parents, or are victims of child abuse, so many of them do not have the chance to meet people from other countries or practice English. So, these international volunteers come to interact with the children, teach them about their cultures, and get them excited to learn about the world outside their little town. During this time, I was able to help the local Taiwanese college volunteers with their event planning and behind-the-scenes support, as well as teach about the United States and the culture, basically taking on the role as both international and domestic volunteer.

We had conversations with the children and talked about our different cultures. We made drinks and jelly together and walked around selling them to raise money for charity. And, we participated in an all-day outdoors cultural exchange and learning day where the kids go from place to place to learn different languages, cultures, and games from each country.



Throughout my time in Taiwan, I learned a lot about Taiwan's democracy and their efforts in humanitarian affairs. I learned that it is important to research and study about the strategies that other countries are taking in order to improve or strengthen our own. I also learned about the importance of exposing young children to different cultures and people to get them interested in traveling or studying abroad, and learning new languages. I was also able to see how non-profit organizations in Taiwan worked, helping me compare it with my Japanese and U.S. experience, and give me a clearer understanding of the importance of children and youth empowerment. Finally, it gave me the opportunity to experience what it's like to work in Taiwan and help me connect with my parents' culture. I hope that I will be able to be the bridge between Taiwan and the United States, even if it's in a small way.