

## Biography – Gunjan Wadhwa

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My identities have made me profoundly sensitive to the issues of development and governance in our society as a whole. Being an Indian citizen, I identify with the core concerns of developing countries such as India and her neighbors and with the fact that these concerns can be addressed by unique policy solutions. Having been brought up in New Delhi, the capital city of India and one of the world's fastest growing global cities, I have been exposed to the evils of development. More than half of its population living on streets, in slums, and in resettlement and unauthorized colonies with no basic rights and entitlements, New Delhi is an urban city where 'marginalized communities' is a ubiquitous social category. Women and children form the most exposed and vulnerable sections of such societies and their rights, which ideally should be the best protected, are the first to be violated. The urgent need to reform such societies drew me first towards the study of international relations and developmental politics (MA International Relations) and has now urged me to apply for a doctorate degree in the same field.

My experiences in the civil unrest affected Indian States such as Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Maharashtra, and in the HIV/AIDS high prevalence States such as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have influenced my decision to a significant extent to take up policy formulation specifically for protection of child rights and ensure its effective implementation. My case study on 'Public Hearings as a Mechanism for Increasing Awareness and Accountability: Rights and Entitlement of Children in the Context of HIV/AIDS and Response of the State' has been published by UNICEF India (2010) and is being used as an advocacy tool to affect policy changes in the country. I presently work with the Government of India as a research and policy specialist for one of its statutory bodies, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, providing professional support to its Chairperson, Prof. Shantha Sinha (2010-2013). In the policy document prepared by me under her supervision, concerning 'Rights and Entitlements of Children Affected and Infected by HIV/AIDS' (2011), and published by the Commission I tried to provide a critique of the existing legislation and policy for children in India and recommend a systemic framework for inter-ministerial and inter-departmental convergence. I intend to further this governance and development discourse in India and internationally by being a part of such innovative and rights-based policy-formulation initiatives.

Having worked not only India but in the UK and with international development organizations such as UNICEF and Oxfam, all of my work has been concentrated on redressing inequalities in the society and ensuring easy access for the 'marginalized communities' to their basic entitlements. This includes working as Oxjam's Regional Support Officer for Coventry (2008), organizing music events all over Central England to help raise money for Oxfam, as well as with the Warwick District Council as Action 21's Chief Fundraising Officer/Volunteer (2009), raising money for various educational initiatives. During my internship as a caseworker with Simon Hughes MP in London (2009), communicating with his constituents who were in difficult and emotional situations, and understanding and solving their problems related to immigration, housing, police, health and education, I realized the complete absence of such developmental politics in India and I hope to contribute significantly to this area. My experience with Shine Foundation in Delhi (2009-2010), where I helped develop action plans for the betterment of urban slum communities and provided training of the English language to youth from these communities, convinced me of the urgency to create democratic spaces and build capacities of the system as well as of those being governed.

