

## LiA Experience – Project Reflection – Summer 2

### *Reaction\_for\_impact – makesense\_americas*

During the summer of 2023, I had the opportunity to contribute to a meaningful volunteer project with *makesense americas*, Mexico City, in their *reaction\_for\_impact* program. While the project seemed straightforward initially, it was accompanied by several challenges and unexpected twists throughout the experience. However, this unique experience allowed me to transcend language barriers, create impactful content, and immerse myself in the world of social change. Over the course of the summer, I worked on several projects, including creating reels and infographics for IRRI's social media channels and documenting two significant events. This reflection piece delves into the challenges I faced, the lessons I learned, and the profound impact this experience has had on me.

One of the most significant challenges I encountered was the language barrier. As I didn't speak Spanish, effective communication seemed daunting at first. However, this obstacle soon revealed itself to be an opportunity for growth. We relied on visual cues, gestures, and translation tools to bridge the gap. This experience taught me the value of patience, adaptability, and the universal language of kindness. It was a testament to the power of collaboration in the face of adversity.

One experience that stood out for me during this program was documenting two events for IRRI. This was a highlight of my volunteer experience as it provided an immersive insight into the organization's work on the ground. It was heartwarming to see the dedication of the IRRI team and the

impact they were making in local communities. Capturing these moments on camera reinforced my belief in the power of grassroots initiatives and the potential for change at a community level.

All the tasks demanded adaptability and resilience. Every part of the project brought its own set of challenges, but we, as a team, learned to embrace them as opportunities for growth. We adapted to new environments, embraced uncertainty, and pushed ourselves beyond our comfort zones. It was a reminder that personal growth often occurs outside of one's comfort zone.

One of the major takeaways from this summer was the significance of teamwork and encouraging each other. There were many days when I felt tested by the challenging circumstances, but the presence of my project partners, a supportive group of fellow Laidlaw scholars, and a positive and uplifting group of project heads from MakeSense Americas always inculcated the idea that no one is alone, and together, there is nothing impossible to overcome. This made me realize the importance of team morale and how impactful it can be to overcome any and all challenges that one might face during testing circumstances.

The impact of this volunteer experience extends beyond the tangible content we created, or the tasks we accomplished. It's about the connections we forged, the stories we shared, and the lives we touched. Through our work, we contributed to raising awareness about the vital work that IRRI does. We helped amplify their message and reach a wider audience. This experience solidified my belief in the power of collaboration and the potential for positive change when individuals and organizations come together for a common cause.