



Jyotsna Rathinam

GenNext Fellow Jyotsna Rathinam reflects on her incredible journey with her host organization, Save the Children, to attend their 2025 ECHO/HIP workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa.

During the week of November 11th, I had the wonderful opportunity to attend Save the Children's ECHO (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) HIP (Humanitarian Implementation Program) 2025 workshop in Johannesburg.

Over the course of the week, I was able to enrich my knowledge of humanitarian work as well as experience some of the fantastic aspects of Johannesburg. This four-day



Facilitators and workshop participants pose for a group photo.

workshop served to bring country office colleagues from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Madagascar, and Malawi together to brainstorm both anticipatory action and emergency response plans to climate disasters in the sectors of Education in Emergencies, Child Protection, and Mental Health and Psychosocial Services.

Prior to the workshop, I worked with my manager, Tamara Low, Senior Humanitarian Evidence and Learning Advisor and Head of Needs Assessments at Save the Children, to create country factsheets and analyze data collected from the four countries participating in the workshop.

This process was incredibly insightful, as I learned about how humanitarian organizations collect information on needs through children's consultations, key informant interviews, and household surveys, as well as the ethics and processes regarding quantitative and qualitative data.

**"...the trip was an incredible opportunity to learn more about the process of how humanitarian programs are designed and the people who spearhead them."**

This analysis and the resulting needs assessment report that was published, helped consolidate findings of the needs within the region.

During the workshop, I, alongside 12 other facilitators from around the world specializing in a plethora of humanitarian areas, worked together to present information, facilitate discussions, and brainstorm activities that could help country office colleagues decide the best steps forward and what to prioritize in the upcoming proposal season. My primary role was to take notes on the various sessions as well as help in organizational duties.

On the first day of the workshop, we went over the basics of ECHO HIP as well as the needs assessment findings. Country offices also prepared presentations on lessons learned to use as catalysts for new proposal ideas.

For example, Zimbabwe presented on a previously used multisectoral approach by integrating WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene), Nutrition, and Child Protection. Malawi presented on localization through working with local organizations, and Madagascar presented on Anticipatory Action including what should be the threshold to trigger a humanitarian response as well as what materials may be needed for that response.

Presentations were often broken up by discussions that were held either within each group's assigned table, which included a diversity of sectoral experts and country office colleagues, or within country office groups.

Many challenging questions were addressed, from how to engage local partners, to how to ensure gender equity in emergency responses.



*Beautiful views in Johannesburg*

Throughout the workshop, a variety of topics were discussed, from meaningful child participation, to Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA). While addressing often serious topics, the facilitators made sure to plan in fun ice breakers (and dance breaks) that allowed us to bond as a team to push through the long days.

The final two days focused more on the theory of change to achieve the desired outcomes for children as well as their communities, and solidifying ideas for responses within each country to include in the 2025 proposal.

While a busy and very jetlagged week, I still had time to indulge in some South African specialties (my favorite being the wine and seafood), take a bus tour to see the city highlights and learn about the country's rich and complex history, and visit a Sunday flea market with arts and crafts from local vendors.



*Sharing ideas following group table discussions during the workshop.*

Undoubtedly, the most memorable part remains bonding with colleagues from all over the world and hearing about their rich and unique experiences within the humanitarian field.

Overall, the trip was an incredible opportunity to learn more about the process of how humanitarian programs are designed and the people who spearhead them. I am incredibly grateful to be part of an organization full of talented and passionate individuals, and I look forward to engaging in similar experiences in the future.

