

The European Second-Generation Department's DONE program's first half year

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The ESGD (European Second-Generation Department) gap-year program DONE finished the first half of its 2018-2019 year in December. Five Second-Generation from the UK joined the program to participate in spiritual training, education and service projects.

S. Tohma, 18, first year:

"I decided to go on DONE, actually with no clear reason or motivation but I learnt that through workshops I could learn a lot and grow or improve myself in many ways, so I thought DONE might be the last push I needed.

The most valuable lesson I learnt was understanding my own value and my own beliefs; not values or beliefs determined by external influences. I learnt to think more carefully about what matters to me and what is better for me, not because someone else said so but because I came to that decision over a long period of time after reflecting deeply. I came to understand life and myself on a more internal deeper level rather than a superficial one that tends to affect me, still nowadays but now I realise what type of life is more important and truly fulfilling. Yet, I only realised this through honesty and confrontation, not just on DONE but also now, which I'm still struggling with, but it's always a good challenge.

DONE as a whole was what I guess I needed or feel like I was missing especially with my faith, values and spirituality and I feel it led me in a better direction, giving me meaningful reasons as to why I should practice a better lifestyle. Ultimately, it was a very balanced programme where I learnt life lessons, connected to other BCs, had leisure time and reflected deeply on myself to grow into a better person. Therefore, I really appreciate DONE and I think it helped me consolidate my values in the long-term, rather than the short-term.

I would definitely recommend DONE to others because I think it's a big stepping stone towards learning and practicing how to live a better and happier life."

C. McGuigan, 19, second year:

"STF did intimidate me. I liked the sound of DONE as it is more education focused. I also wanted to do something different from my brother. I found my reasons for going on DONE by going on the ODP+ workshop in the summer before the program started.

The most practical lesson I learnt from DONE was the habit of reflection. I now reflect everyday; it was very natural to pick-up. It helps me be more critical of how I live my life and helps me

realise what is valuable in life. I'm able to see how far I've come and it makes my days more valuable. Someone on DONE told me that: 'You only learn once you start reflecting'.

In terms of friendships on DONE, I've realised that once you learn to open up and recognise that we're all coming from the same place, then you can be yourself and free with these people. You want to be the best for these people.

From the position of a 2nd year, you are in a position where you want to encourage a certain environment and support that environment. On the other hand, it was important for me not to get too ahead of myself. At the start of DONE I thought: 'Where do I fit in here?' and 'How can I contribute in a meaningful way?'. I tried not to force friendships and relationships as it is more important to be free and real. In that way, friendships will come naturally. I realised that I can support people and do have things to say. I tried to practice Scott Peck's (author of *The Road Less Travelled*) concept of love which was: 'Love is being able to support someone's spiritual journey'. That was the main concept that I was trying to encourage.

To me, DONE is a long workshop that is too long not to matter or for it to be simply brushed off. For me, it gave me a bird's-eye view perspective on my life as well as the tools to be able to make changes to it."

V Raineri, 19, first year:

"I wanted to do a gap-year in the first place and Caleb suggested DONE. The application process was very introspective and made really look deeply into myself.

The most important lesson I learnt from DONE was learning to accept my more sensitive, emotional side. If you're sensitive, you have the ability to connect more to other people. I realised, that what I can give is valuable and worth expressing. Before, I couldn't accept myself as emotional but through DONE, I become more open to the sensitive aspects of myself. I've become more reflective and introspective to my day-to-day life.

Looking back, I was really shy. It takes time, but genuinely, by the end of DONE, you can talk to anyone. The environment is very unique in that way because of all the shared experiences we have together. You have to be able to express yourself freely to be happy, without being held back by anything. What is important is not getting lost in the environment of friendly friends, be to able recognise your own condition and talk to those who you trust and value. I realised that you can't be everyone's best friend; I've just got to be me. I learnt a great deal from sharing my heart with people who inspired me to be myself.

On DONE, we were told that DONE is for life. Meaning to inherit the DONE attitude, which is to be attentive to life. To see how, by paying attention to your actions and thoughts, you can change how you feel. By reflecting everyday, being attentive to your life, what went right or wrong, and making sure you pay attention to what is happening; this all results in being able to live life in the moment."

A warm congratulations to C. McGuigan, P. Dimbi, A. Marsh, S. Tohma and V. Raineri for completing the first half of DONE 2018-2019. All the best for DONE Mission One which begins in March 2019.

