Struggle and Reconciliation

Time over! The business proposal is ready. I am going back and forth in time. The last few weeks have been the hardest to me, not because of the proposal, but because of the 4-day war which distracted me from the proposal and from everything else in the world. I often sat in front of the computer with wet eyes, struggling hard with myself to concentrate on our teamwork. The war was not only between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. I had an internal war with myself: Armenian Girl struggling with Global Citizen. Armenian Girl was asking: “How can you work on a business proposal at a time when Azerbaijani armed forces are beheading your compatriots and mutilating even peaceful inhabitants?” Global Citizen was whispering softly: “Dry your eyes and get down to work.”

These 2 voices echoed in my ears over and over again and eventually merged into one. Armenian Girl and Global Citizen unanimously said: “Let’s make the world a better place.” I felt that Global Entrepreneurship Experience was all about making the world better not only for yourself but also for others. Still, I was not able to contribute actively to our teamwork during the first few days of April. Our teamwork was facilitated through Facebook, but the first thing I would see entering there was horrifying images illustrating war crimes by the Azerbaijani soldiers. Little by little I managed to pull myself together and started to devote quite a bit of my time to the business concept proposal. Deb Gilbertson was sending me emails with useful links and tips on a regular basis. Our team leader Abby was also very supportive. When our team were uncertain about what concept to choose, she organised online voting. So each team member could have their own say in the project from the very beginning. However, some of our teammates were rather inactive as a result of which we ended up with a smaller working team.

During the initial distribution of work, I pursued the duty of editing the proposal but later I also created the business timeline with goals and expected outcomes and wrote the executive summary. After reading the first draft, many things seemed vague to me and I posted questions in our GEEBiz group in Facebook. This was the first time I was initiating a group discussion. I had learnt from one of Deb’s emails that we could all pursue leadership roles at different stages of our teamwork, but I still wondered if Abby would be OK with my step. I did not want to appear as a self-proclaimed leader in her eyes. A bossy team leader would think I was stepping into her territory, but Abby thanked me for my contribution and was the first to answer the questions I had posted. She even suggested that I became the co-leader of our team, something I considered an honor. She has encouraged me so much. I also appreciate Moona’s and Darwin’s efforts. They were also friendly and open to discussions. I mostly communicated with them through posts and comments in our closed group. Abby and I were also exchanging private messages and became especially close during the last stages of teamwork.

The differences in time zones did not hinder our communication as we would work until 2-3 AM to be able to meet the deadline. Neither of us ever complained about this: we both realized that being a team leader entails increased responsibility. Besides working on our own sections, we also provided support and guidance to the others, and tried to improve the quality of the entire report. I shared journal requirements in our group and Abby posted a sample journal for our reference. We also shared our feedback on the draft with our teammates.

As regards technological challenges, some of us could not edit the draft proposal in Dropbox. Later I found out that the reason was that we had not verified our Dropbox accounts, but by that time we had already “migrated” to Google Docs, which was a better option.

Now that the contest is almost over, I feel more mature due to both my local and global experiences. Sometimes the slaps life gives us make us even stronger. I lost around 100 compatriots this month in our historical homeland Artsakh. Armenian soldiers fought heroically in the frontline. The war is not over yet, it’s just a ceasefire, but at least Armenian Girl has reconciled with Global Citizen.