

*The Graduate Program in International Political Economy
And Development ~ Fordham University*

Beyond Borders

Reports from IPED's International Peace & Development Fellows

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WHAT IS IPED'S INTERNATIONAL PEACE & DEVELOPMENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP?

All matriculated IPED students in good academic standing are invited to apply for IPED's International Peace & Development Travel Scholarships. Up to four are offered each year. Scholarship recipients spend six months at the conclusion of their studies working overseas with an international non-profit relief and development agency. For Spring 2011, these travel scholarships were in partnership with Catholic Relief Services. Students were assigned to East Timor, Ghana, and Sierra Leone.

Editorial Board

Katie Jajtner,
Editor and Designer

Michael Felix, Joshua Kyller,
and *Joseph Witiw,*
Contributors

Dr. Henry Schwalbenberg,
IPED program Director

Tel. 718.817.4064
Email: ipedjournal@fordham.edu
www.fordham.edu/iped



CRS Staff and Partners from Government of Ghana and National Catholic Secretariat. April

Michael Felix, CRS Ghana

As a Fordham Peace and Development Fellow working with CRS Ghana, I have had the great opportunity to work on a variety of development projects and assist in the provision of relief to victims of flooding and conflict. These have all been tremendous learning experiences.

When possible, CRS Ghana uses an innovative market-based approach to provide assistance to victims of natu-

ral disasters or humanitarian emergencies. In such cases, beneficiaries are typically given vouchers worth US \$50 to \$70 to use at a local market that is organized by CRS. Vendors are mobilized to accept voucher payment for a wide variety of predetermined items that vary depending on the nature of the emergency.

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IPED Fellow Joshua Kyller with CRS-TL Livelihoods Program Team (from left to right: Agus, Josh, Evalina, Heather, Isaac, and Alberto)

Joshua Kyller, CRS East Timor

I arrived in East Timor on the 2nd of February 2011 for the start of a six month internship working with the CRS/Timor Leste Livelihood Department thanks to an International Peace and Development Fellowship from Fordham University. In December I received a three-page scope of work while visiting CRS headquarters in Baltimore. Thus far, I have been pleasantly surprised to find that the work it described matches a good deal of my daily activities. I have had the opportunity to work on developing project proposals; help conduct a needs assessment for the Livelihoods Program via literature reviews and stakeholder interviews; and learn

a lot about CRS and Timor Leste in the process. In terms of looking at this opportunity through the lens of someone interested in starting a career in the field of development work—a field of such elusive and indeterminate parameters—this is certainly proving to be a fascinating place.

Interest in Timor by the outside world has been going on for centuries. It was a colony of Portugal; an occupied territory of Indonesia; and an official ward of the United Nations. Finally in 2002, it became the world's newest democracy with one of the highest rates of per capita aid inflows in the world. CRS first came to Timor in 1979 to provide humanitarian assistance and food aid

during Indonesian times. More recently, they have again worked in an emergency capacity in response to the outbreak of political violence—first in 1999 after the referendum on independence, and again in 2006, which led to many internal refugee camps on the outskirts of the capital Dili. While CRS still works on Peace Building and Governance as one of its main programs, they are starting to focus more on longer term development initiatives with two additional programs in health and livelihoods. My work has been mostly with the Livelihoods Program.

One of the reasons that livelihoods interventions are

getting more attention is due to the pressing and immediate needs in terms of food security and malnutrition in rural Timor. Additionally, much of the donor community seems to have realized that its failure to focus on shorter term interventions with immediate economic benefits for the most vulnerable populations led to the recurrence of violence in 2006. Currently half the population of Timor is under the age of 18, and youth unemployment numbers range around 40%. The country as a whole is a net importer of grain, and rural families on average spend three months

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Michael Felix, Ghana

In February 2011, I was part of one fair in Makongo, a fishing village on the shores of Lake Volta that had experienced severe flooding. During that fair, vendors offered staple foods, clothing, school supplies, building materials like cement and roofing sheets, as well as fishing nets. Continuing their support of CRS voucher fairs, Ghana Health Services also sent a representative to participate in the fair and accept voucher payment for national health insurance.

I was extremely impressed by the way in which the flood victims were able to use the assistance provided by CRS to respond to their

most pressing needs. Some needed to rebuild homes while others needed to reestablish fishing businesses. Many purchased one year's worth of health insurance, providing a safety net and a coping mechanism that up until that point had remained out of reach. When the fair ended, vendors were ecstatic that the equivalent of tens of thousands of dollars had been injected into the local economy.

In April 2011, CRS Ghana was asked by their traditional partner, the National Catholic Secretariat (NCS), to assist in establishing a temporary center for refugees fleeing political violence in Cote d'Ivoire. As a member of the CRS team, I went to Oseikojokrom, Ghana. I assisted in several logistical

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Joshua Kyller, East Timor

a year without enough food to eat. After subtracting oil revenues, Timor has the lowest GDP per capita in Asia. Finding ways to use the aid (and now oil) money to address these issues has made it to the top of everyone's priority list.

The project proposal that I have been working on is aimed at a donor from the US called Foods Resource Bank. CRS is hoping to implement a livelihoods project with the dual objectives of increasing maize yields of upland farmers and decreasing post-harvest losses. Current yields are some of the poorest in the world, and losses can count for up to 30% of annual maize harvests—hence the issue of food insecurity. The proposed project will use improved maize varieties (neither hybrid nor genetically modified organisms) to

increase yields and improved storage techniques to decrease losses. The writing process has been informative, but I am anxious for it to be submitted and for the real test—whether or not it gets funded.



WHAT IS IPED?

IPED stands for the International Political Economy and Development Program at Fordham University in New York City: a program that trains graduate students in the advanced interdisciplinary analysis of global economic relations and international development issues. Graduates frequently work as financial analysts in the private sector, economists and policy analysts in the public sector, and project managers in the non-profit sector.

*My experience as
a Peace and
Development
Fellow has been
an excellent
complement to
my academic
training at
Fordham
University*

tasks with the aim of providing a safe, healthy, and dignified refuge for victims of conflict. The strength of our team and our partners, including the Government of Ghana, NCS, and UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees), enabled us to quickly meet international standards for sanitation, water, hygiene, and shelter despite many difficulties.

Working in the midst of such professionalism and efforts to implement innovative programming has been the highlight of my work with CRS thus far. All in all, my experience as a Peace and Development Fellow has been an excellent complement to my academic training at Fordham University.

Joseph Witiw, CRS Sierra Leone

This week the Freetown office, which is normally buzzing with activity, went empty. The Global Fund Round 10 Field Assessment and the Partners' Justice Workshop commenced in the same week, forming a perfect storm. The Global Fund grant aims to fight malaria in Sierra Leone with the help of district health centers. CRS/SL will assess the centers' capacities for the project prior to implementation and budgeting. Meanwhile, the Partners' Justice Workshop tackles major issues of injustice in conjunction with church partners. Many staff dispersed to fulfill these tasks outside the city, while others remained behind faithfully supporting ongoing assignments.

After finalizing the assessment tools for the Global Fund teams, I left with our country representative and regional adviser on the strategic planning trip for the

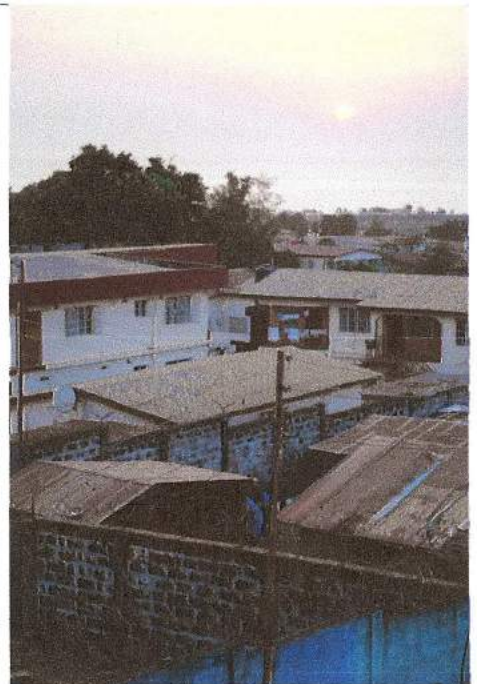
justice workshop. We joined the bishops, and Diocesan Caritas and justice & peace commission directors to discuss major issues of injustice that Sierra Leone faces in the coming five years.

Although we at CRS facilitated this workshop, it was a tremendous learning experience for us. We gathered and analyzed issues regarding justice and partnership. Ultimately the output of this workshop will be an issues paper that will guide our 5-year strategic plan. At another level however, the value lies in the strengthening of our partnerships as actors for justice in Sierra Leone.

This week summed up my responsibilities at CRS. I offer programmatic support and preparations for writing the Strategic Program Plan. In this instance, I drafted assessment tools and co-facilitated a workshop. In other

weeks, I am involved in different tasks to support CRS Sierra Leone. The dynamic of these two categories of tasks produces a tremendously fruitful learning experience. On one side I am able to work with project directors, producing documents, preparing for grant signing, creating tools and evaluations. On the other hand, I work with partners and staff to examine the injustices and issues of poverty and human rights in Sierra Leone and discuss how to best address them.

Even though the office in Freetown was relatively empty, Catholic Relief Services Sierra Leone was working as hard as ever. This has been a key week in securing a nation-wide Global Fund grant and developing our strategic plan which will endure in this office for the coming five years.



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FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

The Jesuit University of New York

The Graduate Program in International Political
Economy and Development
Fordham University—Dealy Hall E-517
441 East Fordham Road
Bronx, NY 10458, USA