



*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 Rwanda, Burkina Faso, and Sierra Leone.

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CRS Staff and Erin Atwell, left, in Rwanda.

Erin Atwell, CRS Rwanda

Imagine vulnerable Rwandan farmers, many who lost immediate family in the 1994 genocide and live on less than \$1.25 a day PPP. Imagine integrated project interventions that address food availability, access, and use. Now, imagine iPods. In current CRS (Catholic Relief Services) Rwanda programming, new technologies function alongside project interventions. While some of my own family in the United States may not be comfortable navigating an iPod Touch, CRS Field Agents, who come from rural

areas of Rwanda with little to no education, are using iPods to collect valuable information on CRS project beneficiaries.

In March 2012, CRS/Rwanda hosted the annual CRS ICT4D (Information and Communication Technologies for Development) conference in Kigali. As an International Peace and Development Fellow from the Fordham IPED program, I was given the opportunity to participate in this conference and to learn about the current use of technology

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IPED Fellow Emily Groene with CRS Global Fellow seminarians.

Emily Groene, CRS Burkina Faso

The hope for Burkina Faso lies with its children and the institutions that work to increase access to and improve the quality of education. “Beog Biiga,” “Tomorrow’s Child,” is a Food for Education (FFE) program sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that focuses on improving food security while increasing educational opportunities. In order to meet its objectives, Beog Biiga seeks a multifaceted approach. This includes improving the school environment, health and nutrition, gender equality, and community and governmental capacity by providing meals to students attending school. The desire is to improve overall school enrollment and attendance.

As an intern with the International Peace and Development Fellowship, my responsibility is to support the FFE program. This opportunity has allowed me to utilize my familiarity with educational programs to create training materials as well as facilitate trainings of animators in the areas of mentorship, inclusive education, participatory learning, and early childhood development. Furthermore, after learning about challenges specific to the area I worked in, I was able to collaborate with my colleagues to introduce new techniques suitable to the local context. In addition to working with our staff, I’ve had the chance to collaborate with our partners at the Ministry of National Education and Literacy (MENA) and visit teachers in the field to encourage their work in school health, hygiene and nutrition.

In order to demonstrate the impact of the program, the FFE team is required to gather data on health and education indicators daily. These indicators include: student enrollment, commodity consumption, vitamin supplementation, and daily attendance for 130,000 students in remote villages of the program area. To help aid the data gathering process, I developed and managed the implementation of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data collection system using ICT4D, an information and communication device used in the development field. Using iFormBuilder software, I prepared a system for mobile data entry using iTouch devices and trained a team of 11 data collectors.

With the use of the M&E system the FFE team was able to successfully collect and analyze all relevant data used for our final report. This process was a great learning opportunity for everyone involved and by adjusting the strategy as needed throughout the program; we were able to meet our objectives.

The greater tasks of responding to food crises and ensuring educational opportunities remain high priorities for Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Burkina Faso. An example of this is the quick response by CRS Burkina Faso in delivering food supplies to refugees escaping the crisis in neighboring Mali, a result of a recent coup. This example highlights one of CRS’s

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Emily Groene, Burkina
Faso*

strengths, it's ability to quickly transition from development work to disaster relief when the occasion calls for it. I'm grateful for this introduction to CRS's work, and I find on an everyday basis that the IPED degree has prepared me well to help meet the needs of the organization. ■

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.

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Erin Atwell, Rwanda*

in the development sector. I learned about using iPods at small animal and seed fairs for accountability, mobile phone technology to share market prices and manage financial transactions, geographic information systems for beneficiary mapping, and the multitude of public and private-sector actors who are available to partner with CRS in delivering high-quality development interventions.

Since arriving at CRS/Rwanda in January 2012, technology as a development tool has marked all of my activities. One project in which I was actively involved was a Green Mountain Coffee Roasters livelihoods intervention that supports coffee farmers who own 200 or fewer coffee trees. As part of this initiative, farmers form Farmer Groups and receive

training on bio-intensive agriculture techniques for food crops and improved methods for producing quality coffee plants. Additionally, they receive what has become the trademark integrated model of CRS/Rwanda. This includes nutrition interventions through Positive Deviance/Hearth groups focusing on the use of locally produced food, and SILC training, a community-based micro-finance approach. Additionally, CRS programs always stress the importance of peer to peer knowledge exchange in order to insure the viability of the program long after any relief organization has left.

We knew that rigorous monitoring and evaluation would be critical in assessing the outcomes of the project. Instead of dealing with lengthy physical questionnaires that may get lost or be completed incorrectly, we chose to train rural

field agents on the use of iPods as a data collection tool. The use of iPods by field agents has resulted in saving time and money as the data is now collected electronically.

Once baseline data on these farmers was collected, I used statistical analysis software, specifically SPSS Statistics, to analyze the data and develop a baseline report.

The use of sophisticated analysis tools is increasingly recognized as vital to CRS/Rwanda's monitoring and evaluation systems. To that end, in June 2012 CRS/Rwanda hosted a SPSS Statistics training to ensure that key staff members have the capacity to use this software.

Beginning in September, I will continue my work with Catholic Relief Services as an International Development Fellow in Burundi, where I will focus

on agriculture and peace building. The Fordham University fellowship has served as an important introduction to CRS and to the realities of a career in international development. It has equipped me with important skills and experiences. Additionally, I am now prepared to be an advocate for integrating technology into development programming to ensure efficient and effective interventions. ■

"I find that the IPED degree has prepared me well to meet the needs of the organization."

-Emily Groene

Emily MacGruder, CRS Sierra Leone

Serving as an International Peace and Development Fellow in Sierra Leone, I have had the opportunity to work on multiple projects during my four month fellowship, but there is one project specifically that highlights the work and progress I have experienced while serving in Sierra Leone, the Quality Circles project.

The Quality Circles project is an operational research project being implemented in the Kailahun district of Sierra Leone. This district was one of the areas most affected by the decade-long civil war. In a country that consistently ranks as one of the worst in terms of maternal, infant and child mortality rates; the Kailahun district sits as the worst in Sierra Leone. The Quality Circles project seeks to address the conditions that lead to these deaths by developing “Change Ideas” through the collaboration of traditional birth attendants and public health staff. These “Change Ideas” are concepts locally designed in order to address problems that afflict specific areas.

Due to the nature and design of the Quality Circles program there is a need for a robust M&E system. My introduction to the project began before the development of the M&E system and therefore I was able to lead the project. This entailed creating



“This experience with CRS has greatly increased my understanding of what’s required for quality project management...”

-Emily MacGruder

The CRS West Africa Regional Director, Sierra Leone Country Representative, and Emily MacGruder (left) with the District Medical Officer and his staff in Kailahun, Rwanda.

the data collection and analysis tools necessary to capture the established performance and impact indicators. This opportunity also allowed me to document the learning process of the project. In addition to the creation of the M&E system I was able to facilitate trainings for field agents on the proper use of M&E tools, techniques for facilitating the advancement of “Change Ideas” in each of their areas, as well as coordinating the visits of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) West Africa regional staff to the project.

After completing the design of the M&E system for the Quality Circles project I was asked to coordinate an M&E audit which involved advisors from CRS headquarters as well as the regional office. This has afforded me the opportunity to learn more about CRS M&E standards and tools used in the audits of individual projects. As a result of this audit I have been assigned to travel to other regional offices in Sierra Leone to assist staff on a food for education and a food & security project. I feel my experience from

the Quality Circles project as well as my exposure to the M&E advisors has greatly assisted in realizing the proper methods needed in order to have a successful monitoring and evaluation project.

This experience with CRS has greatly increased my understanding of what’s required for quality project management and its success in regards to M&E. I am excited to use the knowledge and experiences gained from this opportunity in future employment with CRS.



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