



BEYOND BORDERS

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Fordham University's Graduate Program in International Political Economy and Development trains graduate students in the advanced interdisciplinary analysis of global economic relations and international development issues. Graduates frequently pursue professional careers in global finance, international economic policy, global environmental policy, and in international relief and development.

Beyond Borders shares the experiences of IPED students who had undergone internships with Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Over the course of the summer, interns are assigned to the development projects of CRS abroad where they gain invaluable experience in international, relief, humanitarian aid and development.

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Alumna Elizabeth Pfifer leads CRS Uganda

Elizabeth R. Pfifer, IPED class of 2008, has always been drawn to service work. From a young age, she got involved in volunteering and that continued into high school and through college. After graduating, she served as a Jesuit Volunteer in Tanzania for two years, and was exposed to rural, poor, vulnerable populations in need. She developed a strong interest in development work and wanted to continue working overseas to help.

Now, Ms. Pfifer serves as the Country Representative for Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Uganda. "I love my work," shares Pfifer, explaining what a bonus is it to have work that "helps people in need and is personally fulfilling."

Thus far, Pfifer has worked with CRS for over a decade in Africa, including positions in Madagascar, Niger, Tanzania, and now in Uganda. In her current role as Country Representative, she is responsible for providing leadership in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as new business development. In this position, she also acts as the primary liaison between CRS and government officials, donors, and the local Catholic Church in Uganda.

Initially, Ms. Pfifer was hired to serve as the Country Manager for CRS Uganda, but was quickly promoted to Country Representative after winning a large \$40 million contract with USAID to support orphans and vulnerable children and youth in 17 districts of Uganda. It is no surprise that since her arrival in 2013, she has successfully increased the country program's annual budget by a factor of 7.

In recognition of her many accomplishments, on March 8th of this year, Ms. Pfifer returned to Fordham University to receive the 2017 Swanstrom-Baerwald Award for her "Excellence in the Service of Faith through the Promotion of International Peace and Development." After the ceremony's opening prayer, Archbishop Bernardito Auza, S.T.D., apostolic nuncio



and permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations remarked: "In honoring Liz, we honor all of those who, like her, have dedicated and continue to dedicate their time, talent, and passion to those in need."

When asked about what type of impact she makes, or hopes to make with her work, Ms. Pfifer replied that "sometimes it is hard to measure the impact of our work," explaining how the true impact of programs might not be felt for months, a year, or longer. "But to know that we are doing small things that can make a lasting difference is gratifying and humbling" said Pfifer.

Indeed, her humility shone through. In Uganda, their program specifically targets the most vulnerable people, and last year alone, in a country of 39 million people, CRS helped over 1 million men, women and children. Pfifer has also been very successful in integrating innovative private sector solutions into traditional development programs, such as agriculture and microfinance. She helped establish local partnerships between banks and telecoms, and is currently implementing a project with Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream through CRS'

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Armand Aquino helps improve livelihoods in Burkina Faso



Armand Aquino (center) posing with the pupils of a primary school in Nesenatenga in the province of Sanmatenga, Burkina Faso.

For the first half of 2017, I served as an intern with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. CRS, or locally known as Cathwel, has been helping the people of Burkina Faso in improving their lives and livelihoods for nearly 60 years. Currently, they have projects in various sectors including education, agriculture, health, and savings-led microfinance, among others.

As an intern, I support two main functions within the organization: the implementation of the Food for Education (FFE) program as well as working with their Business Development Unit.

The FFE program, known as Beoog Biiga in Morée language (or “Children of

Tomorrow”), is a project funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that aims to improve the quality of primary education in the two provinces of Bam and Sanmatenga. The program has multiple activities including provision of lunches to students and take-home rations to girls, training the teachers and school administrators in recent pedagogic techniques, community awareness building on the importance of education, administration of deworming drugs and vitamin supplements, among others.

As a program intern to Beoog Biiga, I support the needs of the project managers. The work included translating and writing one-page briefs and donor reports as well as

the preparation of a presentation on the program for an international conference. I also had the opportunity to work on a study of the effects of artisanal gold mining in education. Child labor in artisanal gold mining is a problem in the area of intervention of Beoog Biiga as it takes time and energy away from children that should be spent on education. Two IPED courses in particular, Project Assessment and Community Economic Development, were helpful in understanding the nuances of this study.

The Business Development Unit in Burkina Faso is also gearing up to prepare a number of proposals for upcoming funding opportunities. Currently, I am working with the team on two upcoming proposals in the field of agriculture and education. As an intern, I perform research to support and provide comments on the design of the projects, including sustainability and exit strategies. Fortunately, the discussions from Dr. Schwalbenberg’s Foreign Aid and Development class served as a good background for me to jumpstart work on these project proposals.

Overall, CRS Burkina Faso has been very welcoming and my stay with them has truly been fruitful, learning a lot and forging friendships along the way. Moreover, the patience and warm hospitality of Burkinabés has made my stay all the more enjoyable. Finally, I am immensely grateful to Fordham IPED’s support these past few years to make this opportunity possible. I feel that this is just the beginning of a career – a life, rather – lived in service.



Armand Aquino (IPED 2017) with a stockpile of bulgur from USDA for CRS' Food for Education program in Burkina Faso.

Kathryn McCann works on public health with CRS Guinea

The CRS Guinea Country Program has a portfolio of projects mainly focused on public health and health systems strengthening. In the wake of Ebola, funding became available to fortify the public and private health sectors against future shocks. As a MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning) Intern, I get to work on the MEAL activities connected to a variety of different projects including a World Bank funded malaria prevention and neglected tropical disease eradication program (OMVS) in Upper Guinea, and a USAID funded peacebuilding project (Cultural Cohesion for Peace and Prosperity, 2C2P) in Conakry and Upper Guinea.

With each of these projects, I have participated in the creation of M&E tools and learning documents, trainings of trainers, baseline studies, and data analysis workshops. All activities are carried out in coordination with our local partners at OCPH (Caritas Guinea), civil society organizations, the Ministry of Health, and WANEP (West African Network of Peacebuilding). During these field visits, I was able to see most of the regions of Guinea.

Most recently, I had the opportunity to attend the CRS Global Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) Workshop hosted in Dakar, Senegal. I was asked to write the report of the workshop which will be used to form an agency-wide strategy for HSS. During the workshop, I created a SWOT



Kathryn McCann (left) with the President and CEO of Catholic Relief Services, Sean Callahan.

analysis used by all participants to propose a HSS vision, priorities, and pathways to becoming a global leader in the field.

Throughout my time here I have drawn on the skills I developed at IPED. Of course, the tools and skills from the Project Management Track have been extremely useful, but I have also drawn on skills and

topics covered in Community Economic Development, Conflict Resolution, and Foreign Aid and Development- not to mention my French training, both at Fordham and with Alliance Française!

I am extremely grateful for the foundation and support IPED has provided to prepare me for a career in international development. A fellow student, Pathé Bah, and I have continued the debate from our *Politics of Global Economic Relations* course about the role of multinational corporations and foreign aid in international development. We have yet to reach a consensus!

International Peace and Development Travel Scholarship

All matriculated IPED students in good academic standing are invited to apply for IPED's International Peace and Development Travel Scholarships. Up to four scholarships 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 2017, two travel scholarships were awarded in partnership with Catholic Relief Services. Students were assigned to Burkina Faso and Guinea.



Kathryn McCann (right) during a data analysis workshop for the Senegal River Basin Development Organization (OMVS) project.

Elizabeth Pfifer, Uganda

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global Producer Development Initiative. Very recently, under Ms. Pfifer's leadership, CRS began responding to the South Sudanese refugee crisis in northern Uganda by providing life-saving access to water and sanitation at Bidibidi Camp, the largest refugee settlement in the world.

In speaking about how her time at Fordham helped with her career, Pfifer explained how the IPED program "provides practical opportunities for students to use the theory and project management skillset developed in the classroom out in the real world." She also noted how IPED provides financial support for language study, which gave her the opportunity to spend a summer in Burkina Faso to study French and learn about emergency programming with a large INGO. Pfifer then commented on the strength of the relationships in her cohort, and the IPED alumni network: "I still am very close with many of my classmates. It is like a little graduate program family."

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Pfifer shared some inspiring words regarding her work: "It isn't about what I have done as an individual. It is about working with others who have similar goals. It is about inspiring others to walk the same path. And it is about leaving the world a little better than how we found it. If we could all do this, I can only imagine the impact we could have, and how much better off future generations would be."

There is no doubt that future generations will be better off as a result of the impassioned work of Ms. Elizabeth Pfifer.



Elizabeth Pfifer (center) receives the 2017 Swanstrom-Baerwald Award at Fordham on March 8th, 2017. (Photo credit: Bruce Gilbert)



Elizabeth Pfifer (third from left) on the banks of Lake Victoria, source of the Nile River.



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