IED Alum Takes Learning Abroad

Van Credle, a 2014 graduate of the IED Program, is the current Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant for Community Cohesion Initiative at the International Organization for Migration in Kabul, Afghanistan. Van discovered the job through her internship at the American Red Cross, which she began while in her final semester of the IEDM program. Her position isn’t typical Monitoring and Evaluation, as Afghanistan is considered a "transitioning state" and conflicts are frequent. Therefore, standard methods for monitoring and evaluation aren’t applicable because of too many external factors.

Van was brought on to help with writing final evaluation reports for the initiative’s activities. They provide small grants to work in communities that are more affected by conflict, such as a girls’ school that they funded to refurbish, or a winter package project through which they helped fund packages for the very poor to help them through winter with charcoal, blankets, and other items.

“...I hope that this work can help the state towards stability, but on the small scale, we’re helping kids feel safer about going to school, rebuilding roads so people have better access to medical care, and supporting events that recognize the importance of women.”

- Van Credle
IEDM alum

Continued on page 7
Mr. Daniel Runde, Director of the Project on Prosperity and Development at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) shares his perspectives and dialogues with students about opportunities in global development.

Leaders in Development

“The world is changing in all kinds of positive ways. We, the United States, want to participate in the shared opportunity that is development,” remarked Daniel Runde, Director of the Project on Prosperity and Development at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) at the weekly Leaders in Development Seminar. Mr. Runde, who in 2010 was named one of “40 under 40 in International Development in Washington” by the Devex Group, discussed the dramatic shift in how developed countries have engaged with developing countries over the last 50 years.

By considering the role of official development assistance and private enterprise, we can identify opportunities to make a difference. Globalization can be a positive force for development because of its ability to connect economies to global supply chains. By resetting social contracts, considering the role of taxes and governments that are willing to make the changes needed, and using trade as a platform for development, we can connect people to the positive side of globalization.
Dr. Cruz-Zuniga Presents Impact in Nigeria

In January 2015, Dr. Martha Cruz-Zuniga, Chair of the Integral Economic Development Program, traveled to Lagos, Nigeria, to present her current work on evaluating teachers' training using an integral approach to impact evaluation. The research, a joint project of Dr. Cruz-Zuniga, Mary-Ann Walker of Development Research and Projects Centre, and Modupe Adefeso-Olateju of the Education Partnership Centre, was published as "The Role of Research in Teacher Training and Development: Case Studies from Nigeria."

The convening was organized by the Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE), a funder collaborative that seeks to increase secondary education access and improve learning outcomes for marginalized populations.

The Partnership is led by a group of private donors which includes the MacArthur Foundation, The MasterCard Foundation, Human Dignity Foundation, and the Intel Foundation. It funds local interventions that accelerate innovation, support evidence-based policy reforms, and capture and disseminate learnings to key stakeholders. The general goal of the convening was to share knowledge and experiences, discuss best practices, and encourage peer-to-peer collaborations.
Civic Education Programming in Saudi Arabia

In December 2014, students Huda Alahmdi and Omar Fallatah traveled to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, for their Applied Research Project. There, they ran trial experiments to test modifications to the civic education program in Saudi Arabia’s elementary schools. The modifications were designed to make the civic and social education program more effective based on a proactive learning process, rather than the usual routine lecturing that is common. The proposed modifications included values regarding human dignity and social and civic responsibility such as solidarity, work ethic, and tolerance. Some values were present in the curriculum but needed to be taught more effectively, while others were entirely absent. The new curriculum focuses on building relative exercises for each value and drawing a framework to help the teacher engage the students in their learning process, and to apply that value in their community (school, home, neighborhood).

The experiment included stages for different scenarios, and each stage contained answers that were ordered from most passivity to most proactivity. Since Huda and Omar were seeking to change behavior into more socially responsible behavior, they monitored closely the reaction of some of the students when a particular situation required more compassion.

One of the difficulties Huda and Omar found was convincing the students not to select the “optimal” answer, but rather to answer truthfully about what they are doing in real life.

Continued on next page
This is a learned behavior; in the schools, they are taught there is only one correct answer and they need to choose it or risk angering the teacher. This led students to hide their true feelings and actions and diminished the discussion that children in this age group need to have to open their horizons gradually. One positive outcome: some of the teachers started to be more lenient with the students while attending the experiment.

Huda hopes to increase the children’s sense of responsibility, stating that they are the leaders of the future. She also hopes that the empirical results of the trial, once compiled and analyzed, will motivate another large-scale experiment in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia to continue fostering social and civic responsibility among the youth.

Impact evaluations such as this have the ability to provide a more holistic understanding of the impact not only on the individual, but also on the community and society as a whole. At the same, these evaluations identify areas in which existing programs can be strengthened and help to increase the overall effectiveness.

“It gave me the opportunity to be in the field and to gain experience; touching students' lives and seeing their excitement and interaction was a great blessing. To me, this was an early indicator that the proposed modifications will make a change.”

- Huda Alahmdi

Omar presents his proposed project and seeks faculty approval.
New Student Highlights

Many students joined the program this semester, contributing their talents and experience. Here we highlight two of them.

Ana Maria Hernandez works in a camp for handicapped orphan children in Haiti. She has been with the organization for the past 3 years and plans to develop educational plans and create a project to enable the participants in the program to support themselves. Ana graduated from Queens University of Charlotte in 2008 with a degree in American Studies. She completed a six month internship in Valencia, Spain, with an event and marketing agency. After working in the non-profit sector for over three and a half years, she realized she needed additional knowledge and tools to achieve her dreams and enrolled in the IED Program.

Lissette Escobar is a current sophomore honors International Economics and Finance major, Mathematics minor, in the IEDM 5th-Year Program. Currently, she is a member of the Business Professional Society, Students for Life, and a tutor for the Center of Academic Success. Having an interest in integral development with a focus in Latin American countries, this program best fits her future prospects. Having the chance to continue her studies in DC, the Mecca of international relations, is a unique learning opportunity that enables networking, involvement in the workplace, and an overall diverse experience. In addition, remaining at The Catholic University of America will permit her to develop her craft alongside Catholic core values.
In her current position, Van leads the Monitoring and Evaluation unit alongside a local colleague, and remotely manages field staff who monitor the projects, develops M&E plans for all activities, and reports on individual project activities as well evaluates the program against its goals. “My colleagues in the field have told me that in some villages, even though the committees tried to select those who were most in need, the people who received blankets and coal shared these items among other villagers that they also knew were in need,” states Van. “I think it's amazing to hear how people who have so little, and have many reasons to not trust each other, can still support each other when it's needed.”

*Working in a conflict area is difficult because there are a lot of external factors, in this case terrorism, which can affect development significantly more than any program. However, the aim is to find a window of opportunity, in this case the election of Ashraf Ghani and the formation of a new government, and capitalize on change that is already occurring.*

Van states that the most helpful knowledge she gained during her studies was survey design: “The Community Cohesion Initiative has been using only qualitative data to evaluate its programming, but I was allowed to design a survey to evaluate a series of projects in order to gain quantitative information for analysis to use in our reports.”

Van offers the following to current students: “My advice is to really take initiative and find opportunities that they want. I spent a lot of time networking at events, attending conferences, and getting my internships because I knew I was interested in working in conflict areas. The IED Program gave me a start by opening different opportunities (Leaders in Development seminars, Devex membership, paying for conference fees), but those really don't help unless you talk to people and tell them what you want.”
Sustainable Development, Human Focus

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