



Emerging Ideas

The Newsletter of The International
Development Studies Program

IDS Director's Message



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How time flies! The academic year of 08-09 is nearly over and again it is time for us to look back and see how IDS has fared over the past year. We have so much to celebrate as I believe that IDS has been on the right track in achieving its objectives. One of the notable achievements was our field trip to New York City for visiting the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and other development-related organizations. As you will find in this newsletter, our students who participated in the trip all indicated that it was indeed an exciting and rewarding experience. Now IDS has finally achieved what was initiated three years ago: alternating between Washington, D.C. and New York City in conducting the field trip each year, thanks to the special research-travel fund that has made all this possible. In addition, over the past year, IDS continued to support our students with our travel awards, which are used to subsidize curriculum-related activities such as summer or winter internships, study-abroad programs, and field trips for thesis data collection. As always, IDS is strongly committed to its mission, helping our students learn as much as they can and get themselves fully ready for their future career development.

As I am writing this end-of-year message and saying farewell to the IDS graduating cohort, I also see myself stepping down as the program director. I can hardly believe that four years have passed so quickly since I assumed this position. I want to take this opportunity to thank my dear colleagues -- all IDS-affiliated faculty members -- for their generous collaboration and assistance over the past four years. Their contributions have significantly helped to build IDS into a dynamic and promising interdisciplinary program. I also want to take this opportunity to extend my warm welcome and best wishes to my successor, Dr. Tom Smucker. I believe that he will take IDS to the higher level of progress.

Jieli Li

EMERGING IDEAS

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A group of the IDS Students in front of the United Nations Headquarters in New York City.



Two “Aha!” Moments in NYC

By: Lilia Krasteva

UNDP was impressive as it greatly enhanced my understanding of how the most decentralized subsidiary of the UN can work on the ground. I was impressed to learn that their local offices have as a first mission capacity building, and they are working in tight connection with the government of the host country. More than just advising and providing guidelines to the public executives, UNDP is collaborating with them on a democratic and pluralistic basis, so that adequate problem-analysis and a strategy for sustainable development is elaborated. The presenters said something that, for me, was illuminating. We learned that UNDP Poverty Reduction team works to build the capacity of developing nations so that they may bring to the WTO not only their demands but also potential solutions to their economic challenges.



The visit to MADRE was the other “aha” moment for me. This NGO’s mission is to advocate for human rights and adequate resource distribution for women. The organization is working mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean. One aspect of MADRE’s approach that I found to be the most important for their result-generating strategy is what the organization does on the ground. They find local NGOs, discuss their needs and provide connections to grant-makers. More specifically, MADRE acts as a de-facto grant-seeker on behalf of organizations that do not have the resources or capacity to do this for themselves. Thus, MADRE’s strategy aims to eliminate the lack of receptivity and cultural barriers that international NGOs face in local communities. In this sense, MADRE has a dual impact: it provides resources for immediate problem – solving on the ground, and supports local NGOs. Overall, MADRE develops the agency of local civil society.

IDS Takes on the Big Apple

By: Nickie Sene (Tamny)

During the IDS trip to NYC this Spring I feel like we all learned as much about and from each other as we did from the organizations we visited. The overall consensus throughout the briefings and meetings seemed to be that the economic crisis has created hiring freezes across sectors making getting a job even more difficult in the already competitive field of development. Yet, all was not gloomy, as organizations promised that if you are willing to start out in low-level positions or as volunteers and interns, things tend to usually work out. Although these messages were difficult to accept, it was refreshing to receive an honest portrayal of development agencies’ realities.



My favorite parts of the trip were a crazy hour long L train ride with Ifoda, Mitch, Jenny and Christine to a Russian/Uzbek restaurant and an impromptu trip to the Natural History Museum. All in all, the trip was a useful taste of what awaits us in this troubling job market and strengthened bonds between us, which will hopefully become useful network later on when we meet again in the field.

Making Connections

By: Christine Leistner

The trip to New York was not only a useful way to make contacts in the competitive working force of International Development, but also a bonding experience for the entire group. We were able to share our ideas and understandings about the world and development. Our group never gets a chance to be together for an extended period of time, so the New York trip was an excellent way to become more familiar with my fellow colleagues.

I always enjoy visiting New York; there is a certain flair that dances on the street at nighttime. During the day we were able to visit many impressive development organizations. Being a part of this program allowed us to ask any sort of question to people who actively work in our field today. I found it truly exciting to learn about the types of projects that these organizations conduct. This field is extremely alive and exciting; we are lucky to be a part of it. I think the trip to New York connected us with an awareness of the career possibilities that will be available in our future.



Appreciating UNDP's Anti-Poverty Mandate

By: Ifoda Abdurazakova

Our trip to United Nations Development Programme Headquarters in New York City was a fascinating experience. From the beginning it was obvious that everyone was nervous not knowing what might happen in the place where the world leaders decide challenging issues affecting the lives of millions of people. However, experts from the UNDP HQ Office Ms. Uyanga Gankhuayag and Ms. Luciana Mermet showed the real work of UNDP's fight to eradicate poverty in the world. We were briefed and introduced to the aspects of human development and poverty reduction strategies that are being implemented at UNDP.

According to the presenters, the UNDP's mandate is derived from the need for poverty eradication, which is interlinked with socio-economic problems and multi-government responses in terms of fiscal policy, trade and industrialization. The UNDP has taken a leading role in implementing the Millennium Development Goal agenda set by national government leaders in 2000. In order to achieve progress in developing parts of the world, UNDP aims to increase the capacity of governments to design their development strategies, elaborate MDG-consistent fiscal and macroeconomic policies, monitor Millennium Development Goals progress and provide empowering opportunities for poor and disadvantaged people.



The lively discussion with UNDP experts lasted for more than two hours and created plenty of opportunities to challenge our knowledge about UNDP's role in poverty reduction.

I am confident that the IDS professional trip to New York City created many opportunities to integrate our knowledge of development theory with the practicalities of working in the development sphere.

Advocating for Social Change

By: Lauren Young

Among the amazing organizations we visited in New York City this year were MADRE and Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO). Both are international organizations that advocate for women's rights in global policy. MADRE's current program areas are women's health and combating violence against women, economic and environmental justice, and peace building. MADRE partners with sister organizations throughout the world to meet immediate needs, advocate for human rights, and educate the public. WEDO's initiatives encompass climate change, corporate accountability, UN reform, and women's political participation and leadership. WEDO carries out these initiatives through coordinating political action, building broad alliances with other like-minded groups, conducting and applying pioneering research, and connecting global policy work to local and regional advocacy efforts.



Both of these organizations primarily accomplish their goals through advocacy and partnership. We had previously visited organizations in Washington, D.C. and New York City that were either implementing agencies or donor organizations. This was my first look at the important role of advocacy in the realm of international development. These two organizations work to bring about social change by advocating for individuals and sister organizations in the global south that do not have the political clout or resources to advocate for themselves on such a large scale. MADRE and WEDO are also able to raise funds for important projects by drawing upon plentiful local resources for the benefit of women worldwide.

Most importantly, our trip to New York City reminded me of how incredible our student body is. I may never again have the opportunity to wander the streets of the Big Apple with such a diverse, bright, accepting, caring, and utterly vibrant group of friends. I will miss you all.

Keeping Up the Fight

By: Jenny McArdle

It was most refreshing to go to New York, in the midst of a devastating economic crisis, and see that there are still dedicated development practitioners and organizations who are keeping up the fight. Even through the turmoil and uncertainty that we are experiencing domestically, there are still battles being waged and won every day lifting people out of poverty, helping children, empowering women, and improving the standards of living for the world's most impoverished and vulnerable people. All of the organizations that we visited are involved in honorable work. Not only was it uplifting to see the work that they are doing, but also to see how much knowledge, creativity, experience, and wisdom the students from the OU IDS program possess. So, it was a joy to know that no matter how bad things might get, there are going to be fantastic people working to make things better. The New York trip really brought this point home for me.



This Summer I will be.....



“conducting my field research for my thesis in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania”

- Faishol Adib



“conducting research on deaf children in China for my thesis.”

- Xiu Mao

“starting a dual degree in Economics here at Ohio University.”

- Daniel Kanyam



“participating in OU’s HIV/AIDS in Africa program in Botswana then possibility doing an internship in Portland with African Sports Outreach.”

- Jenny McArdle



“conducting research in Columbus about the diaspora of Liberia for my thesis on land and reconciliation in Liberia.”

- Siphokazi Magadla



“conducting field research in northern Benin for my thesis on sexual harassment and gender-based violence in northern Beninese secondary schools.”

- Nickie Sene

“interning at the United Nations Headquarters in New York”

- Ifoda Abdurazakova



“working on my thesis and will graduate by the end of August”

- Vonchanh Indavong



Second Year Students' Plans

After graduation I will be...

"in Haiti working on reinforcing a grassroots NGO that work on population issues. I will spend part of the summer working with GYLC as a Faculty Advisor."



- Frednel Isma

"working as a social worker for senior citizens Japan."

- Hisako Inomata



"working as a program assistant to Boston University's study abroad program in Niger."

- Mitch Boutin



"interning for 'Project to End Human Trafficking' in Pittsburgh as a research analyst until October 2009 when I will return home."

- Hend Irhiam

Congratulation Station

IDS would like to congratulate...

Damion Croston, a second-year IDS student, and his organization, Planting Empowerment, for winning at UNPD SEED Award! Damion and his colleagues were one of 20 groups selected for an award out of over 1,100 applicants.

Lilia Krasteva, a first-year IDS student, on receiving a nationally competitive Philanthropic Educational Organization Scholarship.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the New IDS Director Dr. Tom Smucker and extend our appreciation to Dr. Jieli Li for his service as IDS Director. We wish him well in his future endeavors.