

Beverley Catlett
Episcopal Relief & Development Internship 2015

Episcopal Relief & Development is an international relief and development agency and a “compassionate response to human suffering” on behalf of the Episcopal Church. This international non-governmental organization has its headquarters in Manhattan, New York, and with the help of its supporters works in over 40 countries worldwide to alleviate hunger, create economic opportunities, promote health and fight disease, respond to disasters, and strengthen and rebuild communities worldwide.

As a summer intern for the marketing and communications department, I prepared press releases, updated information on the organization’s web page, gathered information on current events - including the Charleston shooting, burning of churches across the United States, and impact of Cyclone Komen in Burma Myanmar - via the agency’s various social media platforms. In doing so, I honed my writing skills and developed a more journalistic, less prosaic style than I had become accustomed to using in my classes as an English major. My experience editing and writing reports helped me to become more direct and precise in my writing and forced me to consider different audiences to which I was catering when I prepared to present an issue. I also gained an immense amount of knowledge about current and past struggles with disease, disaster and more in countries that I was unaware existed. One of my major projects as a summer intern was to update the website’s country pages, each of which describes in detail for potential donors the work being done in the 40 countries Episcopal Relief & Development targets with its programs. In doing so, I read through detailed reports of programs underway in each country as of 2015 and learned of a number of ongoing issues that I otherwise never would have known were still prominent in the world. I also prepared several press releases – the most extensive of which focused on the ongoing conflict in Syria and ISIS’s persecution of religious minorities, which has led to the largest forced migration since World War II – and published them to various

platforms, in the process of which I improved upon my computer skills and gained knowledge in the use of HTML, Vocus, InterAction.org, and other web platforms.

In addition to honing my writing skills and learning new computer and journalistic techniques, I gained a huge amount of sheer knowledge from this experience that I never would have otherwise attained. Among the issues I researched and wrote about in these country pages were the stigma against survivors of Ebola in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea that continues to present challenges even though reported cases of the disease are now in decline; the heavy prevalence of gender-based violence in African countries torn by civil war that results from years of breakdown of social institutions and the fracturing of family structures and social responsibilities; or the lasting relevance of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti which halted the country's development and has resounding effects in the Haitian business community and educational opportunities today. As part of the marketing and communications team and in working with other members to polish and review posts and releases, I learned how to better work as part of a team and to come prepared with constructive comments and criticism to weekly marketing team meetings. I also learned to use computer programs that I'd had absolutely no experience using, and left knowing basic HTML coding, how to create, edit, and maintain a website, how to track readers and their interactions after press releases are sent out, and more.

This internship greatly affected my career goals in terms of opening up an entirely new door to a field of work I hadn't even considered as an English major – I had no idea how much journalistic and editorial work went into the activities of an international non-governmental organization, and it is something I would absolutely like to be involved in in the future.