Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

CEDOVIP aims to transform the power imbalance in intimate relationships through raising awareness, collective visioning, and concerted efforts among community members. CEDOVIP focuses on mobilizing communities to prevent and respond to VAW/G (Violence Against Women and Girls). It does so by: strengthening prevention and response to VAW/G through civil society organizations, government, local institutions, and institutions of learning; and advocacy for better implementation of existing laws and policies, as well as for passage of new, more effective laws and policies. With its vision of an existence of violence-free relationships, their work creates change in the attitudes, behavior, and practices that perpetuate VAW/G in Uganda. As a media and national advocacy intern, some of my tasks included: writing up case studies of success stories from the different program areas that will be posted on to CEDOVIP’s website and made recommendations to improve its outlook. Assisted in running a social media campaign to prevent violence against women and girls by actively posting on social media. Provided guidance and leadership to program staff to work with university activist from Makerere University to create activism to prevent violence against women and girls. Aided program staff to strengthen skills to work with teenagers to prevent violence against girls. Helped write reports and policy briefs. Wrote media articles, and participated in all CEDOVIP/Raising Voices joint staff and helped in areas that I could provide help that people needed.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

As an intern, I was able to work hand in hand with the media and national advocacy program staff. Though I was an intern in that department, it was clear by the second week that our work went beyond our department. My main task was to compile positive stories from different program areas. At first, it was challenging since I required a translator for the interviews. I learned how to avoid the
temptation of talking to the translator instead of the interviewee. I was able to learn how to ask probing questions whenever the prepared ones did not provide a clear answer. Such skills will come in handy when I conduct my own research. Through my work, we were able to understand areas that the program directors needed to revisit especially in cases where there was a transition rather than the prevention of domestic violence. Most of the shifts would be from physical to emotional and economic violence. I admired the support that everyone in the office offered. Our work requires great feedback for future better performances. Most of the feedback revolves around the things that can be made better. I admired the way the executive director led the meetings. She managed to make everyone feel important while also ensuring that we all learned from each other’s successes and failures which would be referred to as work in progress. I was able to grasp the importance of good leadership from the executive director which I hope to use in the future. As a posse scholar, there are various things from my posse leadership training that I was able to bring along which allowed me to connect with the staff members and allow the interns to connect and support each other thus ensuring that we all learned from each other as well. Through the connections, I was able to understand the importance of a good NGO structure and the need for power to ensure a successful and sustainable NGO.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

During the quarterly report, my supervisor and I tried to analyze the impact that we had on social media. Aside from describing our posts and interactions with other NGOs in the same field, we had to include those that were not part of the active participation. I realized describing the number of times that people read our social media posts would have been tedious for both the writers and the reader. I recalled the graphs that I had made during my field biology and statistics classes. I was grateful that I had taken those classes for they prepared me to manage to come up with this solution. I managed to collect the data and analyze it for the review. It was through the rigorous writing skills that have been instilled in me from Sewanee that I could capture the stories of those who had been impacted by the NGO’s work. Lastly my women and gender studies courses and politics courses helped me understand the importance of a strong movement. My understanding then allowed me to help the university advocates come up with events that would promote their advocacy on violence against women/girls.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

Working in a human right based NGO meant that I had to interact with all the departments to help formulate solutions to numerous difficulties. Each department though independent, needs the help of other departments while performing proposed activities. In the process of choosing university activists, every program department came to help recruit. It was during that process that I watched the CEDOVIP staff team in action. The staff in charge lead the process but the other staff members supported. I was able to document and post the process in our social media websites. I was given the chance to work with two groups as they went through the process. During the group work and the entire session, we had to take notes and give feedback to the program head to help her make her choices. I thought that that process would have been her burden, but we all helped including all the interns. During the group meetings, the people not involved had questions about the process and we all helped the head of the program explain.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

I aspire to work with an organization that deals with gender issues as a human rights cause particularly in an African nation. CEDOVIP is an organization that seeks to empower Ugandan women and girls
by combating violence against them. Through CEDOVIP, I was able to learn more about advocacy and how to transform that into policy change. I witnessed the use of advocacy to facilitate the development of a nation. Learned about the type of advocacy that ensures the sustainability of the changes that the advocates seeks. I understood how to intersect culture while advocating in areas where culture is the core of the community. I hope to someday work at the UN specifically UNWomen. CEDOVIP, a women’s rights organization introduced me to the professional world of the feminist movement.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?

I was the only international intern. All the other interns were Ugandan. Through interacting with the people at work, I was able to encounter a different type of East African warmth. Though of African descent, I have been privileged with the opportunity to study abroad. While interacting with my fellow interns, I had to face challenging identity issues. To the other interns I was a “mzungu” which in Kiswahili (my native language) means white. I would insist that I was not but my English accent was not convincing enough. I slowly learned to allow people to pick my identity while simultaneously informing them on the importance of allowing people to identify themselves. Our identity conversations would lead to conversations of gender roles and how at times the nicknames that people bestowed on us managed to influence our lives. From most of the people that I interacted with, I learned that patience is a virtue and that while we all have power, we have to use it for good.

Words of advice for future interns (housing, transportation, etc.)?

To the future intern: I would recommend collaborating with the other interns to get an apartment together instead of living at the house that we did. I would also reach out to my supervisor or executive director to help you and the other intern find a safe apartment. If that does not work, I would recommend living at Bushpig for a week then looking for an apartment while there. The matatus are safe but you have to take care of your belongings and using your phone while the window is down. I would not recommend using a boda boda (motorbikes). Around the city, you can uber as well at a reasonable price which can be paid in cash or by card. Do not hesitate to make friends and when you do, introduce them to other interns which would help with group hangouts, allowing you to be safe. Be careful while walking- the boda boda guys can easily snatch your belongings if you do not hold them carefully. Most people are friendly and would not mind helping.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

During my time in Uganda, I was able to meet a wonderful author and professor Sylvia Tamale. I had only read and used Dr. Tamale’s work in my classes. After talking to her, she told me that she has hope for the future feminist movement in the African continent. She encouraged me to write down our history for it was a mistake that our forerunners did of not documenting our history. She also got to sign my book. Looking back, I do not think I would have been prepared to have had a well articulated conversation with Dr. Tamale. I had the best internship experience thus far thanks to your support. I was able to work in a feminist environment and have a taste of my future. This internship solidified my career interest. I had the chance to have faith in the feminist movement and the power of women working together. The words thank you do not cover my gratitude but for now I will express it in Luganda: WEBALE NYO! (Thank you very much).