

Summer Internship Report 2017

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AFNET
(Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Network)
Dodoma, Tanzania

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

I worked under Sarah D. Mwaga as the visual communications intern for AFNET, Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Network. AFNET strives to shed light upon women who are victims of GBV and FGM in Tanzania to show that a lack of gender equality and proper sexual and reproductive rights are the root causes to such epidemic. AFNET is an NGO that works to facilitate community development via advocacy against gender based violence, and promoting good governance, advocacy in reproductive health. AFNET currently has three full-time staff members and volunteers are hired on an as needed basis depending on the project needs. Its programs are geared towards building the capacity of community members in identifying their own socioeconomic problems and finding solutions for themselves. In addition, AFNET strives to become more active in the political field so that laws are created to increase education and sensitize communities to the harm of gender-based violence (GBV) and female genital mutilation (FGM).

My responsibilities at AFNET included: archive/ create video with past interviews and related material from victims of gender based violence and female genital mutilation. Visit field sites, and from these, generate written and visual reports that include case studies, descriptions of successes and problems, collaborate with staff in designing education and community programming, provide guidance and leadership in establishing an online presence for AFNET, that includes procedures for content generation and schedules for posting content.

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?

During the internship I helped create a website, scanned photographs, edited previously recorded video to compile for donor videos, translated interviews and created subtitles with coworker aid, as well as shooting and interviewing FGM victims for another documentary. Prior to the internship work, I had done some work in Premiere (a video program) but this summer I was really able to focus on improving my skills in the program. Most of the video work that I have previously done has been in English, but this summer I worked with creating subtitles because most of the interviews were conducted in Swahili. In the second half of the internship, we went out in the field to conduct and record our own interviews. Generally, the setting would be in a relatively small space, with a tight, low light shot with many people to include. The summer also accounts for winter in Tanzania, so in recording sound we had to account for wind and a variety of other weather factors when recording outside. It also took a bit of discussion for the villagers to be comfortable being interviewed. I also matched many hours of video and external audio in Premiere software.

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?

One problem that was experienced was I was creating a video for a presentation to USAID on the topic of good governance. The previous day, I sat with another coworker to translate the interviews and create subtitles. He gave me a CD so that I could put in sound for the video. I choose a song and put it in without really thinking because all of the lyrics were in Swahili. I later showed it to Sarah, who said we had to choose a different song that was not about FGM because the project was on good governance. She suggested another song that I put in. She also wondered if I could make the video accessible to people that could not attend the meeting. I compressed and uploaded the video to Youtube so she could quickly and easily share the link via Whatsapp to donors and other members and volunteers. Now more the video is extremely accessible to members and funders of AFNET, so they can view the progress of AFNET from remote locations.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

I worked with Sharron Bockman, besides living closely in a homestay she also helped record the interviews. She had no prior sound or video experience, but was very willing to learn as I could not manage video, photographing and sound recording. When we would get to a field site, I would hand her the microphones to set up whilst I set up the cameras. To start every interview, we would begin at the same time with a clap, which made matching sound and video easier in the production phase. In one instance, we were in Mtumba, a village not far from Dodoma, conducting an interview. The interview had been going on for about an hour and the microphone's batteries were close to dying. Sharron motioned to me silently to hand her fresh batteries as to not disrupt to conversation. I passed off the batteries without disruption to the meeting. This was important because the people were already a bit on edge with all of the electronic equipment around in a small space that they were not used to. It was also important for Sharron not to move around too much as to not interfere with the video shot. Recording sound was not a part of her necessary intern responsibilities, but she helped me immensely in recording interviews.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

The summer gave me the opportunity to primarily focus on editing video, and doing field work in the form of photographing and shooting video. I learned how best to prep equipment for the village setting, gained perspective on shooting, especially in places like Tanzania, and more efficiently edit in post-production. I gained perspective on what to do when you have limited resources, such as power

to charge batteries for equipment. I learned a lot about documentary work specifically in unfamiliar environments (in terms of myself and the other people being documented). I really quite enjoyed being able to go out into the field and do documentary work and think that it may be a career path that I am interested in pursuing.

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?

We did a homestay with our boss, Sarah Mwaga, in Tanzania so almost every person that we encountered had a different background. In particular, we would have to walk up the dirt road to a stall in order to get internet to use in the office. The owner of the stall did not speak any English. In order to tell him what we wanted at first, we used some broken Swahili. We also brought along the USB drive to be plugged into a computer that indicated only internet and not minutes. What solidified his understanding of what we wanted was the USB drive, non-verbal communication. Each week we would come back and he would know exactly what we wanted without conflict. It was clear that he wanted to help us get what we needed, the only barrier was translation. Non-verbal communication proved to be very dependable and allowed for interaction despite the language barrier. In another instance we were staying in a hostel, and the hostel owner flagged down a daladala for us that he thought was going into town. After about an hour a man sitting next to us spoke to us in English, and said that the daladala was actually not going into town but towards another village. We told him that was not where we wanted to go. At first he gave us directions to take another daladala that would take us into town; however, after a few minutes of talking with the conductor and the driver, the driver decided to diverge from the original route in order to take us where we needed to go. Without the help of this man we would have missed the ferry we had to catch later in the day to go back to Dodoma. The entire daladala sacrificed their destination and agreed to diverge in order to help us get where we needed to go-the connection being we had a problem and they helped us solve it.

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

Bring a lot of books to read. Also, it would be rather challenging to do a homestay if you have significant dietary restrictions.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

This summer has been an incredible opportunity provided by the University to be able to travel to an unknown place to learn about a new culture, language, and a non-governmental organization. I learned about issues of FGM from a non-outsider perspective, which is important to understanding why the practice exists at all. Learning from a grassroots organization has been incredibly important in understanding and creating a solution about such cultural problems. AFNET went deep into the villages and began collecting evidence as to why this atrocity was happening to their women, instead of castigating the practice as something of barbarians. It really emphasized effective conflict resolution being a result of human to human contact in order to recognize what is at the root of the problem and find a plausible solution.