

**Interning with the United Nations Resident Coordinator
Jakarta, Indonesia
Summer 2014**

I had the privilege to work for Douglas Broderick in the office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Indonesia in the summer of 2014. As the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) in Indonesia, Douglas Broderick is the top UN officer with an equivalent rank of ambassador and designated political representative of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The Resident Coordinator's office (RCO) oversees and manages 22 resident United Nations agencies in Indonesia from the World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Group and other non-resident agencies like the International Civil Aviation Organization. The RCO is ultimately responsible for all UN activities from economic development to diplomatic relations and disaster management. Day-to-day, the RCO is responsible for coordinating agency actions, liaising with other development actors, formulating UN policy objectives and managing diplomatic relations with the Government of Indonesia.

My primary task was to work with resident UN agencies to develop recommendations on how the UN should continue to operate in a Middle-Income Country (MIC) like Indonesia. The "MIC" designation is a World Bank term to define the ability of a country to repay loans. The UN uses the term "MIC" as a broad indicator of stable medium and upper-medium human development status. The primary issue is the UN understands what policy areas to engage in but struggles with how to work effectively with a MIC government with capacity for sovereign

development. I consulted with UN agencies, bilateral aid agencies, multilaterals and academics around Asia on best practices to formulate my own recommendations. My research looked at how to make the UN a more adaptive, innovative and attractive long-term development partner for the Government of Indonesia. I found that if the UN is to remain relevant in MICs, it must renegotiate its relationship with the government as a fee-for-service development consultant and “upstream” capacity builder instead of an aid and service provider. My findings were well received by the UN agency directors and will be considered in the new UN Partnership Development Framework.

My time with the United Nations provided me with a real understanding of how the UN works at a country level. I have lived and worked in an “on the ground” development setting before but never had the opportunity to see how policy and coordination is implemented in a national context. My initial research path explored the UN and the government’s financial position that resulted in a comprehensive funding map and donor strategy for the UN. The research and original ideas led to the chance to participate in policy discussions about the role of the UN with Indonesia’s top line ministries, civil society members, academics and foreign donors. I was able to shape some of the context. I was also able to peer into the internal and external politics of development from 22 agency perspectives and really evaluate the attitude, skills and knowledge needed for diplomacy and growth facilitation.

One becomes a neutral diplomat upon entering the UN. I had to remain politically neutral and conduct myself as a diplomat with every subject even though I was only involved in Indonesia's development policy. Indonesia, the world's third largest democracy, elected a new president while I was living in Jakarta. While the UN was not an official election monitor, I had a rare glimpse into the somewhat errant political process through the lens of an international organization with mostly local staff. Internally, the office was anything but neutral, but externally the UN does not interfere or express opinions on sovereign political matters. Nevertheless, protesters still gathered outside the UN to express worries about the election and called for UN intervention while other groups demanded action on the situation in the Gaza Strip. The protestors and a brief encounter with a handful of North Korean diplomats underscored the inherent duality of international development work and made apparent the complicated third layer of American citizenship in diplomacy. Everything, especially economic development, is political.

Living in Indonesia and researching the economics of Middle-Income Countries complemented my studies at Sewanee and solidified my desire to continue to explore international development and diplomacy. I was able to draw upon principles and case studies from economic, business and finance classes as a foundation in my argument that the United Nations should move away from providing services and introduce a fee-for-service structure in MICs. The brief, but intense, period with the UN reaffirmed my theory that development actors pay too little attention to business models and finance in policy and delivery; a topic I have designed my entire Sewanee education around understanding.

Thank you Indonesia - *Terima kasih Indonesia.*