

The Tonya Public Affairs Internships Fund made it possible for me to intern at the headquarters of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) last summer. During the time I spent working for the IRC, I was asked to conduct research on a variety of comprehensive topics concerning humanitarian law, the status of refugees, humanitarian relief efforts, and global humanitarian funding trends.

The first part of my project included assembling a timeline of UN conventions, public policies, and existing laws concerning human rights issues with a focus on the rights of women, refugees, and the internally displaced.

My task also included writing a detailed analysis of the underlying causes of human migration of refugees and internally displaced persons, who have no choice but to leave their homes and face an uncertain future, and potential vulnerability. I gathered data on global migration trends including major source and host countries, which brought up controversial issues such as the deep imbalance in international support and the dangers of the vast influx of the disenfranchised into religious extremist nations. After attending a discussion with Liberia's Deputy Minister of Gender, Hon. Annette Kiawu, I reported on the new government and NGO initiatives to tackle domestic violence in post-conflict Liberia. Having listened to a briefing from the field on the East Africa and Sahel drought crisis from the IRC's country director from Somalia, I examined the role of drought in famine, malnutrition, gender-based violence, and high death rates.

I also prepared an elaborate review of current IRC operations in over 33 countries. I examined humanitarian crisis situations and IRC relief efforts in various territories such as the disaster-struck Haiti, the drought-hit Horn of Africa, and the violent internal conflict-dominated Syria.

Additionally, I analyzed information on governmental and United Nations funding trends for humanitarian aid and global partnership in local capacity building. I also examined the correlations between overarching themes in the international community arena, and global cooperation in funding for international aid programs with a focus on the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and its emergency funding mechanisms. I conducted an interview with the Director of Humanitarian Affairs at the IRC to learn more about the practices.

Analyzing international humanitarian law juxtaposed with national objectives and ambitions in addition to learning about current humanitarian relief efforts and funding patterns was an excellent basis for my future projects in international and global studies.