

The International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) is an international development and training organization working mainly in East Africa and South East Asia. With over 80 years of grassroots experience, IIRR is a people-centered organization that focuses on sustainable and community-led development. With a development approach of “not relief but release,” IIRR builds upon the capacity of the poor by partnering with them and using innovative yet practical solutions to generate development in their communities. A comprehensive organization, IIRR has a variety of collaborative thematic program areas including: Food Security, Sustainable Wealth Creation, Education, Community-managed Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaption, Applied Learning, and Support for Women and Girls.

As an intern, my main responsibility was to research potential funding and partnership opportunities for IIRR. This specific project involved researching and recording information for over 300 foundations and organizations and organizing them based on priority for IIRR’s particular financial and networking needs. If IIRR seemed to be compatible with the foundation or organization, I would then do further research into grant opportunities, board members, staff, relevant programs, geographic location, previous grantees, contact information, etc. After creating a comprehensive list, I was then asked to narrow down my research and identify ten to twelve high-priority organizations for IIRR to work on approaching for potential funding or partnership in the upcoming year. This list will serve as the base for 2013/2014 leads for potential funders and partner organizations for IIRR. After this list goes out to all board members and staff to identify any potential networking “ins,” IIRR will begin approaching the organizations on the list.

Along with researching potential funding opportunities, I also worked closely with IIRR's communications staff to plan a fall young professionals event for the organization. IIRR is looking to reach and connect with a younger generation of supporters. Along with increasing their social media presence, IIRR is also trying to reach this new audience by hosting informational yet trendy fundraisers that appeal to younger professionals. IIRR does a lot of work in the Philippines; some of their most successful programs are the school based Bio-Intensive Garden (BIG) programs which have successfully educated teachers, children, and families in over 100 poor, rural schools in the Philippines about BIG technology, health, and nutrition. Expanding off the BIG programs in the Philippines, we decided on a Filipino-themed chef cook-off event. Thus, the event in October will involve well known Filipino chefs from New York City participating in a fundraising event to promote IIRR's food security work in the Philippines. The chefs will even be incorporating some of the indigenous vegetables grown in the BIG school gardens into their dishes. IIRR's hope is that the "modern-foodie" nature of the event will attract a broader audience and thus spread the word about IIRR and all the great programs they are facilitating abroad. Along with brainstorming the theme of the event, I helped with the organization of the venue, invitations, staff, special guests, as well as food and drink logistics.

During my time at IIRR, I also participated in weekly meetings as well as conference calls with IIRR overseas staff, potential funders, and potential partner organizations. I also was able to witness and help with the building of their new website as well as their efforts to expand their social media presence online. Another one of my tasks which contributed to the building of their new website was photo editing. Often,

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many of the photos taken in the field are poor quality, thus, it was my job to edit them in preparation for them to appear on the website. This assignment was beneficial to me personally because it familiarized me with *Flickr*, a photo management and sharing program, which many organizations in various fields use. Along with *Flickr*, I also had some exposure to *Etapestry*, an online fundraising software for non-profits that organizes donor information, donations, budgets, etc. Furthermore, I was introduced to the way a donation gets processed, which involved making copies, entering information into *Etapestry*, filing the check, and following up with a handwritten thank you note to the donor.

Overall, my experience as an intern with IIRR was incredibly valuable. My previous experience working with non-profits in South Africa, as well as the knowledge about international development I have gained from courses at Sewanee made IIRR a great fit. The small size of IIRR allowed me to have far more hands-on exposure to all operations. I was able to form close relationships with all the employees as well as some board members, allowing me to further understand the context within which the organization operated. Most importantly, I got to see and understand in greater depth that the best practices for development are community-based, led, and driven. This is evident in all of IIRR's programs, and it is an approach that I hope to incorporate in any similar development work I may be involved with in the future.