Training a new generation of practitioners to address the complexities of sustainable development in innovative and participatory ways.

We are quite happy once again to share with you exciting news and updates regarding the University of Florida, Master of Sustainable Development Practice (MDP) Program. The spring semester of each year is characterized by a convergence of important program activities and events, a number of which will be highlighted in this newsletter. We are especially proud of our third cohort of MDP graduates who succeeded in defending their field practicum final reports and meeting the student learning outcomes established for the MDP Program, encompassing knowledge, skills and professional behavior recognized as important for development practitioners. The titles of their respective final reports can be found in this newsletter, along with the specializations each student earned in conjunction with their MDP degree.

When reading through the list of field practicums, you may be struck by the diversity of topics our students pursued in 10 countries of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. MDP students prepare their field practicum proposals and develop final reports while enrolled in core courses designed to...
facilitate these processes. Their supervisory committees also provide essential support during the development of these documents. The cohort approach described results in students being exposed to a wide array of conceptual issues and methodological considerations while planning for their field practicums and during the analysis and interpretation of their major findings. It is important to note that MDP students are also required to provide their host organizations and groups that took part in their field practicums, the results of their work.

I would like to acknowledge faculty members who served on the supervisory committees of our new graduates. Their support and guidance were fundamental pillars in the educational process of our students and I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to each of them for their contributions to the program.

While the second year students are busy preparing for their final seminars and defenses, the first year students devote themselves to preparing for their upcoming field practicums. Once again, our students were successful in linking up with committed host organizations seeking, in some way, to contribute to processes of sustainable development (see below). Students take on projects that align with their specific interests in order to prepare for the types of professional opportunities they aspire to pursue once they complete the MDP degree and associated specializations. We are grateful to the host organizations, confident that our students will provide an invaluable service while fulfilling the requirements of the field practicum.

Finally, it is during the spring semester that we process applications for a new cohort of MDP students who will initiate their programs in the upcoming fall term. The new group will be characterized by diversity, vocation to work in sustainable development, and considerable prior experience. In the Fall newsletter a short piece on our new students in Cohort 5 will be included.

Throughout the year, the UF MDP program strives to create opportunities for our students to engage with development practitioners representing organizations working in diverse parts of the world. The activities coordinated by the MDP program are only a fraction of the events offered by different academic departments across the university. You will enjoy reading about a sampling of these activities below. In addition to participating in these activities, several MDP degree and SDP certificate students were proactive in launching new initiatives and/or preparing papers and posters for conferences. I would like to commend our students who have been proactive in pursuing these extra-curricular activities while meeting the demands of the MDP Program.

Finally, we are quite proud of our alumni working in different parts of the world. In this newsletter, Indah Waty Bong (CIFOR-Indonesia), Sydney Nilan (Runa Foundation – Peru) and Leandra Merz (The Nature Conservancy and IIM International - Zambia) provide updates on their work, being carried out in challenging contexts. You will enjoy reading about their work.

I recently read a summary of the 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index Report entitled “Great jobs great lives: A Study of more than 30,000 college graduates across the U.S.”. As indicated in the blogspot, *New Index Underscores Value of What Independent Non-Profit Higher Education Does Best* ([http://naicuextracredit.blogspot.com/2014/05/new-index-underscores-value-of-what.html](http://naicuextracredit.blogspot.com/2014/05/new-index-underscores-value-of-what.html)), “six factors in higher education contribute to “great jobs” and “great lives” (quoted here):

1. Having at least one professor who made me excited about learning
2. Having professors who cared about me as a person
3. Having a mentor who encouraged me to pursue my goals and dreams
4. Working on a project that took a semester or more to complete
5. Having an internship or job that applied classroom learnings
6. Being extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations while in college”
It is interesting to view the UF-MDP Program through the lens of these six factors. The capstone field practicum experience of the MDP program fulfills factors 4 and 5 listed above. The rich academic environment of the University of Florida provides students with many extracurricular opportunities and these coupled with the proactive efforts of many students certainly fulfills factor 6. With regards to factors 1-3, I am particularly pleased by and grateful to the core and affiliate faculty (and others linked to the program) that enthusiastically and with great sensitivity provide guidance and support to MDP students. One such faculty member, recognized by all as exemplary as an instructor, facilitator and guide is Jon Dain, who was kind enough to prepare a piece for this newsletter. I believe we can conclude that thanks to our faculty and the opportunities alluded to, the UF MDP Program possesses attributes that have been determined to favor alumni success.

I would like to close by expressing my gratitude to the Center for Latin American Studies, the Center for African Studies, the University of Florida International Center for essential support provided to the program. I would also like to thank MDP student Elizabeth Poulsen, our MDP Graduate Assistant who provided leadership to the development of this newsletter.

Sincerely,

Glenn Galloway
MDP Program Director
MDP co-sponsored a seminar led by Dr. Robert Maguire, Director of the Latin American and Hemispheric Studies Program and Professor of International Affairs at the Elliot School of International Affairs at George Washington University in Washington, DC. Maguire is a graduate of the University of Florida’s Latin American Studies program. The talk was titled *Haiti and the Obama Administration’s Quest for Improved Aid Effectiveness: Promise and Perils.*

Read more on Dr. Maguire, MALAS Alumni in the Latinamericanist Fall 2013 Newsletter.
Spring 2014 Graduation and Celebration: MDP Cohort 3

Final Field Practicum Presentations

Cohort 3 students carried out final field practicum presentations and defenses. Antonia Lliteras (top left) presents her experience conducting and studying leadership trainings in a rural middle school in Paraguay. Sebastian Pazmino (bottom left) discusses his study on agricultural land and production in the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador and opportunities to enhance local production on the island of Santa Cruz.

This Spring 2014, eight MDP students officially graduated with Master degrees in Sustainable Development Practice. One student will graduate this summer, while three more will graduate in Fall 2014.

We celebrate their important accomplishments and success in the program!

Below more information is provided on MDP Cohort 3 practicum projects, specializations and committees.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Practicum Title</th>
<th>Specialization</th>
<th>Committee</th>
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</table>
Member: Renata Serra, African Studies                                                                 |
| Taryn Devereux   | Gender Dynamics in the Adoption of Climate-Smart Agricultural Practices: A Case Study in Cauca, Colombia | Gender and Development Certificate TCD Certificate | Chair: Carmen Diana Deere, Latin American Studies and Food & Resource Economics  
Member: Sandra Russo, International Center and Women Studies & Gender Research |
| Hans Goertz      | Comparative Tree-Planting Strategies: Impact and Application in Haiti             | Agroforestry TCD Certificate                            | Chair: Marianne Schmink, Latin American Studies and Anthropology  
Members: Gerald Murray, Anthropology; Glenn Galloway, Latin American Studies |
Member: Marianne Schmink, Latin American Studies and Anthropology |
Member: Marta Hartmann, Agriculture, Education & Communication |
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<th>Student</th>
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</table>
| **Gentry Mander**| Cacao Value Chain Analysis in Toledo, Belize                                    | Environmental and Land Use Law TCD Certificate Joint MDP/Law Degree            | **Chair:** Marianne Schmink, Latin American Studies and Anthropology  
**Member:** Tom Ankerson, School of Law |
| **Seth Marsala-Bell** | Farming Adaptation Strategies for Climate Change: A Case Study of Campesinos in the Piedras River Watershed, Colombia | TCD Certificate                                | **Chair:** Carmen Diana Deere, Latin American Studies and Food & Resource Economics  
**Member:** Marianne Schmink, Latin American Studies and Anthropology        |
| **Sebastian Pazmino** | Tierra Despierta: A Social and Physical Study of the Agriculture Land in Santa Cruz, Galapagos, Ecuador | Nonprofit Leadership & Food Security TCD Certificate | **Chair:** Christina Gurucharri, Landscape Architecture  
**Member:** Marianne Schmink, Latin American Studies and Anthropology        |
| **José Juan Pérez Orozco** | Understanding Farmers’ Challenges and Evaluating Impacts of a Sustain Agriculture NGO in Communities of Southern Guatemala | Sustainable Agriculture TCD Certificate | **Chair:** Danielle Treadwell, Horticultural Sciences  
**Member:** Carmen Diana Deere, Latin American Studies and Food & Resource Economics |
| **Daniel Stirling** | Health Barrier Analysis in Kitgum, Uganda                                        | Global Health TCD Certificate               | **Chair:** Rick Rheingans, Environmental and Global Health, African Studies  
**Member:** Sarah McKune, Public Health Programs                               |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Student</th>
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</table>
| Raina Zantout       | Analysis of Human Health Risks Linked to Irrigation with Treated Wastewater in Oued Souhil, Tunisia, and Gender Roles in Agriculture | Global Health TCD Certificate | **Co-chair:** Jeffrey Ullman, Agricultural and Biological Engineering  
**Co-chair:** Sandra Russo, International Center and Women Studies and Gender Research |
| Maria Fernanda Checa | Feasibility of butterfly farming initiatives in Western Ecuador as a viable tool for sustainable development and capacity building | Combined PhD in Entomology/MDP Degree | **Chair:** Marianne Schmink, Latin American Studies and Anthropology  
**Members:** Bob Buschbacher, School of Forest Resources & Conservation; Keith Willmott, Florida Museum of Natural History, McGuire Center |
Field Practicum News

Students from Cohort 4 have been preparing their summer field practicum proposals throughout the Spring semester, and recently departed for their summer 2014 practicums.

The table below indicates where they will be posted, whom they’ll be working with, and the focus of their field practicum exercise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Field Practicum Location</th>
<th>Host Organization</th>
<th>Practicum Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beau Bryant</td>
<td>Washington, DC; Kampala, Uganda</td>
<td>International Justice Mission</td>
<td>Using information systems to build evaluation and learning capacities in NGOs</td>
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<td>Samantha Davis</td>
<td>Paquip, Guatemala</td>
<td>Wuqu’ Kawoq – Maya Health Alliance</td>
<td>Surveys about land tenure and child stunting</td>
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<td>Antonieta Eguren</td>
<td>South Africa (Kruger Park, Hoedspruit, Bushbuckridge)</td>
<td>South African Wildlife College</td>
<td>Situational analysis of Bushbuckridge communities of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy Lambeth</td>
<td>Port au Prince, Haiti</td>
<td>Interministerial Committee for Territorial Planning</td>
<td>Facilitating scholarly exchange and study abroad in Haiti</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liz Poul森</td>
<td>Quito, Ecuador</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Process evaluation of a teen pregnancy prevention program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christa Roberts</td>
<td>Costa Rica (multiple locations)</td>
<td>Cayuga Sustainable Hospitality</td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation of eco-lodges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra Sprague</td>
<td>South Africa (Kruger Park, Hoedspruit, Bushbuckridge)</td>
<td>South African Wildlife College</td>
<td>Situational analysis of Bushbuckridge communities of South Africa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Why are the concepts and tools shared in your courses such as facilitation, conflict management, and listening, important and critical to the work students will undertake in their field practicums and in future careers as development practitioners?

By 2030 there will be over 8 billion people living on our planet. A population of eight billion people implies differing ideas, diverse communication styles, conflicting values and competing interests. How are we going to work together to manage a planet whose carrying capacity is finite, whose people live in polarized worlds of power, economics and culture, whose climate is changing? The next generation of professionals needs to be better prepared than my generation is if they are to navigate and manage such complexities.

In addition to disciplinary knowledge and technical know-how, sustainable development depends a LOT on successful collaboration, on negotiating and sharing ideas, knowledge and tasks. Teamwork sounds noble and straightforward but is actually a pretty messy process made messier by the fact that most of us are not taught to work collaboratively; we are trained to think critically, but not socially. As a result, misunderstandings and mistrust are common in many organizations and initiatives. My experience has been that the success of development and conservation projects and policies depends as much on effective communication as it does on technical merit. The same holds true for student practicums. MDP students have 10-12 weeks to undertake a field project that contributes to the needs of those they are working with while meeting their own learning and program requirements. That is an enormously challenging task. The great majority will partner with “host” organizations and interact with multiple actors. It is not uncommon or surprising that expectations on the part of these different groups will differ and sometimes even clash. Students who have the skills to adapt and find common interests will have much better practicum experiences.

I strongly believe that if graduate students leave our programs knowing how to build trust, help groups make good decisions and manage conflict, they will be more effective and marketable as professionals. They will also be better citizens.
2. Would you tell us a little more about your pedagogical approach to teaching and methods utilized in the classroom? What is flip chart paper really about?

I love teaching and my approach can best be described as “experiential learning”, heavily influenced by workshop training. The graduate students we get in the MDP and TCD programs are bright, motivated people, many of whom arrive on campus with impressive professional experience. If we put a diverse group of interesting people in a room, help them feel comfortable and provide them with an interesting task, magical things can happen. It sounds cliché, but I spend a lot of time trying to get out of the way so that students can listen to and learn from each other instead of depending on the instructor.

My classes usually take some getting used to because there are a lot of moving parts. Students participate in role-plays and simulations, discuss readings online, turn in weekly learning journals and have individual and group projects inside and outside of class. There is also a lot of facilitated discussion and reflection. My goal is to have students do something focused on developing the skills relevant to the class topic every single week. That might mean a mediation simulation, planning an agenda for an imaginary multi-stakeholder meeting, presenting themselves in 120 seconds without the use of PowerPoint, or practicing empathic listening skills. I try to treat students like professionals and model the participatory philosophy that I hope they will adopt as practitioners and/or researchers. Paraphrasing the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (as well as some of my personal mentors), you can’t teach participation by lecturing about it.

Trust is a big issue in learning, so one of the first things I do each semester is to meet individually with each member of the class to get an idea of who they are, where they have come from and where they hope to go. It completely changes the dynamic of the group. We also spend the first two classes getting to know each other, clarifying the course objectives, discussing student expectations and concerns, and figuring out how we will work and learn together. All this takes a lot of time, but pays tremendous dividends in terms of student engagement and desire to learn; it makes the rest of the semester possible. I won’t get into the power of snacks and coffee...

As for flipcharts, well, I like to draw and I have found that people really appreciate it when effort is put into visual aids. PowerPoint can be an excellent tool, but EVERYONE uses it ALL the time. That gets boring so I try to be a little bit different. Slides can provide powerful images in a way that a simple drawing cannot so I am not dissing the use of PowerPoint. In turn, flipchart paper does not disappear when the “next” button is hit and there is no need to dim the lights (an awful practice for keeping people energized) to see a flipchart image so it too has its advantages.

Mostly I want students to know that there are many effective ways to communicate and effective professionals communicate in many different ways.

Graduate school is expensive and a huge time investment. For international students it can mean long periods away from family and loved ones. I want my classes to be useful to the people who invest time in them.

(continued)
3. Would you share a little with us about the important work you do as a practitioner in other capacities? Specifically, what is NRLI and what is your role there? Why is this important work?

“NRLI” is the Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute (http://nrli.ifas.ufl.edu/), a 9-month University of Florida Extension Program in the Food and Resource Economics Department (IFAS). The program trains natural resource professionals from around the State of Florida in collaborative approaches to contentious natural resource issues. The approach is very similar to that described above in terms of experiential learning, but the format allows us the freedom work with living case studies. NRLI was created in response to the pervasiveness of intractable conflict and litigation over the management of Florida’s natural resources. The oversimplified idea is that negotiation and joint-problem solving can be more effective and cost efficient than lawsuits. The mission of NRLI is to strengthen the quality and sustainability of environmental decision-making in Florida by training those who make the decisions. We now have over 230 alumni and our goal is to have a core group of trained professionals in every county and every sector in the State.

NRLI “Fellows” are from State and Federal Agencies, the private sector, local government, academia, industry, agriculture, Extension and non-profits. They meet once a month for intensive 3-day sessions at different locations around the state and each session site is chosen to highlight tension over a natural resource issue be it conflict over sea turtle nesting or challenges with Everglades restoration efforts. By the time they are done with the program, the participants in the program are part of a powerful network and have a new perspective on agricultural concerns, environmental concerns and the natural resource issues affecting the state. They also have facilitation, negotiation and conflict management skills that they take back to their jobs.

Florida faces and increasingly complex future just like the rest of the country (and world) and there is a desperate need for people with the skills to help policy makers and the public address our natural resource challenges.

4. In closing, can you share a few sentences that capture what you enjoy most about working with and supporting MDP students and the MDP Program.

What is there not to love? The students who enter the MDP Program are creative, talented people who will make a difference in the world. I really enjoy meeting them and having the opportunity to work with them. The same holds for the MDP faculty and staff. Being part of the MDP program is energizing.
Amber Zappia and Jeremy Lambeth (pictured) along with Alexandra Sprague (all from Cohort 4) acted as small group facilitators at Gator Global Initiative – a social impact conference aimed to inspire students to find their passions and enact positive change locally, nationally, and globally. Amber, Jeremy, and Alex completed a needs assessment for their fellow small group facilitators and, as a follow-up, provided them with a workshop on mentorship and empathic listening.

Jeremy Lambeth (Cohort 4) was awarded the UF Presidential Service Award for his assistance to USAID’s Haiti Health Infrastructure Program (HHIP). Jeremy Lambeth’s support to AECOM, a provider of design, technical, and management services, led to improvements in network administration, human resource productivity, and collaboration with institutions of higher education.

Hans Goertz, Cohort 3 student is shown here with acting Peace Corps Director, Carrie Hessler-Radelet. Mrs. Hessler-Radelet visited UF on February 10th, and took the opportunity to have breakfast with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, including many MDP students. UF is one of the top schools for generating Peace Corps Volunteers both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
Cohort 3 Alumni **Leandra Merz** has accepted a position with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Zambia. TNC will be conducting an in-depth situational analysis of villages in two Game Management Areas (GMAs), one on the southern border of Kafue National Park, and one on the northern border. Leandra will train approximately 10 project leaders to conduct household surveys and participatory workshops. The surveys will include information on livelihoods, health, education, and governance, and the workshops will include participatory mapping, historical timelines, and visioning for the future.

Leandra will oversee the surveys and workshops in the southern GMA, around Mulobezi town, while research is simultaneously being conducted in the northern GMA. After training and piloting this process in two GMAs, it can be expanded to all GMAs around Kafue National Park and provide valuable baseline data for improving conservation and development around the park.

Leandra will also continue her work with IIM International, a 501c3 that she started in 2012 that provides scholarships or orphans and vulnerable children attending high school in Zambia. After learning that the boarding facility is not ideal and that orphans struggle to have adequate support for succeeding in school, she embarked on an effort to provide improved housing for the students. She and her husband have raised approximately $15,000 in order to build male and female dorms, latrines, a dining hall, and a small home for a house-mother who will be trained to look after the children. Construction will begin this summer and is scheduled to be completed by November. You can find more information about this project and Leandra’s progress at [www.IIMinternational.com](http://www.IIMinternational.com).

**Beau Bryant** (Cohort 4) with an exceptionally large alligator at the Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park in Gainesville. Many Gainesville residents enjoy the nature and wildlife in the reserve, which includes alligators, wild horses, bison, boars, armadillos, and over 270 species of birds. We don’t necessarily recommend that you emulate Beau, should you visit Paynes Prairie!
Cohort 3 students Hans Goertz and Taryn Devereux (Alum), along with students from other academic departments, collaborated to create the Service-Oriented Learning (SOL) working group, which aims to integrate service and experiential learning into the TCD program. The SOL working group comes out of a need identified by students in the program to gain professional experience that applies academic lessons in the field - here at home, in Gainesville. The group plans on developing partnerships with community organizations and leaders through existing TCD courses. TCD students & faculty, and MDP students, faculty and staff attended the first workshop coordinated by the SOL working group, and plan to continue to be involved with the group’s activities in the coming academic year.

Cohort 3 Alumni Raina Zantout traveled to Nepal in May 2014 to carry out a social assessment with the UF chapter of Engineers Without Borders (EWB). Among other tasks, she has spent the last several months developing a household survey, which will primarily assess local health concerns and issues, including water access and quality. The surveys serve the role of impact monitoring and should be repeated within 2 years of project completion to evaluate health impacts of the initiative.

The goal of this EWB-UF project in Khanalthok, Nepal, is to assess and improve the community’s supply of potable water, including looking as well into Khanalthok’s only secondary school, which lacks a stable water supply system. The proposed design includes construction of a water storage unit with other improvements, such as pumping units and a filtration system. Proper measurements and data to be collected this summer will influence final project design. Khanalthok is a village development committee located about 52km southeast of Kathmandu, the capital. More information about EWB-UF can be found at www.ewb-uf.org, and information about this project can be found at www.ewb-uf.org/#!nepal/c1ohk.

Raina also attended the annual Global Health and Innovation Conference in April at Yale University in New Haven, CT, which attracts hundreds of health and development practitioners from around the world to discuss innovations and new research in global health. She presented her research on environmental risks and human health, looking at the increased incidence of diarrheal disease in India during the monsoon season and proposed infrastructure solutions to mitigate annual flooding.
Alexandra Sprague and Jeremy Lambeth (Cohort 4) participated in the 2014 UF Global Health Case Competition, the first annual competition at UF promoting interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to tackling dynamic case studies and proposing real-world solutions.

Several teams of students had 48 hours to address a complex global health challenge to promote interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches. This year the case was: Ukraine and the Polio Outbreak”.

Alex and Jeremy were on the same team (Marco Institute) and received 3rd Place Honorable Mention in the competition. In total, 10 student teams participated in the competition. Dr. Sarah McKune, (pictured left) Faculty Advisor on the Planning Team and MDP Affiliate Faculty, poses with Alex and Jeremy’s team following the award ceremony.

Get involved and learn more about the UF Global Health Case Competition here: https://sites.google.com/site/ufghcc2014/2014-case

The Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) held it’s 30th annual conference this year in Miami, FL from April 27th – May 1st. The conference theme this year was, “Integrated Agricultural Systems for Environmental Sustainability and Production.” Several MDP community members participated including Alumni, MDP Students and SDP Certificate Students.

Erica Odera, MDP Alumni, Cohort 2 and Researcher with UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education gave a presentation titled Undergraduate Student Thoughts about Feeding the World.

Austen Moore, SDP Certificate Student, and PhD graduate student in Agricultural, Education and Communication (AEC) presented the following two papers and a poster:

An Investigation of the Household Asset Building Program (HABP) in Ethiopian Extension
Mary Rodriguez, Austen Moore, & Amy Harder

Challenges of Public Extension Service Delivery in Post-Conflict Settings: A Comparison of Mali, Myanmar, and Timor Leste, Austen Moore, Joshua Ringer, & Assoumane Maiga

The Green Revolution’s Long-Term Impacts on Population, Food Supply, and Social Indicators: A Comparison of India, Mexico, and the Philippines (Poster)
Mary Rodriguez, SDP Certificate Student and PhD graduate student in AEC was an integral part to the success of the conference. She was this past year’s 2013-14 student representative, serving on the executive board and as the voice of graduate students for the organization. At the conference, she organized two graduate student meet and greets, organized and led a graduate student silent auction. During the conference, Mary served as the point person for all students, presented a few presentations and a poster, and served as a concurrent session facilitator.

Raina Zantout, MDP Graduate Student (now Alumni) gave a presentation on her field practicum project titled, Analysis of Human Health Risks Linked to Irrigation with Treated Wastewater in Oued Souhil, Tunisia

Taryn Devereux, MDP Graduate Student (now Alumni), gave a presentation on her field practicum project titled, Gender Dynamics in the Adoption of Climate-Smart Agricultural Practices: A case study in Cauca, Colombia

New and Continuing Funding (as of June 2014)

Alexandra Sprague, Cohort 4 TCD Fellowship
Elizabeth Poulsen, Cohort 4 MDP Graduate Assistant
Hans Goertz, Cohort 3 FLAS Fellowship, Portuguese
Jeremy Lambeth, Cohort 4 FLAS Fellowship, Haitian Creole
Antonieta Eguren, Cohort 4 CONICYT Scholarship, Chile
LATAM Book Scholarship

Incoming Cohort 5 Funding (as of June 2014)

Gabriela Polo Tomala TCD/MDP/LATAM Fellowship
Jennifer Meisenhelder Employer Tuition Reimbursement Program
Rugiyatu Kane FLAS Fellowship, Swahili
Kristen Marks MDP Scholarship
Benjamin Christ Graduate Hall Director Kusse Bekele African Studies Graduate Assistantship
Irving Xchel Chan Gomez CONACYT – Mexico Whitney Turientine FLAS Fellowship, Swahili
LATAM Book Scholarship

CONGRATULATIONS to these and all other MDP students who have secured support!
My current position:
Just before I graduated from the University of Florida in Spring 2013, I was offered a great opportunity to join the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) as a consultant in a Participatory Measurement, Reporting and Verification (PMRV) research project. The research looks for the feasibility of local participation in MRV across three sites in Indonesia: West Kalimantan, Central Java and Papua.

My main research site is in West Kalimantan, in the Kapuas Hulu district, the easternmost district in West Kalimantan Province and also known as the heart of Borneo Island. I work with other colleagues in 3 villages and together we have experienced the most amazing things that possibly could happen during the conduction of fieldwork:

• The highest flood of the year (1-3 meters high in some houses)
• Persistent monsoon rains
• Muddy and adventurous road trips

(continued)
• Local celebrations including the making of glutinous rice-based snacks *emping*
• A new village hall opening
• Seasonal diseases such as measles and their cures from local shamans
• A variety of seasonal fruits from rambutan and durian to many other tropical Borneo fruits that even I have never seen or tasted before
• Fresh fish catch straight from the river
• Wooden boat rides on rivers overflowing with rocks and fast currents to visit artisanal gold mines that located deep inside a forest

**How has the MDP Program experience impacted your research and development perspective?**

For me a learning process is like a spiral curve that builds up. My MDP experience has contributed plenty to this learning process. My field practicum in Botswana, the time I spent working with an amazing MDP team and learning from the people in Okavango Delta, together provided me with different perspectives in seeing and dealing with things in the field. The classes that I took and great mentors I had during my study at UF have equipped me with concepts and theoretical backgrounds, especially now when I have finished with my field work and analysis data on land tenure, participatory mapping, drivers of land use and land cover change, institutional arrangements, people-forest relationships and villagers’ livelihoods.

*Above: A participatory mapping activity with villagers. Liz Felker, CIFOR-PMRV 2013*
As Peru Program Coordinator for the Runa Foundation, Sydney is working and living it up in the Peruvian Amazon. Working in partnership with Rios Nete, a Peruvian NGO, she is planning and carrying out the expansion of Runa’s agroforestry and community development programs in the San Martin region.

As one of a few pioneering Runa staff in Peru, Sydney is working on the millions of things that go along with development and start-up of a non-profit in a new location. From building alliances with local organizations, to travelling throughout the jungle on research expeditions, and writing and receiving hundreds of emails, Sydney is constantly channeling her MDP knowledge and experiences to help her do her job, and do it well.

Sydney states, “One of the best aspects of the MDP program is it gives you the knowledge and skills to be able to collaborate with professionals in so many fields, to talk knowledgeably and confidently with anyone from public health workers to indigenous healers, from agricultural researchers to leaders of local cooperatives. The MDP also provided very useful skills for project planning, knowing how to highlight priority objectives, work in teams to develop activities, and have the tools to evaluate them.”

One of the main focuses of her work with Rios Nete involves revaluing traditional knowledge of Amazonian communities. They are currently developing plans to build a research and healing center where this important knowledge can be documented and empirically validated through collaboration between indigenous healers and western researchers.
As part of Runa’s Peruvian expansion, they are recruiting qualified applicants for their internship program, which could be a wonderful fit for carrying out a MDP Practicum or gaining other research or practice-based experience.

For more information visit Runa’s website: www.fundacionruna.org

Contact Us

• Alumni: We love to hear from you! Please send updates to cstarter@ufl.edu

• Check out our new website: http://mdp.africa.ufl.edu/ From the website, you can subscribe to our listserv to receive weekly email updates on development-related events and resources

• Connect with us on Facebook and LinkedIn

• MDP Alumni Final Field Practicum Reports are available on the University of Florida’s Institutional Repository. View all the reports here in the MDP Collection.