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The MDP Program Newsletter

Issue 12



Integrating knowledge and skills to prepare a new generation of development practitioners

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Feelings of Fall

This fall semester has been full of experiences. We had the opportunity to welcome Cohort 8 to the Program, and started the first day of classes with a Solar Eclipse!

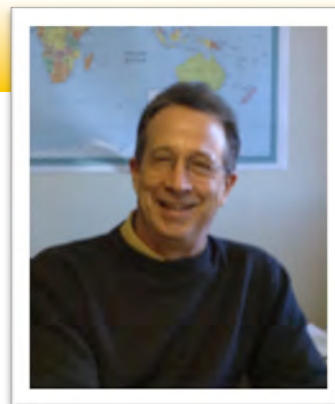
Over the summer, our Cohort 7 students completed their field practicums, and during the semester, Cohort 6 students presented their final project results. In addition and as in the cases of every fall, we have updates about the outstanding participation of our second-year students in the 5th Sustainability Conference, in New York City!



Center for
AFRICAN STUDIES
at the University of Florida

UF Center for
Latin American Studies
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Glenn Galloway



In this newsletter, we share exciting news and updates regarding the University of Florida Master of Sustainable Development Practice (MDP) Program, including information on our most recent graduates, faculty awards, visits by scholars and practitioners, and extra-curricular work and service being carried out by our students.

Over the summer (2017) 19 UF MDP students carried out their capstone field practicums in 17 countries around the world, collaborating with highly respected host organizations on important development issues. When scanning over the list of students and their field practicums, you will be struck by the diversity of topics pursued by our students (see page 9). This diversity is a direct reflection of the broad, global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals, more commonly referred to as the SDGs.

In 1987, “Sustainable Development” was defined in the Brundtland Report “Our Common Future” as *“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”* Over time it was recognized that sustainable development required more than the thoughtful and judicious management of natural resources. Indeed, it became clear that meaningful progress in meeting the global challenge of sustainable development requires the engagement of both wealthy and poor nations and the active involvement of all sectors of society. This recognition led to a broadening of the sustainable development agenda and the inclusion of goals that, while quite distinct at first glance, are in actuality deeply interrelated. Persons enduring abject poverty, poor health and/or hunger are unlikely to become involved in the sustainable management and use of natural resources. Formal and non-formal education for boys and girls are essential for progress. Human rights, equality, peace and justice are fundamentally important in any country seeking to further sustainable development. Of particular relevance to this newsletter, elements of each of these areas were explored/addressed by our MDP students in their field practicums in 2017.

Beyond the interdisciplinary complexity of sustainable development alluded to above, a number of students shed light on how the challenge of sustainable development truly requires a global perspective. For example, Jackie Curnick worked with the Alaska Conservation Foundation on the impact of toxins on native Alaskans. It turns out that volatile chemicals used in warmer, lower latitudes are gradually transported to higher latitudes through evaporation and atmospheric circulation, eventually condensing in the colder environments. These chemicals (PCBs for example) accumulate in the fatty tissue of the most important, traditional sources of food of native Alaskans, resulting in dangerous, chronic exposure to substances known to cause cancer and other negative health impacts. In another field practicum, Russell Anderson (highlighted later in this newsletter) measured the enormous quantities of plastics and other solid waste spoiling beaches on remote islands in Belize. Perhaps surprisingly, the source of most of this waste is not Belize. Rather, ocean currents transport and deposit these materials on islands far from their origin. In both cases, people and environments are impacted by unsustainable practices carried out elsewhere, often far away. These experiences and the more publicized global impacts of climate change highlight the interconnectedness of our planet and the need for international cooperation.

At first glance, you might question how a master's program like the MDP could possibly provide guidance to students working on such a diverse array of topics. Fortunately, students in the UF MDP draw on the experience and knowledge of a large group of core and affiliate faculty across many departments of the university. We are quite grateful for this invaluable support that enriches and strengthens our program. One such faculty member, Dr. Muthusami Kumaran, Associate Professor of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, has been an outstanding supporter of the program since its initiation, serving as major advisor to several students, offering courses on non-profit management and fundraising for non-profits and NGOs. In India, he visited MDP students while they were carrying out their field practicums and he serves on the Steering Committee of the program. He kindly accepted an invitation to be interviewed in this newsletter and offer a glimpse into his professional trajectory, his perspectives on the MDP Program and the crucial role non-profits and NGOs play in the development sector and the challenges they face in accomplishing their respective missions.

We are always proud to share updates on what our graduates are doing. In this issue four of our alumni have sent brief overviews of the exciting work they are undertaking in the US and around the world, reminding us of the constructive, multiplier effect passionate and committed professionals can make in today's world.

Before closing, I would like to express once more my appreciation to faculty members who have contributed to the MDP program in the past year and also to the Center for Latin American Studies, the Center for African Studies, the International Center, the Graduate School, the Office of the Provost and the Tropical Conservation and Development Program. This broad support is the key to success of the program. I would also like to thank Daniela Lizano, our new Graduate Assistant, who took leadership in the preparation of this newsletter.

Finally, a happy and successful 2018 to all our readers.

Glenn Galloway, PhD
MDP Program Director
University of Florida

Welcome Cohort 8!

This fall the MDP program welcomed 8 students into the program.

Two of the students come from Colombia and Costa Rica. They bring a diverse array of backgrounds, interests and experiences, ranging from Geographical Spatial Analysis and Humanitarian Work, to Education, Conservation and Labor Rights. They have worked for non-profits, as activists, in international education, and also the for-profit private sector. You can review their profiles at: <http://mdp.africa.ufl.edu/people/current-students/>



Cohort 6 Graduates

Congratulations and best of luck to our final Cohort 6 graduates. We will miss you!!!



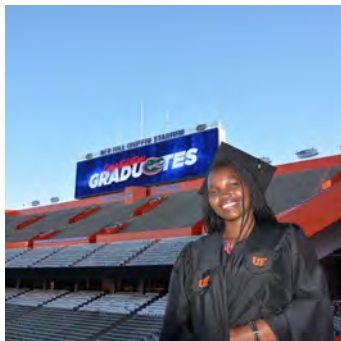
Russell Anderson



Eunmi Song



Rosanna Kingston



Grace Kihombo



Zotha Zungu

Student	Location	Project Title	Committee Members	Specializations
Russell Anderson	Belize	"Coastal Resource Management within Placencia, Belize: Analysis of Challenges and Opportunities in Caribbean Development"	Bette Loiselle (TCD) (Chair) Paul Monaghan (Agricultural Education & Communication), Sarah McKune (African Studies / Environmental & Global Health)	Agriculture Education & Leadership, Emergency Services & Disaster Preparedness, Ecological Restoration, Natural Resource Policy Administration, Latin American Studies, TCD
Zotha Zungu	South Africa	"Data Know Best: Tracking Learner Achievement and the Impact of the Old Mutual Flagship Program in Nine Schools in Motheo District, Free-State Province, South Africa"	Sarah McKune (African Studies / Environmental & Global Health) (Chair) Glenn Israel (Agricultural Education & Communication)	Monitoring & Evaluation, African Studies, TCD
Rosanna Kingston	Haiti	"Tires are good for the Soles: Process Documentation of Upcycling"	Sebastian Galindo (Agricultural Education & Communication) (Chair) Jaclyn Kropp (Food & Resource Economics), John Kraft (Warrington College of Business)	Organizational Leadership for Nonprofits, Entrepreneurship, Latin American Studies, TCD
Grace Kihombo	Tanzania	"Assessment of factors contributing to girls' school attendance and academic performance on Form Four national examination in Mbeya- Tanzania"	Susan Paulson (CLAS) (Chair) Andrew Noss (MDP / African Studies)	Education and Gender, African Studies, TCD
Eunmi Song	Uganda	"Understanding the Reproductive Health Education Needs of Adolescent Girls in Uganda"	Sarah McKune (African Studies / Environmental & Global Health) (Chair) David Diehl (Family, Youth & Community Sciences)	Organizational Leadership for Nonprofits, African Studies, TCD

Awards

As reported by the [Gainesville Sun](#) and the [Independent Florida Alligator](#), **William Russell Anderson** (Cohort 6 and Fall 2017 graduate) has shattered the record for graduate certificates, not only by MDP students, but by all University of Florida graduate students to date. By taking 18 credits in Fall and Spring semesters and 9 credits over Summer semesters, Russ completed a concentration in Climate Science as well six certificates: Tropical Conservation and Development (TCD), Latin American Studies, Ecological Restoration, Natural Resource Policy Administration, Leadership in Agricultural Education and Communication, and Emergency Services and Disaster Management. It has been a great pleasure to have Russ in our program, and we are proud of his accomplishments!



Congratulations to MDP Affiliate professor **Christine Overdevest** (Department of Sociology and Criminology and Law), selected as a UFIC Global Fellow for 2017-2018! Led by UFIC's Office for Global Research Engagement, the Global Fellows Program aims to build a cohort of UF scholars who will provide campus leadership in international research activities, elevate the status of UF's internationalization mission and build strong institutional relationships for global engagement. Dr. Overdevest will develop her fellowship in Pakistan.



During the 5th Annual International Conference on Sustainable Development, our MDP Professor, Dr. Renata Serra, with her colleagues, Michelle Kendall and Alexandra Towns, won the "Best Paper Award" with their work: "*Engaging Men and Promoting Equitable Household Decision-Making in Agriculture and Livelihood Projects.*"

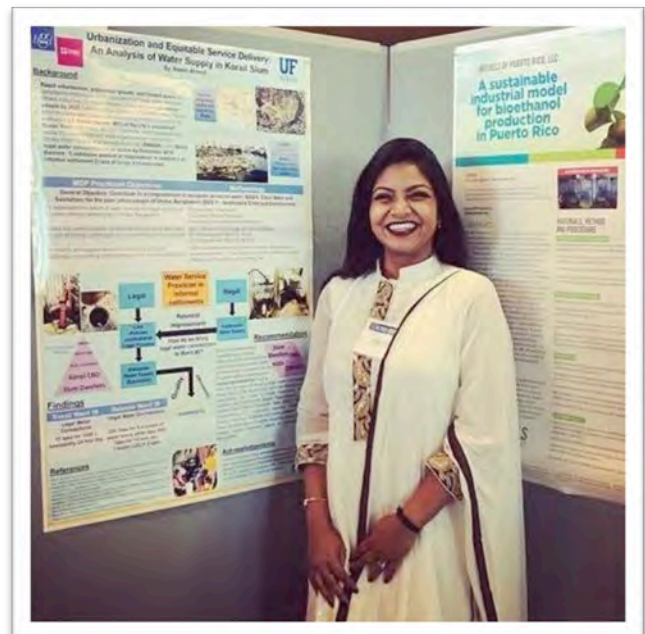
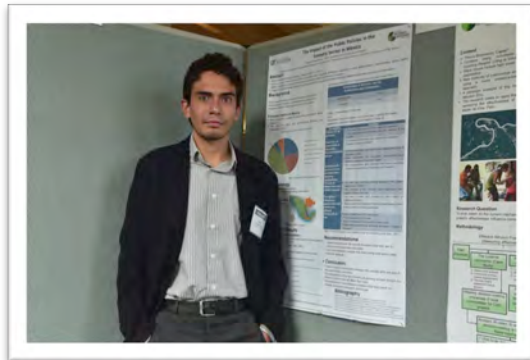


5th Annual International Conference on Sustainable Development



Our Cohort 7 Students attended in September the 5th Annual International Conference on Sustainable Development at Columbia University in New York City. This conference draws together development world leaders and practitioners, sharing their knowledge, research results and experiences.

Our students participated in oral and poster presentations about their 2017 Field Practicums. They also took advantage of the event to network and generate new contacts for future work.



“Dr. Reehana Raza, Center on International Development and Governance at The Urban Institute: Careers and Development”

In September we welcomed Dr. Reehana Raza (PhD Economics, Cambridge), senior research associate at the Center on International Development and Governance at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. She spoke to MDP students about her experience and opportunities with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), USAID, Department for International Development (DFID) and other bilateral agencies.

Her research interests include: institutions, political economy, human development and service delivery. Raza is also the founding member and first director of Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives (IDEAS), and has taught at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) in Pakistan.



“Natasha Sakolsky Executive Director, Pact Institute: Practitioner Careers and Development”

In October MDP students enjoyed engaging with Natasha Sakolsky (MPH Tulane), executive director of PACT Institute, about her experience in Africa with HIV/AIDS and reproductive health initiatives, strategic planning, organizational design, operations and change management, resource mobilization, and partnership development. She also discussed her current efforts to mobilize private sector funding (Global Fund, Gates Foundation, Coca-Cola Foundation, Chevron) to improve health and livelihoods of people involved tin and tungsten mining operations in central Africa.

PACT is a non-profit international development organization founded in 1971, Pact works on the ground in nearly 40 countries to improve the lives of those who are challenged by poverty and marginalization.



Cohort 7 Summer Practicums

Name	Country	Host Organization	FP Title
Anna Martinson	South Korea	Teach North Korean Refugees	Financial Sustainability in Seoul, South Korea: Teach North Korean Refugees
Margarita Fontecha	Colombia	Fondo Acción	A New Hope. Social capital and Community Capacity Building for Forest Conservation in Caquetá (Colombia), under a post-conflict scenario.
Derek Sindler	Republica Dominicana	AgroFrontera	Conservation Agriculture in Practice: Rice in Northwest Dominican Republic
Miguel Olivas	Mexico	Centro Interdisciplinario de Investigación para el Desarrollo Integral Regional-Instituto Politecnico Nacional	"The impact of the public policies in the forestry sector in México"
Jackie Allegra Curnick	Alaska, US	Alaska Community Action on Toxics	Environmental Health and Justice in Alaska Documentary: Pulling Teeth from a Polar Bear
Florencia Lathrop Rossi	Costa Rica	Asociacion de Servicio Comunitario Nacional y Ambiental	"Mujeres de Corcovado: experiences using design and visual communication as tools for agency."
Grace Palacios Chavez	Peru	Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) // German Agency for International Cooperation	The role of Kichwa Lamas indigenous women in the conservation of their community forests and their participation in the implementation of the Conditional Direct Transfers
Daniel J. Sarafan	Cambodia	International Justice Mission	An Analysis of International Justice Mission's Counter Labor Trafficking Initiative in Cambodia
Max Gebler	Ghana	Hen Mpoano	Plenty of Fish in the Sea? Shark Fishing and the Fin Trade in Ghana: A Biting Review
Nazmi Ahmed	Bangladesh	BRAC	Institutional collaboration for water provision and management
Tania Romero	Peru	ARC Amazon	Planning of conservation and Development projects
Breton Homewood	Honduras	INGENAES (USAID, UF)	Gender roles and the effectiveness of agricultural extension
Corey Jones	Dem. Rep. Congo	Redeeming Love Ministries	M&E of programs benefiting women and children impacted by war
Zotha Zungu	South Africa	Old Mutual Flagship	Data Know Best: Tracking Learner Achievement and the Impact of the Old Mutual Flagship Program in Nine Schools in Motheo District, Free-State Province, South Africa
Grace Kihombo	Tanzania	Salvation Army	Assessment of factors contributing to girls' school attendance and academic performance on Form Four national examination in Mbeya- Tanzania
Rosanna Kingston	Haiti	Rebuild Globally	Tires are good for the Soles: Process Documentation of Upcycling
Sheila Nyokabi Maingi	South Africa	Gender Links for Equality and Justice	M&E Entrepreneurship programs countering gender-based violence
Estefania Rodriguez	Swaziland	Swaziland Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise	Participation of women in goat value chain
Nicole Yohe	Uganda	Catholic Relief Services	Evaluate WASH and Cash-for-Work programs for refugees

Cohort 7 Field Practicums (continued)



Testimonial from Host Organization

“Margarita, after traveling to some of the most remote areas of intervention of Fondo Acción’s Connected Landscapes (Caquetá, Colombia) and working with team members and beneficiaries, brought knowledgeable and insightful recommendations on how to improve our performance regarding stakeholder participation and strengthening in social conflict areas. But she went beyond showing us how to improve – she provided the first external positive evaluation on the strategies adopted by Fondo Acción, which have resulted in a significant positive impact of our intervention in local communities.”

Natalia Arango
Fondo Accion
Maragrita Fontecha’s
Host Organization

MDP Students Outside of the Classroom

When students reflect on their master's program, they often emphasize the academic dimensions. However, students also take part in an array of exciting extra-curricular activities outside of the classroom. Here we highlight a sample of these activities to show the wealth of experience MDP students gain while enrolled in the program, as well as their service to the community.

Nazmi Ahmed (Cohort 7) and **Angela Melidosian** (Cohort 8): Gender and Development Working Group Coordinators

Carlita Fiestas (Cohort 7): Family Nutrition Program IFAS/Extension staff

Emma Lannon (Cohort 8): Tutor for student athletes at UF/ Gameday Ambassador at UF Games.

Nick Diaz (Cohort 8): LISL Health and Nutrition staff

Maria Waked (Cohort 7): Spanish and Portuguese Studies Department TA

Mary Vasilevsky (Cohort 8): Sustainable Athletes Intern

Daniel Acosta (Cohort 8): Livestock Innovation Lab Intern

Fiona Hogan (Cohort 7): Fiscal Assistant III, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

Dylan Rigsby (Cohort 8): Division of Enrollment Management-Communications GA

Daniela Lizano (Cohort 8): MDP Program GA

Margarita Fontecha (Cohort 7): Communication and Leadership Skills Professor

Jesse Cosme (Cohort 8): Graduate Assistants United GA

Breton Homewood (Cohort 7): UF Campus Peace Corps Recruiter (UFIC)

Max Gelber (Cohort 7): African Studies Quarterly Editorial Board

Jennifer Meisenhelder (Cohort 5): Project Manager, Physical Plant Division (UF)

William Russell Anderson (Cohort 6), **Sheila Nyokabi Maingi** (Cohort 7), **Daniel Acosta** (Cohort 8): MDP Global and MDP North American Students and Alumni Advisory Council (SAAC)

Sheila Nyokabi Maingi (Cohort 7): African Studies Quarterly Book Review Editor

Working and Contributing to Puerto Rico's Cause: **UNITED FOR PUERTO RICO!**

This Fall MDP Program (students, faculty and friends) helped together to collaborate to Puerto Rico's cause after hurricane Irma. We want to thank everyone that volunteered and donated items to the people of Puerto Rico!



Interview with Dr. Muthusami Kumaran

“Without NGOs the world would be a much darker place”



How did you decide to start a career in NGO Management? How did you become involved with NGO work?

My origin is from India. I have PhD in Public Administration from my home country. I came to the US in 1991 and I completed my second PhD in Urban Public Affairs. I also have an undergrad degree in Chemistry and two Masters, one in Political Science and another in Public Administration. After my second PhD, my first job was with the Non-Profit Sector in Washington DC. I had worked already in the past for NGOs, when I was in India, as a volunteer, but this time I was employed by an NGO. My interest in NGO Management started when I was doing my second PhD. I was part of the Community Outreach Partnership Center, which brings capacities to local communities, especially communities in distress. We won a 500K grant, and we started working with a community in Louisville, Kentucky. They were passing through a hard time. We helped them in program planning, capacity building, basic technical resources and how to manage non-profits. It was very powerful to see what they could do, so that led to my interest in teaching Non-Profit Management and at the same time (2001-2002) to my interest in a deeper understanding of non-profits. Then I worked for a State Government organization for 6 years and that involved non-profit work as well.

I launched my teaching career in 2004 at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu, teaching first Public Administration and then Non-Profit Management. I graduated the first class in Non-Profit Management there. In 2006, I began to focus my research on NGOs as well. I worked in India first, which by the way has the second biggest NGO sector in the world, after the US. I started working on how NGOs help in disaster management in India (after a big tsunami event there), and then with the different roles NGOs play in different countries, based on local realities: political, economical, social, and regulatory frameworks.

When I came to UF in 2009, the Non-Profit Program was expanding and they hired me to teach some basic courses in Non-Profit Management. I've doing that since then: Non-Profit Management, Fundraising and Risk Management, Planning and Evaluation. In 2011, after the MDP Program started I realized that there was a natural connection, as NGOs play a key role in international development, and MDP Students interact with NGOs as development practitioners.

In 2012, we agreed to develop a Non-Profit minor for Graduate Students and that's how I started my interaction with the MDP Program. I think our two courses are value-added for MDP, not only for understanding non-profits, but also in how to manage development programs and volunteers, among others. And the MDP Program is amazing. In 2014 I became one of the members of the Steering Committee who advise the Program.

What have you found more rewarding working with the Non-Profit sector and with NGOs?

I found volunteering a very rewarding aspect of working with NGOs. This is about service. And service is required to teach, to work, and to do research. It is about helping. We are required to help. In addition to volunteering, also the capacity building aspect is rewarding: teaching NGOs how to develop a mission statement, putting together a fundraising plan, giving workshops. When I see NGOs doing tremendous work, I say: “*without NGOs the world would be a much darker place*”. Without NGOs, in many countries people would have no options for a more decent life. Many NGOs have started because of an emotional response to need, and they’re passionate about the needs and issues of the people: hunger, environment... My major fulfillment lies in teaching them how to do it better, through management, planning, marketing, and raising funds. That’s what we call capacity building. NGOs can be more effective, their impacts will be much better and also they’ll be more efficient. It is very rewarding also to be on NGO Boards, being part of a small group of leaders who provide information and help them improve their service. That’s the highest level of involvement. And that’s what keeps me going. My teaching, my work and my service, they go all together.

What has been your greatest challenge associated with work in NGO management in developing countries and in the US?

The first challenge would be the demand. There’s a huge need to improve the capacities. Without exceptions, NGOs work with very minimal resources. One of the frustrations that emerges when I train NGOs is that they just don’t have resources to implement their management. I have done some pro bono work as part of some grants. In fact, last December I was part of an NGO grant and I trained more than 150 NGO leaders in Nepal. The frustrating part is that many of them come to learn and when we go back 5 or 6 months later to see how much of what they learned they actually used, a small percentage of them actually implemented what they learned. And it is sometimes because of their local realities, the burnout. Sometimes they work so much and the tasks are so many. They start with good intentions but it is very difficult to manage everything at once. So that’s the frustration for me. Although there’s an interest, not all of them are able to implement all of what they’ve learned.

Which advice do you like to offer to incoming and current MDP Students concerning their future work on the Development field?

First of all, I have great admiration for all MDP students, because they are engaged in International Development. And that clearly tells how service-minded they are. Independently of their focus, the core is that they all want to serve: to make the world a better place, in their own way. And also I have great admiration for the Faculty members, and for Glenn and Andy--they are all so dedicated in terms of advising students, and helping them with their practicum. They care about making sure the students get the max of their two years experience.

Faculty Spotlight (continued)

You guys are on campus for two years. I would advise you that, beyond the excellent curriculum designed for you, and despite that you are very busy doing all those things, if you can use this opportunity to identify and take courses with a special focus, that will increase your marketability. There are so many resources available from faculty and programs. Even if you're not taking their courses, you can ask faculty to serve on your committee, and they will help you to learn and having better direction. The bottom line is that, in addition to all the wonderful courses that you are taking, also take time to reach out to all the faculty who are teaching, who are doing research in the area you're interested in, and they could be country-specific. So you have all these opportunities to take classes and also to take advice as well. And if they cannot be in your committees, at least meet with them! We are here to help you guys and to make sure you have what you need. Because your responsibility in the future goes beyond the wonderful Program you're in. It goes to International Development and building a better place. And you need all the help we can give you.

Student Publications

Sheila Maingi (Cohort 7), during her 2017 Field Practicum in South Africa, participated writing a Chapter on "*Peace Building and Conflict Resolution*" in the a regional publication known as the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer 2017 by Gender Links, Southern Africa:

<http://genderlinks.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Baro-2017-Ch8-Peace-building-and-conflict-resolution.pdf>

Margarita Fontecha (Cohort 7) co-authored the article "Climate Change Communication in Colombia," published in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Change:

<http://climatescience.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228620-e-598>

In addition, Margarita recently published her 2017 Field Practicum work in the Columbia University Journal of Sustainable Development:

<https://consilience.journals.cdrs.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2018/01/Fontecha-finalized-1.pdf>

Former MDP Student **Chad Henry** (Cohort 5), jointly with MDP affiliate faculty **Laura Warner** from the Department of Agricultural Education & Communication and the Center for Landscape Conservation & Ecology at UF, recently published his 2015 Field Practicum work:

Warner, L. A., Harder, A., Henry, C. V., Ganpat, W., & Martin, E. (2017). Factors that influence engagement in home food production: Perceptions of citizens of Trinidad. *Journal of Agricultural Education* 58(3), 239–255. doi:10.5032/jae.2017.03239

Fall Festivities!

This fall the MDP students enjoyed festivities and social activities like our traditional Potlucks, an evening reception at the UF president's house hosted by the Center for Latin American Studies and the UF Latino Alumni Association, Thanksgiving celebrations, and more!!



Hans Goertz (Cohort 3)

“After graduating from the MDP program in 2015, I joined the International Programs Office of UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS Global). Together we launched a five-year USAID-funded agricultural capacity building project in Haiti. I was part of an advance team to Haiti that set up an office, recruited staff and established our academic assistance programs. I left the project in 2016 to move to Knoxville, Tennessee with my partner. I have since returned to Haiti to assist with relief efforts for Hurricane Matthew, and to develop funding proposals for reforestation programming.



I currently work as a research administrator for the University of Tennessee, supporting aerospace engineering. This has been a transition from my training as a development practitioner, but the grant writing and management skills from my MDP coursework have been applicable in this new role. I remain connected to the development community by serving on the board of a Returned Peace Corp Volunteer (RPCV) support group for my PC host-country of Mozambique.”

Rebecca Starkman (Cohort 6)

“Upon graduating from the MDP Program in 2017, I started working at Counterpart International in Washington, D.C. as a program finance officer for Latin America and Africa projects.

My role is to support the field offices of Guatemala, Haiti, Morocco, and Zambia with reviewing program activity budgets, financial reports, and generating expense reports for the programs teams. The projects I’m involved in focus primarily on capacity building for civil society organizations and enabling local partners to advocate for increased transparency among government and private institutions.



I’ve gained experience in analyzing project grants, proposal budgets, and contracts. The MDP Program has prepared me in more ways than one for the work I’m doing now. It has definitely helped me be more successful in understanding the connection between the project in the field and the intended impact, as well as measuring/monitoring the program impact. As part of the programs team, this is an integral part of program planning and fostering relationships between donors and partners in the field. Right now I’m enjoying learning and growing in this new career. I’ll be traveling to Morocco for three weeks in February to visit with the field office and assist with their administrative project tasks. I’m excited for what the future holds and the opportunity to travel and work closely with field teams.”

Rachel Velez (Cohort 6)

"I am currently working as the Environmental Justice Organizer / Communications Coordinator at Clean Water for North Carolina. It is a dream come true, as I've been volunteering with them since arriving in North Carolina, and they have an extraordinary mission of working with low-income communities throughout the state promoting water rights and clean water infrastructure.

I am so very excited for my future in the water sector and want to thank the MDP Program for providing me the skills and practical know-how that helped me land this position.

I will keep you updated in my work and hope to visit very soon. And if there is one thing I can share with the upcoming graduating cohort is to apply, apply, apply and never give up hope! Getting a job is a job in itself!"



Rugiyatu Kane (Cohort 5)

"A year after graduating from the UF MDP program I am happy to have returned to my home country: Senegal. I have fully immersed myself as an early career development practitioner and have been able to put to into practice many of my acquired skills and knowledge. I am currently helping to shape the next leaders of Africa through my work as a teacher at the Senegalese-American Bilingual School. I teach an exciting AP Seminar course I designed and developed entitled "Sustainable Development and Me" through which I cover topics ranging from identity and socio-economic inequalities to environmental problems and sustainable solutions.



I have also joined the Senegalese Evaluation Association (SenEval) through which I have been able to benefit from various professional development opportunities, notably attending the 6th Conference of the International Society for Child Indicators in Montreal Canada in June 2017, as well as being able to organize several seminars and workshops on child and youth participation in evaluation and research. My involvement with SenEval has allowed me to engage with expert and emerging evaluators as well as other local development practitioners. I am proud to be part of the "Emerging Evaluators Cohort" and a member of the Child and Youth Centered Evaluation Focus Group.

In July 2017, the Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa nominated me as one of Africa's Most Outstanding Emerging Women Leaders. I traveled to Ghana to follow a three-week leadership institute along with 24 other young women from countries all over Africa. It was an honor to represent Senegal, and as a MILEAD fellow I am excited about developing a project that combines my love for yoga and women's empowerment through the "Yoga, Leadership and Service Camp." This camp will challenge teenage girls (13-17) through workshops on personal and community development using principles of yoga to help them build confidence, self-love, and their own service-learning project.

Most recently I have been on a team with USAID-ERA (Education and Research in Agriculture) and Virginia Tech University helping to build capacity across the country in Positive Youth Development through a USAID project seeking to establish 4-H clubs in Senegal. We just finished training over 100 club leaders who will help reach our target goal to impact 19,000 youth by 2022, and I am so excited to be part of this movement!"

Wishing You a Happy New Year from our MDP Family to Yours

We have all been witness to the invaluable work being carried out by MDP students with broad, cross-departmental faculty support and by our growing body of alumni, and this is an opportunity to contribute to our exciting program! The MDP UF Foundation Account will support MDP students, for example, in the realization of their capstone field practicums and to attend relevant conferences where they can present their work and engage with other practitioners. We thank our alumni and faculty for their very generous contributions to date.

Donations can be made online at: <https://www.uff.ufl.edu/OnlineGiving/FundDetail.asp?FundCode=020485>

