

C'nect

July 2015, n° 18

LESSONS LEARNED

Tips on how to get the best out of your internship

ALL WORK NO PAY:

Are NOHA students' unpaid internships justified?

REDISCOVERING MONGOLIA'S MANUSCRIPTS

Preserving and restoring books at Gandan monastery

Dear Readers,

This edition of C'NECT magazine is about employment and internships. The thorny issue of recruitment in the humanitarian and development sectors has drawn much blood. With no standardised hiring procedures, sometimes no formal hiring process at all, and a high applicant rate, entry level applications in this field can feel like weeding through a field of nettles in search for that one rose. Most sectors maintain their own fields; clearing out over- and under-qualified candidates through well-written job criteria, and grooming young buds with well-researched workplans. The humanitarian sector does not.

This made writing this issue very hard. There were no human resource specialists we could interview, no mentorship programmes to profile, no common process we could review. Everyone who finds an internship, job or consultancy in this field seems to have come about it a different way. Some got them through close personal contacts, others were sought out for certain skills, but most often it was after applying to a seemingly random position and getting lucky. A 'big break'. Humanitarianism is the new show biz, but with no agents or talent scouts to help you out. This edition of C'NECT could never hope to be that talent scout for you, but it can hope to set the playing field. Recent alumni and current NOHA students have come together to give insight into internships and early employment.

The C'NECT magazine has been an under-used tool in recent years, and its success has been based on the motivations of a few and the engagement of the many. This edition marks the last that I will personally oversee, but I am happy I have been part of that motivating few these past years. I now leave the position of editor-in-chief with a growing readership, a distinguished team of writers, and a slowly growing brand. I also leave this magazine in the capable hands of Anouk Hulspas, who I can announce as the next editor-in-chief of C'NECT magazine. She has been a brilliant partner in this edition and it has been an honour to watch her work.

And now all that is left to do is to thank you, dear reader, for being part of the many who have engaged with this magazine. On behalf of the C'NECT team, I thank you for your readership and I hope this edition helps you, in some small way, to navigate through the weeds, towards your future career. Happy job-hunting and happy reading.

Signed,



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Claire Louise Travers

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SHARE YOUR SHOT!

The September 2014 floods were the worst floods that hit Kashmir (India) in the last 110 years. However, the community got back to regular life after proving an impressive resilience.



Text and Pictures by Malashree Bhargava

Malashree Bhargava is a practitioner and a student of humanitarian action and disaster risk management. Since NOHA Masters (2006-2007) she has served in very different and dynamic contexts such as with the UN agencies in Burundi and India, GIZ in Afghanistan, DG-ECHO in Belgium and NGOs in Spain.



Text and Pictures by Lidia Cantero

For several weeks the Monastery of Kingthar Dhamma in Rathedaung, Rakhine State, Myanmar, become Lidia's operational centre for a comprehensive nutrition survey, the first ever done in the area by an INGO.

Lidia's work slightly differs depending on the organization or mission (She worked with Save the Children, MSF and ACF) but she is a nutritionist so mainly her work is in the field of health and malnutrition, she has done missions in Pakistan, Niger, Djibouti, Myanmar and now Sierra Leone.



THE TALE OF TWO CITIES: HEADQUARTERS IN GENEVA AND NYC

Lucie and Claire both completed internships with the UN from August to November 2014, in Geneva and New York respectively. Here they write about their experiences: their application process, the working environments and living conditions.

Lucie (NOHA Aix & 2013-14) interned at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Environmental Division in Geneva.



Claire (NOHA Uppsala & Groningen 2013-15) interned at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Humanitarian and Fragile Context Branch (HFCB) in New York.



I applied online on the UNECE's website and got short-listed for an internship within the Environmental Division. The selection process has been quite long as I went through a number of steps that left me wondering if I would ever get to see the end of it: it included, inter alia, a written assessment, a phone interview and a lot of referrals from professors as I did not have any previous professional experience in the legal field, except for a quick internship with Amnesty International in Canada. However I finally made it to the end and got selected as the "preferred candidate". Hurray!

I did a lot of readings to make sure they would not send me packing after a few days, bought a suit and moved to Geneva for three months. I was lucky enough that Geneva is just an hour's drive from my hometown and that I had family friends I could stay with during the week, making things easier. Geneva is a very expensive city and UN interns do not get paid: living there can be quite a challenge and make you think twice about applying to an internship, which is a shame.

I interned full-time for the secretariat of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Par-

ticipation and Access to Justice on Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) from August 2014 to November 2014.

The Aarhus Convention is a new kind of environmental agreement linking human rights and environmental rights. It was adopted in Aarhus, Denmark, on 25 June 1998. It entered into force on 30 October 2001 and as at April 2014 it had 47 State Parties from the UNECE region, including the European Union but it however opened for global accession.

Both the Convention and its Protocol are the only legally binding international instruments on environmental democracy that put Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in practice. Whereas most multilateral environmental agreements cover obligations that parties have to each other, the Aarhus Convention covers obligations that parties have to the public. It grants the public rights to easily access information, participate effectively in decision-making in environmental matters and to seek

justice if their rights were violated.

As an intern my primary role was to assist the Secretariat in its daily work. The work ranged from the most menial tasks (scanning documents, updating databases) to the most challenging and interesting ones. You have to be prepared to do both, as it is part of the job. I had, inter alia, to update the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee communications database and proofread French translations of various official documentations, but I also got to accomplish many challenging tasks such as drafting the pre-hearing findings of a few cases that were going to be submitted to the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee, or conducting legal analyses evaluating the consistency of several State's legislations with the Convention's requirements. At the end of my internship I also got to draft a chapter on the Aarhus Convention as a benchmark for international environmental governance for an upcoming book on independent accountability mechanisms, which I share credits with my supervisor.

One of the many perks of being an intern at the Palais des Nations in Geneva is that you have the chance to attend many inter-

national meetings where you meet inspiring people: I had the chance to meet the Secretary General Ban Ki Moon while attending a town hall meeting and it is something that I won't forget any time soon. And sometimes you even get to be an integral part of the meetings: after preparing a legal analysis of the revised draft environmental and social policy of the World Bank, I was able to present my findings at a meeting with a few of their delegates. I also supported the secretariat during the 46th meeting of the Compliance Committee, getting the chance to be part of an international meeting for 4 days straight.

Being an intern at the UN has its drawbacks: you work long hours and you don't get paid for it. However, I found that what you are accomplishing can be rewarding in many other ways. You get to be part of a team that tries to implement changes in the world, no matter how small those changes are. If you commit to your work it is interesting, challenging and you learn a lot, everyday. It is a great experience but really, your internship is what you make out of it.

My application and selection process couldn't have been more different from Lucie's. I received this internship opportunity after visiting the UNFPA New York offices, and meeting a member of staff who worked for UNFPA; Ms. Erin Kenny. I simply approached Erin to ask if she had an opening for an intern, and she asked me on the spot if I had experience in Communications. When she listened to my instant pitch she asked for my CV. The whole process of 'selection' was simply a passing of my CV and her word onto the right people. My 'interview' was casual, I wore a summer dress. She asked me on the spot when I wanted to start and what my hours would be. She had already decided to hire me. I merely had to fill in paperwork and the INSPIRA application as a formality.

I started a few months later, but I did not do any serious preparation – I didn't read up on what they did, or buy special clothes. Unlike Lucie, my internship would be staying 3250 miles from home, in New York. There were visa issues to sort out, and I was all alone. Finding accommodation was one of the hardest experience of my life, and there were no family friends who could help me out.

Like Geneva, New York is expensive and internships are usually unpaid. But unlike Geneva, the cost of food is relatively cheap – it's rent and bills that put you over the edge. I interned part time for the fund for population activities (UNFPA), on communications and knowledge management from August 2014 to November 2014.

UNFPA HFCB is a new mainstreaming branch of a predominantly development branch. UNFPA takes its organising principal from the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development: to ensure universal access to reproductive health services, support capacity building and promote awareness of population activities. Following the Millennium Summit in 2000 and the development of the Development Goals, UNFPA worked to track and assist in the goal to improve maternal health. In 2008, they became a co-lead for the Gender Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR), established under the Global Protection Cluster. As such, UNFPA has emerged as a strong leader in the field of GBV programming, and has adopted this goal into its training and protocols internally.

As an intern my primary role was

to address the lack of a simple interface whereby country and regional offices can access resources and information relevant for their programmes, and share knowledge with other country offices. Luckily, the organisational culture in New York meant that I did not have to do menial tasks like photocopying or data entry. I was challenged everyday and treated like a member of staff. I had responsibilities, and deadlines. I had to run consultations to establish the information needs of the different regional offices, and present regularly to executive staff. I created a new framework for the existing internal knowledge management hub.

Often I was left to run the project alone with little help or oversight. This was both scary and invigorating. I had to be proactive and take the initiative – they expected so much from me. I thought this was unfair when I started – I was 'just' an intern. But pretty soon I stopped thinking of myself as 'just' anything. I had a job to get done.

Just like Lucie, one of the most important perks of interning at the UN plaza in New York is that you have the opportunity to network. I built up a cache of personal con-

tacts, who I met at meetings and events in the Plaza and surrounding areas. Everyone was willing to put aside some time to grab a coffee. Unlike in Geneva, I was never 'just' the intern. I was not introduced as an intern, but a colleague, and my name was attached to some important research that UNFPA used at high level events. People began to know who I was. I began to see people I had met before who would gesture me over and introduce me enthusiastically. At the General Assembly I got the chance to be part of consultations, observe the proceedings and go for lunch, coffee or dinner after. Being an intern at the UN is hard work, with no pay. But, like Lucie, I was part of a team, I was challenged and I learnt a lot. Unlike Lucie, New York makes you feel unlimited, even as 'just' an intern. You can be as important and as integral as your confidence allows you to be. New York doesn't let a good person be constrained by a hierarchical structure of G, P and D staff. She'll let you shine through irrespective, if you are bright enough.

WARMING TO THE JOB

Text and Pictures: Sanne Hogesteeger

Sanne Hogesteeger (NOHA Groningen & Bochum 2013/2014) conducted an internship with the Red Cross Climate Centre and the IFRC Africa Zone Office. Here, she writes about her experiences, including the challenges she faced and how the internship affected her.

Was I really qualified? Could I really do this? Internships stretch and challenge you, and the question is: could I rise to the challenge and become one step closer to the job?

Students that have looked for an internship are familiar with the stress of finding a good placement. My search started months in advance, and led me to so many web pages and so many LinkedIn profiles that I did not really know what I wanted anymore. Two months

before I had to start my internship, the Groningen students received an email from an old NOHA student, who was working for the Red Cross Climate Centre. They were considering taking interns from our program.

After writing my motivation letter, I was invited for a Skype interview and (in my opinion), there was an instant connection. Every interview is different, but I liked this one a lot because it did not feel like an interrogation but rather a nice fluid conversation.

They asked me about my interests and my ambitions and which topic and country I was interested in. I tried to suppress my hopes, but I wanted this internship. After a couple of days they let me know – they wanted me! However, before this could be finalized, they had to find a place for me at a Red Cross Field Office, since they did not need an intern at the headquarters in The Hague. I was excited, because they were mostly looking into offices in Africa, the continent that I had focused on during

my bachelor program. Just three weeks before I eventually left for my internship, I heard that they found a place for me at the IFRC Africa Zone Office in Nairobi, Kenya. Around that time they also sent me my Terms of Reference and the real preparations could start: Getting my vaccinations in time, contacting the people in Nairobi for housing, and packing my bags. This was also the moment when the nerves started, because my contract said I would be a “Junior Climate Change Advisor”.



I would be responsible for organizing a Climate Change training for African Red Cross National Societies, and preparing for a possible El Niño. An El Niño is caused by an abnormal warming of the ocean surface water in the Pacific, which leads to an above average amount of rainfall in East Africa. Practically an El Niño causes flash floods, so I would be monitoring the forecasts and would be responsible for triggering “no-regret action” if the threat of an El Niño grew stronger. ‘No-regret actions’ were the language used for any preparedness actions that would decrease the risk of the community, but would not be costly or non-relevant if the event was not occurring this year. This was so much responsibility for me. I would have to learn to read El Niño forecasts and other weather and climate reports.

Luckily, I found a great teacher in my supervisor at the Climate Centre. She taught me the tricks of the trade, and gave me loads of readings as well as a Climate Training Kit. Within a couple of weeks I was writing El Niño updates including explanations for East African National Societies on how to read them and what kind of questions they should ask themselves to see if they were prepared for a possible El Niño. Ehen I also got the opportunity

to sit in on a different project with the Kenya Meteorological Department I knew what they were talking about and even had something to say during these meetings.

However, four months after I arrived in Nairobi, an El Niño event had still not started and countries were more concerned about a possible longer dry period. When the Kenyan Red Cross put out an Emergency Drought Appeal, my ToRs changed. I visited food security projects in Burundi, and looked at one project in which people worked in cooperatives to cultivate rice. A lot of fields had not been prepared for planting yet, because people were waiting for rain to make the soil easier to cultivate, which unfortunately was a rain that would never come. This was a valuable experience for to see with my own eyes how dependent people’s livelihoods are on the climate of a region.

During this internship, I was also responsible for organizing a Climate Change training for African National Societies. I set up calls with Geneva, the Regional Office and the Climate Centre to coordinate the content of the trainings week. Additionally, I had the responsibility to communicate with the National Societies, have them send in their applications and book their

flights, hotel and transportation. This meant I needed to understand all processes that were taking place in the office, a great chance to get to know the workings of other departments. The fact I was given a lot of responsibility and different tasks, made me feel appreciated and made me want to work even harder. Facilitators from Geneva attended this week, the Climate Centre and the Zone Office who trained twenty-five participants, and I also facilitated one module during this week. The module was called ‘Early Warning, Early Action’ and I taught how to read weather forecasts. It felt great to be able to teach others about something that I had learned in the previous months.

By the end of the four months, I felt like that I was able to live up to my role as a “Junior Climate Change Advisor”. Even though the idea of being a climate change advisor had scared me, I accepted the challenge and tried the things that looked too difficult; and I am thankful for the amazing learning experience. I gained a huge amount of new knowledge, contacts and skills. I am already missing the pressure of the work and the warm and welcoming colleagues. These four months in Kenya have reaffirmed that this is the world I want to work in.



Previous page: field visit in Burundi for a food security project.
This page: farewell cake for Sanne and her colleagues that were leaving, after the end of her internship.

All Work, No Pay: Are NOHA Students’ Unpaid Internships Justified?

Text: Kate Mattingly

Most NOHA students complete an internship as part of their third semester. Although certain positions are consistently available each year, it is the student’s responsibility to find an appropriate placement for a humanitarian organisation. In most cases, the organisations do not provide remuneration.

A unpaid internships are a growing source of debate and criticism for exploiting free labour and favouring the financially well-off, but they remain omnipresent in higher education, including in the humanitarian sector. In the context of NOHA, the duplicity is obvious and immediate: humanitarian organisations work on principles such as impartiality and equal opportunity, and strive to fight exploitation and support livelihoods. How can unpaid work be justified under these ideals?

I talked with several second-year NOHA students who have recently completed their placements and shared their personal and general feelings on the issue. Kristian Rocafort of the Philippines is among NOHA's minority of non-European students, and like myself he completed his three-month placement in the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO). The European institutions are not known to be without financial resources, and while other trainees at ECHO and throughout the Commission do receive a salary, NOHA positions remain unpaid.

Kristian's poignant words underscore the dissonance between stated humanitarian ideals and practice. "Unpaid internships in the humanitarian sector are for the financially able. This is in stark contrast with the overarching goal of the sector to employ highly capable individuals from all over the world and strengthen local capacities." He feels that, especially for NOHA students from outside the European Union and poorer backgrounds, "the qualifications might fit for a posting, but budget simply cannot. It is very difficult to find something that is financially remunerated

during internships, and it is a number one priority for students living under a budget. Although some internships offer attractive terms of reference, taking an offer, living overseas for a period of time, requires money". Students are, of course free to find a post anywhere in the world, however many headquarters are located in Europe and paid positions are rare.

Anastasia Hainova was placed with Alboan, a relatively small Spanish organisation. Even though she understands the benefits and exposure students can obtain, she feels that interns "also contribute to an organisation's development with their knowledge and energy, dedicating their time to execute assigned tasks. That is why the organisation must pay its interns

"UN justifies not paying their interns saying that it is a learning experience. If I didn't do the job someone else would have to do it, so it is not an individual learning experience. It is work."

at least minimum wage. An internship is always a mutual process. Moreover, a little remuneration can motivate a student and improve the quality of his/her work." She highlights the propensity for exploitation as well: "When organisations can rotate interns every three to six months and always have some-

one free of charge, we are talking about inequality of rights".

Maya Tucker, who has volunteered for six years for Children Future International, a small non-governmental organisation (NGO), and did her internship with War Trauma Foundation in The Netherlands, points to personal and large-scale benefits of interning which mirror those of volunteer work. "I do it because I know they can't pay me, and that if they did, it's directly taking money away from the kids, programmes, and families who need it".

With part-time paid work on the side, Maya has managed to find a sustainable combination of income and giving back. If we viewed unpaid internships how we view voluntary 'charity' work or community service, would it change our outlook? The tasks are often comparable, but volunteering implies freedom to choose hours or projects. Rarely is this an intern's reality. In my own experience, being treated as an equal to my paid colleagues was a huge positive; few people enjoy being limited to unimportant or mindless tasks; coffee-making or Xeroxing being the stereotypes. At the same time, my comparable level of responsibility, workload, and skills expectations highlighted the unfairness of pay.

While Maya has enjoyed unpaid work for an organisation in which she believes, she finds it unfair that full-time internships of six months or longer go unpaid. "I feel like after three months of training and getting the gist of processes, you are a contributing employee and should be paid as that". Goodwill alone can neither solve global problems nor make up for an intern's need for income.

Big organisations need to be grateful and flexible for donated time because everyone needs to pay rent". While three months on itself may not seem so bad, many job-seekers nowadays are completing multiple unpaid internships in efforts to build experience and their CV. This type of financial investment truly excludes those without significant savings or means to stay afloat. In addition, many humanitarian organisations are based in some of the world's most expensive cities, such as Brussels, New York City, and Geneva.

"I feel like after three months of training and getting the gist of processes, you are a contributing employee and should be paid." as that"

Carin Atterby has worked in Geneva as a humanitarian affairs intern for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs (OCHA), bearing the brunt of a sky-high cost of living alongside zero income. Do you know how the UN "justifies not paying their interns? They argue it is a learning experience - as if you are actually not working but learning. Even though I am learning a lot, what I do is still work. If I didn't do the job someone else would have to do it, so it is not an individual learning experience. It is work."

It is not surprising that, coming out of such experiences in debt and disillusioned by the system, students' enthusiasm and drive to do good on a humanitarian level may be replaced by more immediate needs: employment and financial security. Thus, a focus on helping others is overshadowed by the necessary focus to help oneself. And can we blame anyone for this?

Jessika Gustavsson also did her placement with OCHA, based in Jordan, and experienced many positives in her environment. "Still being mid-crisis, the office had an emergency culture that meant flexibility and innovation but also lack of structure and strategy. It was an extremely dynamic environment where I got to meet and greet as well as get to know very powerful people, but also understand the politics behind the decisions that are being made and might change the humanitarian agenda and architecture". Her stance on remuneration is conditional: "In general I would say unpaid internships are okay after Bachelor's degrees or as a part of a Master's degree, but when an organisation/agency is asking for someone with a Master's or several years of work experience, I'm definitely not in favour of it being unpaid". I personally have filled several unpaid internship positions during my higher education years, and enjoyed some unique and amazing opportunities which may not have come otherwise. I generally did not complain about the situation because I knew what I was signing up for. But my own positive experiences don't negate the importance of the issue; the aggravation of inequality by not making an internship route viable for those with less financial flexibility. It's partly about the exploitation of those who are able, but even more about

questioning why those equally deserving are being left out altogether because of an inherently regressive practice.

Still, an outstanding guest lecturer during my second semester at Deusto described many of the stark realities in the humanitarian world. When discussing difficult and dangerous situations in the field, he reiterated a key consideration: "No one is forcing you to be there". It is important to remember that no unpaid internship is involuntary; we know the terms and we agree to them. But like myself, most students feel powerless on their own to challenge the system and somehow change this policy. If someone demands pay for an internship, it will simply go to another more willing. And as long as we all need the academic credit, this necessary evil will live on and continue to disadvantage those who cannot say yes to working for free.

You do not take a picture, you make a picture

Text and Pictures: Mareike Günsche

Mareike Günsche is a professional photographer for 15 years and a NOHA student during 2014 -2015 in Gronigen and Dublin

Going into the field for an internship or work is a new experience for a lot of students. Especially when working in foreign countries, the new surrounding should be captured to document and to show friends and family at home.

However, if you take pictures, especially while working with vulnerable groups, it would be great to keep in mind that there are actually guidelines you need to consider:

- ALWAYS ask permission from the people in your photos, before printing them, uploading them on social media or using them to document your work. If you take pictures of children you have to ask their parents or legal guardians for permission.

- Be empathetic, you take pictures of people, not of subjects. Don't use others, especially children, as decoration for your own life documentary. Think about whether you would feel comfortable to be shown in that situation/position.

- Be strict in your selection of pictures you will publish/use/upload. A good selection stands and falls with the weakest picture, better show less but strong ones than a lot, which are only ok.

- Keep in mind the ICRC Code of conduct, paragraph 5: "Ensure that the portrayal of individuals and their circumstances is fairly represented in terms of their capacities and vulnerabilities. All efforts must be made to explain how photos and stories will be used and to obtain permission from the individuals for the use of their photos and stories."

Lastly, some personal advices: if you take pictures, try to bring the camera to the same level as the people. If you point down with your camera on them, the image will have a victimizing impression. So if you want to have empowering pictures instead of stigmatizing ones, get to the same level.

Coming home and using pictures.

Similar to texts, photographs are the property of the author and should be valued as such. Here are some guidelines for the use of photos in your future work. It is a personal view and about how I as a photographer want my work to be treated, I don't necessarily refer to law.

If you are doing a presentation: Probably not all the pictures you use will be your own, so if you use the material of others always copyright it with the name of the photographer. Normally, the name of the photographer should be written under the image, sometimes it's just the organizations name they have been working for. If so, the organization has bought the picture with all rights, so name them as the owners (even though they are not the author). If you can't find a copyright name, then my advice would be not to use the image.

Uploading and publishing in an academic background: As soon as you publish the text, including the pictures, you need permission of the owner. This might sound difficult, but it's the photographer's work and if you want to use it, you have to ask. Most photographers would probably be ok with shar-

ing their work for academic use, if you or someone else will not have any profit out of the publishing. And if they worked for organizations like ICRC or MSF, you can contact the media/communication manager and ask them for permission.

Uploading and publishing/printing with profit: If you publish your text and someone (must not be you) earns money through this publication, you have to have the permission to use the photos according to the European copyright law. Also, if the material you are working with will be used for a brochure for a NGO, where no one is earning money, as soon as you print something for distribution you need permission. There are guidelines to compensate for the right to use a photographer's work; this would normally depend on the size of the picture printed, the edition and so on.

Contact:
www.mareike-guensche.com
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Examples of the tips that Mareike give.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: AN INTERVIEW WITH MAX PEREL-SLATER ON FOUNDING AN NGO

Interviewer: Claire Travers

Max Perel-Slater is a co-founder of Maji Safi Group, a non-profit organization based in the US and Tanzania. Maji Safi Group works to promote positive health behaviors and decrease communicable diseases using non-traditional leaders, such as women and youth. Max graduated from Wesleyan University in 2011 with a bachelors degree in Earth and Environmental Science and Environmental Studies. Here he talks with Claire Travers about his experience of setting up a new social venture, including the challenges and lessons learned.

Maji Safi Group's mission is to promote health and disease prevention in underserved and impoverished areas in East Africa through holistic community empowerment and by working with local women and youth. It creates safe places where rural communities can learn about disease prevention and health from each other and feel empowered to improve their Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) situation by focusing on their health behaviors. This vision results in healthier communities and a decrease in preventable diseases.

Max, you started the non-profit Maji Safi Group. What does Maji Safi mean?

It means 'Clean Water' in Swahili. Maji Safi Group works to spread information about disease prevention and improve water, sanitation and hygiene behavioral habits. We operate in rural Tanzanian communities in the Rorya District of the Mara Region. That is in northwest Tanzania on the shores of Lake Victoria – about 15 km south of the Kenyan Border. So the name is apt and easily understandable to the communities we work in.

Can you explain why you decided to set up a new organization?

The founders of Maji Safi Group, Bruce Pelz and I, identified a gap in development projects in East Africa. Rural areas tend to receive development support in terms of infrastructure-based projects, like wells and medical facilities. These types of programs may provide water or medical treatment to a rural community, but there is no WASH or health promotion to go with them. For example, our baseline research found that 48 hours after water had been treated in a household, 75% of the family's drinking water was already re-contaminated. This was because the families did not have proper information about water storage, and were not familiar with the fecal-oral disease cycle. In the area where Maji Safi Group started to operate, there were no other non-profit or-

ganizations that focused on WASH and disease prevention education. This means that for a population of roughly 250,000 people, there was a huge lack of information.

What is your view on NGO saturation?

In certain areas, there is an oversaturation of NGOs, which can lead to competition for funding and participants. An example is Kibera, Kenya, where there is a massive need for NGO work, but the area has become highly saturated, and there is very limited communication and coordination between organizations. This leads to competition and even rivalries. This is bad for development. I think that organizations need to work together, and I am trying to make Maji Safi Group do just that. At the end of 2014, Maji Safi Group was elected by the members of the Lake Zone WASH Forum as the regional WASH coordinator for the Mara Region of Tanzania. We are now in the process of developing a School WASH project with other members of Lake Zone WASH Forum. We also have a pretty unique approach that focuses on participatory interventions. And I think Maji Safi Group does a good job of developing change makers of rural public health. We train and employ local community members as Community Health Workers on a full-time basis with a competitive salary and benefits.

Community Health Workers?

Yeah, the Community Health Workers. They are key to the model Maji Safi Group uses. When we started out, we recruited young local women with low levels of education and no prior health-related work experience. We trained them, investing time and money in leadership, WASH, and facilitator training. These women have become powerful public health advocates, and because of their understanding of community needs and culture, we were able to develop highly engaging disease prevention programs. We use non-traditional methods like singing and

dancing, playing games, and telling stories. This really gained traction within the community. Soon, the project's lessons and songs could be heard in the streets of our target area. Today we work in five main areas of the community: households, hospitals, schools, community outreach, and extracurricular activities for children. Each area engages different community stakeholders, like parents, teachers, health care providers, government leaders, youth. The Community Health Workers are trained consistently across these areas and link them together.

Maji Safi Group seems to have an impressive number of female community health workers. Do you think this is an important trend in new NGOs?

Well, Maji Safi Group believes that women's empowerment is the way forward in the development of Africa. 80% of our full-time Community Health Workers are women, and 93% of them have children.

What was your background and experience before setting up your NGO?

As an undergraduate at Wesleyan University, I researched the societal costs of poor Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in the rural communities of Shirati, Tanzania, which demonstrated the devastating economic and social consequences of improper WASH conditions and negative behavioral habits. I concluded that a network of locals working to make changes in their community's public health could achieve a more sustainable outcome than previous programs. When I graduated, I was awarded several prizes to return to East Africa and pilot these conclusions. I have been involved in developing and implementing public health interventions in East Africa ever since. In 2011, I worked as a fellow in Kibera, Kenya, with Shining Hope for Communities. I managed the installation of their water distribution system and an assessment of the behavioral patterns related to water treatment methods. After that, I returned to Shirati, Tanzania, and worked for the District Hospital there to develop a pilot community outreach program that used a community health worker model for promoting disease prevention and community health.

That is a lot of experience. When you decided to start Maji Safi Group, did you do any further, specific research?

Well, I had already researched the WASH conditions in Shirati for my capstone while I was an undergraduate, but after that, me and the other co-founder, Bruce Pelz, completed a needs assessment and conducted some additional baseline research of that area.

What was the biggest challenge to setting up Maji Safi Group?

The biggest challenge was, and still is, data. The data from health facilities in the area are notoriously inaccurate, which makes monitoring and evaluation really difficult. In the beginning, we needed to find ways to measure behavioral change. While it is easy to measure attendance and understanding of programs, it has been a huge challenge to measure whether the participants have changed their behavior in their day-to-day life. You cannot, for instance, follow participants around to see when they wash their hands or openly defecate, and self-reporting can be inaccurate or biased. This is a challenge because it is the kind of information that is important for donors in terms of demonstrating that the organization is achieving the desired outcomes. We have developed our own evaluation tools, but they are not perfect. We created these assessment methods with community input and with practicum students from the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in Saint Louis. They include practical demonstrations by participants as well as site visits and pictorial sheets that are filled out by both the participants and our community health workers and then displayed

in the participants' homes. Now, we are piloting health screening evaluations in which participants are invited to come to be tested for diseases such as malaria, worms, diarrheal diseases and schistosomiasis. If they test positive, they are then provided with the appropriate medicines for free. The idea behind this is to give them a "clean slate". Then they can focus on preventing these diseases for the next year before another screening. We hope this will give us more data on disease prevalence among program participants.

How did you cement funding for Maji Safi Group?

We received seed grant funding from a US-based charitable lead trust for our first two years of operations. Since then we have also built a private donor base in the US and applied for grant funding.

So, when you started out, you had an initial vision for Maji Safi Group.

Yes, the idea was to set up a network of local women as change makers of public health and disease prevention in their communities.

And do the current realities of Maji Safi Group match that vision?

Well, that vision was realized pretty early on, when we trained our first community health workers, and they still work full-time in the Rorya District! But the organization has gone much further than Bruce and I had initially envisioned. That is thanks to the amount of community feedback and participation as well as the dedication of the community health workers. Now Maji Safi Group's programs are designed by members of the local community and implemented with cultural understanding and in the local language. They reach a larger and more diverse group than I had first anticipated. Also, the organization has spent a significant amount of time developing learning tools and curricula that are specifically designed to be effective with different groups within the community, like disease prevention for people living with HIV and AIDS. Maji Safi Group has expanded way more than we had originally thought. Today, we have after school programs at primary schools, and a disease prevention center at the hospital. We have a singing and dancing group and a female hygiene program. We also have a weekly radio show and operate community outreach events at markets and fishing centers that promotes disease prevention at a district level.

Where do you see Maji Safi Group in 10 years?

I hope the expansion continues. I think the model we have created is repeatable. In ten years time, I hope Maji Safi Group has expanded to multiple regions of East Africa with satellite offices developing and implementing locally specific disease prevention programs. These offices will, ideally, be staffed by committed community change makers who have been trained at our future community health worker training college.

Any words of wisdom to those thinking of setting up their own NGO?

Often when setting up a new NGO, people focus on the big picture ideas of who are we, whom do we serve, what is our approach, where can we get funding. While these are important questions, I would encourage new social entrepreneurs to spend an equal amount of time working on the administrative details: legal status, organizational policies, accounting, and employment contracts. Without a solid foundation, the most well-meaning and innovative project can end in disaster.

Find and learn more about Max and Maji Safi Group on :
<http://www.majisafigroup.org/>

Principles and Standards on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination



Text & Pictures: Bruno Cerqueira

When working on the field, it's not unusual for humanitarian workers and organizations to have to interact and dialogue with military actors, in order to coordinate, or at least to de-conflict its activities with the military ones. Furthermore, direct involvement of military actors in the delivery of goods and services to the affected population in humanitarian emergencies presents considerable challenges that need to be overcome by humanitarian actors in order to preserve the humanitarian space, and abide to the humanitarian principles. In an attempt of smoothing the relations between humanitarian actors and military forces, both humanitarian organizations and military actors have developed, through the years, doctrines, guidelines and several other types of documents.

Within the United Nations (UN), there are two different doctrines, which guide the relations between military and humanitarian

actors. The first one is the policy on Civil-Military Coordination in UN Integrated Peacekeeping Missions (UN-CIMIC), of which the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is the developer and custodian. In Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) the coordination between Military and Civilian Actors aims at supporting the wider peace process, not only military operations. This doctrine is also focused on PKO, and is not exclusively dedicated to the interaction between military and humanitarian actors, but also to the interaction between military forces under UN command and control and any civilian actors present in the mission area. UN-CIMIC is a military function which has as one of its main tasks to "ensure that their military components are aware of benefits and sensitivities when working with [...] civilian partners, especially with humanitarian actors [...]"

The second doctrine is the United Nations Humanitarian Civ-

il-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord), which has as its depository the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The main purpose of this article is to present and explain UN-CMCoord's concept and definition, objectives and operational standards.

WHAT IS UN-CMCoord?

With the aim of facilitating the interaction between the UN Agencies participating in the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), the organizations participating in the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and other humanitarian actors with military forces operating in the same area (e.g. a Peacekeeping Mission or National Military Forces), OCHA deploys UN-CMCoord Officers to its Country Offices. OCHA's Country Office is seldom inserted in the structure of a PKO, with the objective of preserving its impartiality and neutrality. Therefore, there is the need for UN-CMCoord officers to act as a proxy between humanitar-

ian actors and the PKO, as well as the national military.

The UN-CMCoord Officer is a civilian function, whose main responsibility is to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of appropriate relations between humanitarian and armed actors present in the country, amongst them the military component of a PKO. Those officers don't abide to the same doctrine and are inserted in different structures than the UN-CIMIC ones, having its work regulated by different UN publications and based on different principles. This different doctrine, which establishes and regulates liaison and coordination between humanitarian and military actors, is called UN-CMCoord. To understand it, it is necessary to address, initially, the main official documents published by the UN to regulate the subject.

UN-CMCoord GUIDELINES

Being officially published in May 1994, the Oslo Guidelines were



1. & 2. First-aid course delivered by United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti to Haitians in 2013.



3. Foreground of the MCDA Guidelines

the result of a collaborative effort of several countries, international organizations and universities. Its main objective is to provide guidance on the use of Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) during disaster relief operations. Subsequently, other documents were published, amongst them the “Reference Paper on Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies”, the “Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies”, also known as MCDA Guidelines, and the “Use of Military or Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys”, all from the Interagency Stand-

ing Committee (IASC). These documents have different scopes, and are used according to the situation in place.

After presenting the key documents which define UN-CMCoord, it is already possible to address its key concepts and principles. According to the Oslo Guidelines, the definition of UN-CMCoord is “The essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and when appropriate pursue common goals”. In accordance

with this definition, the concept of UN-CMCoord is guided by the humanitarian principles, aiming at the protection of the Humanitarian Space during emergencies, which by its turn allows humanitarian organizations to work with relative safety in conflict zones.

It is important to highlight that UN-CMCoord is a shared responsibility amongst all actors who participate in the interactions between military and civilian organizations, what is facilitated by the establishment of liaison and by the delivery of common training. Its essential elements are information sharing, task division and planning.

The spectrum of strategies and approaches of UN-CMCoord for the interaction between civilians and military actors, according to how the military operating in the country is perceived by the local population and the parties to the conflict. In cooperation, the focus of UN-CMCoord is to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the combined efforts. In coexistence, the focus of UN-CMCoord is on minimizing competition and reducing conflicts between military and civilians. The higher the level of involvement of military forces in combat operations, the lower the level of cooperation with humanitarian organizations.

The above-mentioned documents also provide key concepts for the use of MCDA. The most important one is the concept of “last resort”. According to the definition of last resort in the Oslo Guidelines, MCDA should be seen as “a tool complementing existing relief mechanisms in order to provide specific support to specific requirements [...]”. Moreover, requested MCDA must fill a gap between the needs that should be covered by the emergency response and the assets, which are available to the humanitarian community for the response. Therefore, requested MCDA must have unique capabilities.

Beyond the definition of last resort, IASC’s publications also define operational standards for the use of MCDA, as below:

- Requests for MCDA should be made based solely in humanitarian criteria;
- Humanitarian operations that make use of MCDA should always maintain its civilian nature and character;
- The role of military forces should be restricted to the provision of support to the humanitarian effort. In principle, military forces should not provide direct assistance;
- The use of MCDA should be clearly limited in time and scale, and
- Countries providing military personnel to support humanitarian operations should make sure they respect the UN Code of Conduct and Humanitarian Principles.

Despite the fact that all the IASC publications mentioned in this paper are not binding and that many humanitarian organizations have their own publications regarding the interaction with military forces, the publications which refer to the use of MCDA are widely accepted by the humanitarian community and by several Armed Forces as being the providers of the general guidance for those interactions.

Personal Experience

This article addressed only the basic theoretical notions on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination. This is just a small fraction of what I had the opportunity to learn and apply during my internship - which later became a job opportunity - with OCHA’s Civil-Military Coordination Section (CMCS). They gave me the chance to attend both the regular UN-CMCoord and the Officer’s Field Course, and treated me not as an intern, but as a professional. It was a great experience I had in working with very qualified UN officers in Geneva, dealing with a subject that is a trend in humanitarian action, that lead me to work in Haiti and now to become a member of OCHA’s Associates Surge Pool.

I am positive that having an internship and working with OCHA CMCS is an outstanding option for those looking forward for such opportunities. Civil-Military Coordination is not just an specialization for me, but a passion. Researching, lecturing, writing and working with UN-CMCoord is not what I do, but what I am now. For me, it was a life-changing experience!

Rediscovering Mongolia's Manuscripts

Text & Pictures: Mareike Günsche

*Preserving and restoring
books at Gandan monastery*

"And then the books were burning..."



Thoughts return him to a past in which, the Monastery was destroyed, monks were murdered, sacred sites plundered and even books went up in flames.

It has been over 70 years since the Soviet-backed government brutally repressed religion in Mongolia. Since the transition towards democratization in the 1990's religious life in Mongolia has experienced a renaissance of sorts, with many monasteries being rebuilt. Two generations of Mongolians who grew up without religion/religious influence, are rediscovering the Buddhist beliefs of their fathers and forefathers.

In the middle of the capital Ulaanbaatar, the Gandan monastery is returning to its former status as the centre of Buddhist life in Mongolia. At present, 900 monks live there. To help rebuild their heritage UNESCO and the Goethe-Institute started a project to save religious writings. Text (paper) and textile restorers train young Lamas and librarians in how to handle the old texts and materials, so that they be saved from destruction. "People died so that these texts could live on," remembers Deejmaa, one of the Mongolian librarians.

Since 2012 Mareike Günsche, one of our fellow NOHA students and also a

professional photographer, documented this ongoing project about paper-restoration at Gandan monastery in Mongolia. A selection of her photographs had been exhibited in Ulan Bator in 2014 and will be shown in the university Groningen from February until September this year. The following pictures are an interesting example of a humanitarian project focused on helping a nation preserve its culture.

Note for the reader: Ms Günsche, author of the pictures wished not to have any comments under her pictures, as she believes that they talk by themselves.



FAMILY, FEMININITY AND FIELD WORK

Interview: Anouk Hulpas

Jessica Alexander has been a humanitarian consultant for the past twelve years. She has worked for the United Nations and various NGOs, both in the field and at Headquarters. She teaches at Columbia's University Mailman School of Public Health, and School of International and Public Affairs, NYU's Wagner School of Public Service and is pursuing her PhD at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She recently published "Chasing Chaos: My decade in and out of humanitarian action". She is now married and working for UNOCHA in Geneva, where one of our editors met her at the Press Bar to get her views on family, femininity and being a woman in the field.



Jessica Alexander, author of the book.

INTERVIEWER: Many students of NOHA wonder, or sometimes even worry about, how they are going to manage their personal life with their professional career in the field of humanitarian action. How do you juggle your home life with your partner and still maintain a presence in this line of work?

JESSICA ALEXANDER: I didn't meet my partner until recently and much of that was due to the peripatetic nature of this work. I was jump-

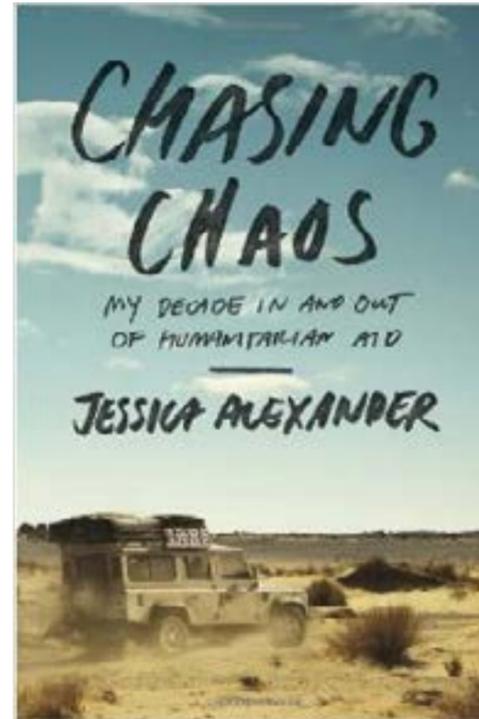
ing around, from place to place which makes it very hard to maintain a relationship or put down any kind of roots. It's a career but it's also a life style. At a certain point I had to make a decision about whether or not I wanted to continue living like that, or to move my work environment to a location that offered more stability and the potential to have a relationship. It was a conscious decision, and one that has worked well for me. Nonetheless, I do have plenty of colleagues and friends, who

continue to live in the field, with partners and their families. So the message isn't that this work doesn't allow you to find a partner, it can be more challenging and you have to make certain decisions, but it certainly is possible.

I: You are very frank, about some of those difficulties, in your book. Which can be very difficult to hear for those young idealists, like us, who are just starting out.

JA: I wanted to give an

honest perspective because I think women should know what they are getting themselves in to. But it's challenging for all women who are ambitious and want to have a career. They may not have time to date, even if they are living in New York City, where it is easier to meet people. This industry has its particular challenges for maintaining the consistency of a relationship, but it's not impossible. Like I said, there comes a time where you need to make choices and there are certain things



Cover of the book "Chasing Chaos. My decade in and out of humanitarian aid."

that you may have to prioritise. For me, given where I was in my career and in my personal life, I decided I was ready to come park and return to New York and work from HQ. You can have a very rich professional life and engage in all of these issues all the while still going to the field, just not living there necessarily.

I: However, before you made your decision to "come park" - as you put it - you were in the same position as most NOHA students will be when they will go into the field. For most of us it is hard to imagine how our lives will be.

JA: I think there is a big misunderstanding of the field being located deep in the bush in places where you have to walk 15 minutes for water. It is not like that, most of the time. Normally you are in a compound surrounded by other expats and if you are living there for a long time, you are going to bring the things that make you feel at home and give you a sense of normalcy. There was a time when I didn't bring make-up

to the field, but then I realised that I was also going to meetings with government officials and going out. I wanted to look professional. All my other female colleagues were dressing up, taking care of themselves and looking great. So on a trip back to Sudan, I packed a bunch of extra creams and make-up. However, after I came out of the airplane I watched how they unloaded the luggage onto a cart, my bag fell off and a truck immediately ran over it. So all this stuff I brought in order to have a resemblance of a normal life, spilled all over the tarmac. It was like someone telling me those things might not be for here.

I: Do you feel like there are certain challenges you face as a woman and that you would not have faced if you were a man? Especially when making those decisions you mentioned, with regards to deciding not to go to the field anymore. Or maybe the other way around; some support you received, which you might not have gotten if you were a man.

"I Don't have children, but I know from my colleagues that once you do, it can be easier for men to keep working in the field."

JA: Well of course we women have biological clocks, and at a certain age you do have to make more conscious decisions than a man might have to. I don't have children, but I know from my colleagues that once you do, it can

be easier for men to keep working in the field. I have seen more instances of male colleagues, versus female, who are able to leave home, their partners and children for certain periods of time to work abroad. It's just harder I think for women to do that for long stretches.

I: Do you think part of that is because women face more risks when they are in the field?

"In this profession, there are going to be risks, regardless of if you are a man or a woman."

JA: In this profession, there are going to be risks, regardless of if you are a man or a woman. That said, if you are working for a well-established organisation, you're going to have security around you. So I don't think that risks are necessarily defined by gender and I personally haven't experienced a seriously risky situation, per se. You may take extra precautions, and be mindful of your surroundings because it's common sense but I felt at times that living in Harlem where I went to graduate school and coming home late was more risky compared to any time I was living in the field.

Q: Something that you have mentioned in the book is that this industry kind of takes the idealist out of you. How do you stay dedicated and motivated?

JA: It is so easy to get overburdened by the bureaucracy, the inefficiencies and the difficulty in demonstrating the effectiveness of our work. But the fact is that I stick with this work because I believe in it and have seen instances where we made a difference, however big or small. There are smart and committed people working throughout the humani-

tarian industry who are dedicated to making it better. They are in it for the right reasons and they want to improve not only how we work but the impact we make. I still believe that this field is necessary and makes a difference in people's lives when they need it most, despite some of the inefficiencies. We are a very self-critical industry and are constantly trying to find ways to improve our practice. I think we're developing for the better, supporting local responses - the affected communities local civil society, governments, etc. - I do see those changes happening, and it's encouraging. And exciting to be a part of.

LESSONS LEARNED

Text: Claire Travers

NOHAs who have completed their internships with high evaluation results give their tips for how to get the most out of your placement.

1 In the first two weeks allow yourself to settle in. You will need time to adjust and get the feel of your surroundings. Spend this time doing tasks as professionally as possible and get the scope of the office, its politics and the processes you're expected to work on. You don't want to be the newbie coming up with loads of changes without fully grasping the implications they might have.

3 Be aware of what is expected of you. Establish what your supervisor needs of you early on. This will help with misunderstandings or conflicts, and will set the foundation for a positive working relationship.

5 There are dangers in expecting too much out of an internship. Actually, expect nothing at all, or expect disappointment. That way you can only be amazed.

7 It is not necessarily true that you will have more responsibilities in a small NGO than in a bigger organisation. It's all about what you make of it. So be proactive and take the initiative.

9 Don't devalue the NOHA brand. The NOHA brand offers so many opportunities and windows within the humanitarian sector, and has a reputation built on lots of good workers. So use it to aim big. Go for something that you know you can't attain without the NOHA programme.

2 The first month is always the weirdest, but don't let it change shape the rest of it. You'll feel like you have no work, or too much work and no support, or too much supervision. You'll thrash around a bit getting the hang of it. It's rare that an intern slides smoothly into their role. But don't let it negatively shape your whole experience and don't be afraid to bring up recurring issues with your supervisor.

4 If you are crediting your internship, start your report right away! It's so much easier to do it as you go along, instead of all at the end.

6 Demand something from the internship. Don't hesitate to say to your supervisor "I want objectives for every week or month". Don't expect the demands to be fulfilled but demand anyway. At least in this way, you know you did what you could to get some meaningful work assigned to you.

8 UN is cool but not that cool, and it should not be the Holy Grail on interning in this field. One NOHA worked for the Secretariat, and then an Agency; "The Secretariat was a great experience but I did not completely understand the bigger picture, because it's so big. I left my internship thinking, "UN is not that cool". However, I didn't make it far, only across the street actually to a UN Agency. To work at a UN Agency is a lot easier because they are operational. They have an operative mandate, which was easier to grasp for a young, inexperienced person. All of the sudden UN seemed a lot cooler."

10 If you don't exactly know what it is you're looking for, that's ok. But make sure to challenge yourself and your ideals. An internship is an opportunity to experience new things so make it worth your time. Think about it this way – could you be doing that anywhere else? Yes? Then don't keep doing it.

12 Never introduce yourself as 'the intern'. No one will assume you are an intern, so never admit it unless questioned directly. Instead try leading with what you do, not what your job title is: "I'm working on customs facilitation during emergencies with so-and-so".

14 Have cards made. One of my biggest regrets was not having cards to hand out when asked. It's difficult because your title won't be impressive and your job will change a lot, but consider getting yourself some cards printed for big events with generic information on it. You don't want to sink loads of time and a good outfit into meeting someone, and not be able to stay in touch. Make sure cards have your linkedin profile, your email and your most used telephone number on there so you don't have to change it too often.

16 Don't use buzzwords you don't fully understand. Everyone loves buzzwords, but using words like "resilience", "mainstreaming", "preparedness" "disaggregated data" are only helpful if you actually understand them. Otherwise you'll sound more like a buzzing bee instead of a competent young professional.

18 Uneasy about a task? Don't be afraid to say no! If you don't have the time or skills, then tell your supervisor. It will save them time and they will respect you for knowing your skills and limits. It may even open up a training opportunity.

20 Humanitarian aid is a small world. The person you work with might one day be your boss, or you theirs. People you meet will run into other contacts you made and they might talk about you. So here's a quick tip for how to leave lasting impressions: people won't remember what you did, they won't remember what you said, but they will remember how you made them feel. So always be pleasant, proactive and positive. It's the easiest way to leave a good impression.

11 Dress to impress. If everyone wears jeans and a tee, wear jeans and a shirt; if everyone is in a suit, make sure you have a nice tie. You never know who you will meet, so always dress to be the best version of you, as if you could launch into a pitch at any moment.

13 Network, network, network! The best thing the internship will give you is the contacts you meet. Use every opportunity to attend new events, lectures or briefings. Offer to take notes for an exclusive conference even if it's outside your terms of reference, or ask if your boss needs assistance in prepping for that meeting she has. Half the battle is getting in the room.

15 Going the extra mile will get you noticed, and getting noticed is everything. It will lead to better and more genuine recommendations, contacts and potential employment. Come in early before big meetings. Sit at the front if possible. Always volunteer if you have spare time.

17 If you don't know ask as soon as possible. Don't wait three weeks to ask what something is or what something means. No one minds explaining to the new guy.

19 Don't take risks with your safety and your health. Remember, you are an intern and you don't have to do anything that puts your person in danger. Small organisations might want you to pick up extra tasks, like driving to location, or meeting with stakeholders, but if it puts your life and health in danger, don't do it.

RUN THE FIELD

Text and Pictures: Sian Cook

Sian Cook (NOHA Uppsala & Groningen 2013/2014) conducted an internship with Clowns Without Border in South Africa, travelling to and from some of the most dangerous slums in the world. She writes about her experiences, including the day to day challenges she faced and how the internship inspired her.

I had almost given up. After sending in internship applications to 39 organisations, a scarce number replied with disappointing responses. This wasn't going according to plan. It was now July, and the research semester was about to begin. I was packing to leave for Cape Town, South

Africa, reading up on the University of Western Cape (UWC) programme and too busy to keep applying for internships. Upon arrival to Cape Town, we had preparation meetings with NOHA students and UWC staff where we learned that there was no strict timetable to adhere to; one other

student would even be doing a part-time internship alongside her research. So I sent in one last application - a 'Research Coordinator' position for a project with Clowns Without Borders South Africa (CWBSA). After just one day, they replied and I was hired within a week. This is a fast moving field, and

your opportunities can change just like that.

For three months I worked in the field in the Khayelitsha and Nyanga townships of Cape Town. In the Xhosa language, Khayelitsha and Nyanga mean new home and moon, respectively. Khayelitsha is South Africa's se-



-cond largest township, with a population of around 391,749 (as of 2011) while Nyanga has a population of 57,996 and has one of the highest murder rates in the country - between five and nine murders reported every week.

I coordinated the Sino-vuyo Caring Families Project, a positive parenting programme being implemented by CWBSA to reduce the risk of child abuse in the townships. I was responsible to oversee a variety of assessments, and sort the data collected from these assessments by local staff members.

During this internship I had a number of day to day tasks that brought me into the townships. I bought assessment supplies to the staff in Khayelitsha and Nyanga and collected research data from their phones, while they organised the supplies for their participants. Back at the office, I communicated any issues the local staff were having, including which participants had dropped out of the project, and entered the data into the project database. Some of my tasks were distinctly administrative in nature; writing notes and taking meeting minutes, collecting printing orders, and organising CWBSA events.

My tasks were practical and useful for the organisation, but my internship also had its difficulties and dangers. Often, there were inconsistencies in the data such as mislabelling of participant data, which

had to be rectified. Other times office cables were stolen, leaving us without electricity for days at a time. Our daily work commute was along the N2, a highway that is known for carjackings and muggings. Locals would drop rocks or leave 'traps', such as rock-filled cardboard boxes, in the road to make you come to a stand-still. The rule was 'never stop'. On one occasion, one of our project managers was stranded on the side of the road with a shredded tyre for 40 minutes. While that might not sound like a long time, in the field, every minute counts. Our local staff were continually hampered with protests against the new Cape Town MyCiti bus system, which were fre-

-quently violent and left public buses burnt out on the roadside. During those days it was very unsafe for the local staff to work, therefore, it was my responsibility to reshuffle participant assessment deadlines accordingly.

Towards the end of my internship, CWBSA changed their office location from Khayelitsha to Lansdowne. It would take longer to reach staff in the townships, and our staff meetings became less frequent to save time and financial expenses. Day to day risks and challenges were amplified: for example, not being able to carry cash for fear of mugging, charging everything when you had electricity, and checking routes were safe for travel. Time was the

most valuable currency, one we had so little of.

My internship taught me a lot, and was far from dull. Everyday offered me invaluable insight into the world of fieldwork and working with limited resources. Out of this experience, I learned the most from the local staff. Though my job involved entering the townships, for them it was their reality. Seeing them come into the office distraught, retelling accounts of beatings and shootings made me realise that frequent exposure to such violence doesn't mean you get used to it. Their dedication to safeguarding future generations from violence rubbed off on me. If I could do anything differently, I would stay longer.

