About IDS

The Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University is one of the nation’s leading professional schools in international affairs. Its International Development Studies (IDS) Program, which was founded in 1992, is a multidisciplinary program that is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of current development issues and theories as well as of the process involved in formulating development policy and implementing projects. Students also focus a portion of their course work on a specific aspect of international development, which they wish to pursue in their careers.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

This is the first Annual Report for the Capstone projects completed by graduating students in the International Development Studies (IDS) program at The George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs. With IDS students having conducted Capstone projects for international development organizations for the last decade, we felt it was finally time to document this excellent work and to inform interested parties, including program alumni, past Capstone clients, and the international development community in general, about the work our students accomplish each year. I hope you will enjoy learning about the impressive array of projects completed this past year and will consider finding ways to collaborate with us in the future.

Sincerely,

Sean R. Roberts, Director, IDS

ABOUT THE IDS CAPSTONE

The IDS program culminates in a Capstone project, where student groups, under the guidance of a professor, seek out a real-world consulting experience with a development organization. Students are responsible for finding their own client organizations, and they fulfill field-based assignments, which are based on the needs of the client while also capitalizing on the students’ strengths and capabilities. The IDS program has been implementing its capstone projects for over a decade, during which time students have successfully helped to implement development projects for dozens of leading development organizations, including government agencies, international organizations, NGOs, and consulting firms. The IDS Capstone experience is not only critical to the career development of some forty emerging development professionals each year, but it also provides valuable supplemental assistance to numerous development projects annually around the world.

For more information about the George Washington University’s International Development Studies Capstone experience and how you or your organization can support it, please contact us at ids@gwu.edu or by phone, (202) 994-5767.
2012 CAPSTONE PROJECTS

This year, eleven groups traveled to ten countries throughout Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe to implement research activities for projects addressing issues ranging from gender-based violence to youth entrepreneurship, food security, and increasing educational opportunities for the disadvantaged. Below is a summary of the work completed by this year’s graduating class for the Capstone project. One can also find the full reports of several of this year’s Capstone groups on the Elliott School webpage:

(see: http://elliott.gwu.edu/academics/grad/ids/capstone_reports.cfm)

A Brighter Future: Evaluating a Girls’ Secondary Education Program in Malawi for AGE Africa

Founded in 2005, AGE Africa initially focused on providing females from disadvantaged backgrounds with bursaries to attend and complete secondary school. The organization has since expanded its activities and adopted a three pronged approach to support for female education: 1) the provision of comprehensive financial support to young women for secondary school; 2) life skills training related to sexual and reproductive health as well as to self-advocacy and self-awareness; and 3) career guidance counseling. While its work had expanded, AGE Africa had yet to formally evaluate the impact of its interventions. The organization recognized that working with a GWU Capstone group was a cost-effective way of doing so. Students conducted an evaluation of the programmatic impact among alumnae from this program and examined potential opportunities for alumnae networking. The evaluation will be integral to maximizing AGE Africa’s impact and to providing a better understanding of AGE Africa’s work for potential investors, partners, and funders. By conducting interviews with all 23 current alumnae of AGE Africa’s girls secondary education program the Capstone team was able to follow-up on how the program had impacted its participants’ career trajectory and livelihoods. In addition to charting successes, the evaluation provided AGE Africa with strategic recommendations to inform future programming

IDS Student Kerry White conducts interviews in Malawi
**Striving for Respect: Male Youths’ Transition to Adulthood, Case Studies from Nepal and Sri Lanka Developed for the World Bank**

The World Bank South Asia Social Development Unit requested that a GWU Capstone Group conduct a study of male youth in Nepal and Sri Lanka to help inform future youth programming throughout South Asia, especially in post-conflict societies. The client requested that the study be cross-generational and cross-cultural and would examine the expectations placed on male youth, their aspirations, and their engagement with state and society in the aftermath of violent conflicts. To gain a greater understanding of the current experiences of male youth in Nepal and Sri Lanka, the study explored the definition of “youth” in each context and the “landscape” of male youth, including their expectations and aspirations as well as the barriers and opportunities facing them today. Students collected data from structured interviews with youth in both countries, disaggregating for age and location, and their analysis included recommendations for how to best engage young men in both of the countries studied.

*IDS Student Alexandra Burrall interviewing men in Nepal*

**iPads and Outcomes: Process Evaluation of The Hunger Project’s Outcome Evaluation Pilot Projects in Ghana and Malawi**

The Hunger Project requested that two GWU Capstone groups help it with the development of innovative and effective means for evaluating the success of its pilot projects in Ghana and Malawi on hunger alleviation and grassroots organizing. The result was two “process evaluations” that examined the implementation of initial stages in The Hunger Project’s (THP) Outcome Evaluation Pilot Projects and assisted in field–testing these projects’ data collection tools. The Hunger Project sought to use electronic data collection tools such as iPads, the iFormBuild system, and iTalk applications, and Garmin GPS units, to record data from household surveys, focus group discussions and key informant interviews for the projects. The student groups traveled to Ghana and Malawi respectively where they trained field staff in the use of the project’s proposed household surveys using the iPad to record answers, tested the appropriateness of both the survey and the technology to the field context by piloting their use, and provided recommendations to field and headquarters staff on how to improve the content and implementation of the survey.
Experts in Their Field: What Community Based Organizations Know About Preventing Violence Against Women in Emergencies, a Study for the International Rescue Committee

The International Resuce Committee (IRC) requested that a GWU Capstone team conduct a study of the capacity and working knowledge that local community based organizations bring to addressing violence against women (VAW) in Uganda and Haiti. This was an initial step in establishing a conversation within the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Network about VAW prevention during emergencies. By gathering knowledge of what local community-based organizations are already doing and know with regards to VAW, IRC hoped to better inform this conversation and to more appropriately target future capacity building efforts for local groups in regions facing potential emergencies. The students traveled to Uganda to conduct interviews with organizations in the field and interviewed Haitian organizations remotely from the U.S. On the basis of these interviews, the student group produced a report that highlighted the work being done by local groups to combat VAW, but they also provided recommendations regarding how these groups can learn more, think harder, look deeper and share further. The report will aid GBV Network members forge stronger partnerships and inspire each other to continue and expand the work they do on behalf of the women and girls in their communities.

Developing a Strategy to Support Youth Entrepreneurs in Serbia for Chemonics

The USAID Sustainable Local Development Project, implemented by Chemonics International and based in Belgrade, Serbia, was launched in 2011 to help municipalities in Serbia better use their resources to promote local development. One component of the project focuses on support for youth entrepreneurs. Chemonics approached a GWU Capstone group to conduct a constraint analysis of youth entrepreneurs in the country and provide recommendations on how to best target programming for this component. The students in the Capstone group conducted background research on the current state of youth entrepreneurship in Serbia, including a survey of participants in an existing youth entrepreneurship program, as well as on best practices in the European Union. The students then conducted structured interviews for two weeks in Serbia with NGOs, government ministers, and youth entrepreneurs. This data was analyzed to give Chemonics an understanding of the most critical barriers facing young entrepreneurs in Serbia as well as to provide recommendations for the most high-value areas for interventions supporting them. The analysis and recommendations were presented to both the field staff in the Belgrade office as well as to Chemonics headquarters staff in Washington, DC.
**International Corporate Volunteerism: Measuring Value for CDC Development Solutions**

CDC Development Solutions requested that a GWU Capstone team conduct research on the value of international corporate volunteerism (ICV) in India. CDC Development Solutions had been facilitating such international corporate volunteerism with a variety of corporate groups, but it had yet to establish a means of evaluating the impact of volunteers on actual development outcomes. The capstone group sampled companies engaged in the ICV program and traveled to India to assess the value of the ICV experience there through interviews with Indian non-governmental organizations that had hosted volunteers. The team used a three-pronged approach in its assessment: 1) measuring host organization cost-benefit; 2) evaluating the benefits to the companies providing volunteers as well as to their employees; and 3) determining the sustainable impact of volunteer services for the host organizations. The team found that both host institutions and the companies providing volunteers accrued tangible and intangible benefits from the experience. Host organizations benefited principally in areas linked to the dissemination and application of information technology, while companies providing volunteers reported improved employee knowledge, sensitivity, and awareness. The team uncovered mixed results among NGOs in sustaining benefits from the ICV experience two or three years following the departure of the volunteers. Findings and recommendations were provided in writing to CDC Development Solutions and were presented by the team at the organization’s annual conference hosted by the US Chamber of Commerce in Washington DC. Subsequently, one member of the capstone team has been hired as a full-time CDC staff member.

**Global Indicators: Measuring Livelihoods and Governance & Peacebuilding for Pact, Inc.**

In response to increased donor demand for results-driven development, as well as to the need for internal knowledge management, Pact Inc. instituted the global indicators initiative in 2011 to annually measure their worldwide impact in six primary practice areas: natural resource management, health, livelihoods, business and markets, capacity development, and governance/peacebuilding. Following its pilot implementation of this initiative in 2011, Pact wanted to revise its indicators for livelihoods and governance/peacebuilding, to ensure better data collection and more meaningful impact evaluation. As a result, they worked with two separate GWU Capstone teams to address this need. Each team produced desk reviews on global indicators and impact measurement more generally in their respective practice fields. They also conducted interviews with Pact staff both in DC and in the field (via Skype) to discuss challenges to the collection of data for the initial indicators that were piloted the previous year. Finally, both groups traveled to the field (the Governance and Peacebuilding group traveled to Kenya and Ukraine, and the livelihoods group visited Tanzania, Swaziland, and Lesotho) to discuss and pilot with field staff and Pact’s local partners various indicators they had formulated based on preliminary research. As a result, both teams provided reports to Pact outlining revised indicators and improved methods of measuring the organization’s annual contribution to livelihoods and governance/peacebuilding respectively around the world.
**Utilizing Participatory Methods to Enrich Health-Related Baseline Data Collection in Kenya: A HERproject Case Study for BSR**

Working with corporate donors and local partners, Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) implements the HERproject in 8 countries around the world to address women's health in the workplace through peer education. BSR worked with a GWU Capstone group on the launch of its new Kenya Farm Pilot—the first HERproject model both to be tested in Africa and to focus on the agriculture sector. The Capstone group developed and piloted participatory learning and action (PLA) tools as a component of the monitoring and evaluation process for the HERproject throughout its implementation cycle. Spending one week in the field, the Capstone group met with 89 people (farm management, farm workers, local health care providers, and NGO representatives) and piloted 28 iterations of the 7 PLA methods that were being explored. As a result, the Capstone group ultimately found PLA methods to be very beneficial for the HERproject, especially in the Kenya Farm Pilot setting where women rely heavily on the support and advice of their female co-workers. Additionally, the Capstone group identified some key health issues in the local community that were then recommended for greater emphasis within the HERproject training curriculum, such as urinary tract infections, post-abortion care, and cervical cancer. Lastly, the Capstone group produced the *Participatory Learning and Action Toolkit: For Application in BSR’s Global Programs*, a publication aimed at facilitating the utilization of PLA methods more widely throughout all of BSR’s work.

**Monitoring Food & Agriculture Policies in Ghana: A Study of Policy Processes, Stakeholders, and Expenditures in the Agriculture Sector for UN-FAO.**

The United Nation Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO) requested that three GW students travel to Accra, Ghana in January and March 2012, to conduct a policy analysis of the agriculture sector in Ghana for the Monitoring African Food Policies (MAFAP) project. The MAFAP project intends to help African policy-makers and other stakeholders ensure that policies and investments are fully supportive of agricultural development, the sustainable use of natural resources, and enhanced food security. MAFAP country reports—comprising expenditure analyses, measures of incentives and disincentives, and contextual analyses—aim to create a policy monitoring system, improve policy dialogue, and promote evidence-based decision-making in support of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) of the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD). The three GW students conducted four weeks of in-country interviews to collect data on the policy environment, key processes and stakeholders, and expenditures in the agriculture sector. The team also established MAFAP presence in Ghana, analyzed strengths and weaknesses in the sector, and provided recommendations to the Government of Ghana and to development partners, which will be published in Ghana’s MAFAP final country report.
This year’s students worked with the following organizations as their clients:

- Advancing Girls Education in Africa (AGE Africa)
- Business for Social Responsibility (BSR)
- CDC Development Solutions
- Chemonics
- The International Rescue Committee
- Pact
- The Hunger Project
- The World Bank South Asia Social Development Unit
- UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Clients provided over $61,000 in support for students’ travel

Overall, the clients were extremely happy with the students’ work and considered it to be critical to their projects. In the case of the youth entrepreneurship research conducted by students for Chemonics in Serbia, the President of Chemonics made it a point to attend the students’ presentation of their findings, commenting thoroughly and positively on their contribution. AGE Africa noted after the presentation by the student group with which it worked that the students’ research had impressed one of its primary donors enough to prompt increased financial support for AGE Africa’s projects. Additional testimonials from clients who worked with Capstone students this year included:

“Once again, the FAO considered the experience with a capstone group in one of its projects to be highly valuable for the work of the Organization. We certainly look forward to working with other capstone groups in the following years.” – FAO

“It was great to work with the students as they brought in a range of thinking on the topic that we are not able to consider in our day to day work...” - Pact

“The Capstone students created a body of in-depth research that we would have otherwise struggled to obtain, and they also allowed us to pre-test some brand-new tools in the field. Now that we have reaped the benefits of their collaboration, I can't imagine how we would have done this without them.” - The Hunger Project

“Students were hard workers, highly talented and completed an enormous piece of work for our organization; ...they have gone above and beyond their scope of work to provide additional, high quality documents on tight deadlines that will aid the organization in our growth for the next year.” – AGE AFRICA
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