



Elena is on an internship with the World Health Organisation. Before this internship she took an MA in International Development in Education and Health Promotion at the Institute of Education, University of London and has worked and volunteered with a number of UK based NGOs.

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR CURRENT INTERSHIP?

After the completion of my Masters course, I was planning to go to Costa Rica for an international experience as I already knew the country and I have relatives living there. I knew that the WHO had an office based in San Jose, so I sent them an application letter together with my CV, offering myself to work for them for three months.

WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

The internship involves working on project on "Public Policy of Food Security and Nutrition" for PAHO as well as for the Ministry of Health, researching policies within governmental institutions in order to coordinate resource-spending. Besides, field work with rural and immigrant women on a Project of Agricultural Sustainability in collaboration with local committees formed by main NGOs of the areas as well as FAO and local representatives of the Ministry of Health.

HOW WILL IT HELP WITH YOUR CAREER?

I do not know yet how this experience will be for my professional development but I am hoping that it will help me to find a job in the field of international development either in Europe or somewhere else in the world. For sure, this experience has boosted my self confidence quite a lot and I feel a lot more confident about my professional future now than when I finished my studies.

HOW DOES IT COMPARE WITH STUDYING DEVELOPMENT?

Being able to put into practise everything I saw during my master course is very rewarding as it makes me feel that I can really contribute to the job though my academic experience. It is also giving me the chance to see how theory does not always match with the real world but defiantly helps to have a better picture of a situation.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU DEVELOPED ON THE PROGRAMME?

So far my experience in this programme has helped me to develop keys skills such as communication and organisation. Working for the WHO helped me not only to gain valuable insight into other peoples' cultures but also to work and communicate with people from all sections of the community. It also gave me experience to develop relationships with partner organisations in the field, encouraging capacity building; negotiating and liaising with public bodies and other non-governmental organisations .I feel that this experience helps me to adapt to a varying workload in a multicultural environment and gain a sense of responsibility and ownership of the projects I am involved in.

WHAT ARE THE GOOD AND BAD POINTS ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE?

Overall the experience is excellent. Being in the country, getting to know the locals and the customs as well as acquiring an excellent professional experience at the WHO are just perfect. I wish I could stay longer and be able to see the outcomes of the projects I am working on.

WHAT'S YOUR NEXT STEP?

I am already in my second month in Costa Rica and I have already thinking about my next step. I am in the process applying for jobs in Europe and at the moment I feel quite hopeful about it.

WHAT WOULD YOUR TOP TIPS BE FOR SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO GET INTO THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR?

Be persistent and keep focused on what you what to do and use the Careers Service resources for advice. The field is very wide and it is easy to get lost in the search. Keep an open mind about projects and be prepared to do a little bit of everything at work as a volunteer. I also encourage students to contact organisations directly regardless the name and size of the organisation.

More Case Studies like this are available in the book, 'Getting Into Development' published April 2006. Buy a copy online at www.careers.lon.ac.uk/books or call in to your university careers office.

