



Akosua Mante

This summer, I worked as a marketing and development intern at a startup nonprofit called Cocoa360 in the Western Region of Ghana. Cocoa360's mission is to provide free education and quality health care to rural farmers and their families and to offer a sustainable model of community-based development. I found out about my internship through Penn's Global Internship Program, and I'm really grateful that I had the opportunity to spend my summer working in such a unique environment.

As a marketing and development intern, my main responsibility was to develop and implement strategies for digital marketing and communication. This included updating social media platforms, creating marketing content for potential donors, and documenting events that took place on the Cocoa360 campus. One of the reasons why I wanted to work for an organization like Cocoa360 was because I knew I would have many diverse and interesting responsibilities, given the nature of a startup. Aside from my central tasks, I also found myself helping out with orientation for new interns, registration for new farmers, and dozens of other things.

Part of the reason I decided to work at Cocoa360 is a direct result of the research I conducted at the Perry World House last semester. My team and I studied different methods of development, and we focused on one nonprofit in South Africa called Ubuntu Pathways. After spending an entire school year researching how models of development can and should

work, I wanted to see for myself how some of the development approaches work in practice. My research at PWH contrasted the differences between a development model that helps many people for as little money as possible with one that aims to help a smaller amount of people but do so extremely thoroughly. In hindsight, I wish my group had the opportunity to address Cocoa360 because the model is extremely unique and actually uses revenue from collective farming labor to fund education and healthcare.

Despite the distinctive nature of the Cocoa360 model, I was still able to observe some of the situations I studied at PWH. The most striking thing that carried directly over from my research to the internship was the importance of community involvement in nonprofits. When I first arrived in the village, I had to meet as many members of the community as I could so that they would feel involved and aware of what Cocoa360 was doing. I saw firsthand how community members felt slighted or ignored if the organization began a new project without informing the general populace. While I might have found this to be a cultural issue, my research on Ubuntu Pathways had demonstrated that it was not. Successful nonprofit organizations center around community buy-in and support.

Even aside from working at Cocoa360, living in Tarkwa Breman was also very eye-opening for me. Living in a village with less than 2,000 people and an hour's drive away from paved roads and the next largest town was an experience that really forced me to take in my surroundings. Some aspects certainly took some getting used to, but I was able to learn a lot about what it's like to live in a rural area of the developing world. Even though I'm still in Ghana right now for my study abroad, I have an appreciation for so many things that are here in Accra and in the United States.

Ultimately, I know this experience will inform some of my decisions moving forward about where I want to work. I've always valued a global perspective in myself and those around me, and this experience certainly strengthened my mentality. I feel confident in my ability to work abroad next summer, and even for longer once I graduate from Penn. I think long-term international experiences are extremely important for so many ways, but I can already tell that living in Tarkwa Breman forced me to think about the way I do things, the way the world works, and where I want to fit into the field of international relations.



*Me with some of the girls from Cocoa360's Tarkwa Breman Girls' School*



*Me with the entire Cocoa360 staff on the last day of work*