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Global Mamas
Cape Coast, Ghana
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I was lucky enough to spend my summer working as an intern for a nonprofit organization based in Cape Coast, Ghana. Called Global Mamas, this fair trade organization sells handmade Ghanaian products throughout the world with the aim of empowering female entrepreneurs in a developing country. Global Mamas has several different locations throughout Ghana in which they operate; I was assigned to work in their Cape Coast location for the summer, and I couldn't have been happier with this placement.

My responsibilities as an intern were pretty varied, but mostly they revolved around Marketing and Communications. Some of my day-to-day work included tasks such as creating sales emails for retail and wholesale partners, brainstorming content for social media platforms, writing blog posts, and taking pictures. Some of the campaigns I came up with throughout the summer were geared towards increasing awareness about fair trade and what exactly it entails. For this, I created a blog post that described Global Mamas' core ten principles of fair trade and took pictures around Cape Coast to accompany each principle. Creating a visual representation hopefully made it easier for our customers to get to the heart of what "fair trade" means for the Ghanaian women. Another campaign I worked on was a #VolunteerAbroad campaign. A lot of Global Mamas' revenue comes from their volunteers that spend anywhere from 3 to 12 weeks at the site, so they're always looking for ways to get the word out to potential volunteers. Whenever I would travel to a scenic, interesting, or fun place in Ghana, I would take a panorama picture; later, I would edit it so it had the Global Mamas logo on it. Ultimately,

I would love if these photos will entice other people to become interested in and even travel to Ghana one day.

In addition to these responsibilities, I also got the chance to travel around the city and visit with our producers (we call them the “Mamas”). This was especially amazing because this one-on-one interaction really helped me to integrate into the Ghanaian culture. I would spend a few hours with these ladies to learn about their livelihood, their families, their dreams, and so on. I would later write up what I had heard into a little biography to put on the Global Mamas’ website so consumers know exactly *who* is making the product that they’re buying – connecting these women and their stories to the clothing that they produce. At first, these conversations tended to be a tad awkward or uncomfortable, but every time I saw the woman afterwards we had that connection. And it kept developing. Brick by brick, visit by visit, I forged some powerful relationships by the end of my time in Ghana.

Meeting and interviewing the Mamas took some getting used to; as cool as it was to speak to these Mamas, it wasn’t always easy. Even though most of the Mamas spoke English, sometimes they didn’t understand what I was saying (which could also be attributed to my own fast talking). Or sometimes, they’d be too busy sewing that day’s order to be able to talk to me at our scheduled time. Or, I’d show up to their shop for our appointment and they wouldn’t be around. It was things like this that forced me to be much more flexible throughout the summer. As the Mama interviews went on, I became much more accustomed to the way Ghanaians speak, and the communication was less strained. I would call twice before I left the office to make sure the Mama was ready and

available to speak to me that day. I learned how to adapt my habits to fit the cultural norms in Cape Coast.

Outside of the responsibilities for Global Mamas' specifically, I was also assigned another project to help a Mama with her personal business. Elizabeth "Esi" Arkaah is a seamstress who was able to buy an expensive knitting machine (suture), and she wanted to rent it out to other seamstresses in her area. The communal knitting machine at the market was expensive and had a long line – sometimes women had to wait two hours before they could use it! It was my role to figure out how to get the word out about Esi's knitting machine, which was cheaper and quicker than the one at the market. Weeks passed, and Esi and I discussed options. She was a busy seamstress, so she didn't have much time herself to devote to this project. We decided that flyers would be the best option; I made them on my computer, checked them with her to make sure they were okay, then printed 40 copies. I handed the flyers out to other Mamas in the Global Mamas' organization; why not have the Mamas stick together and help one another out? Esi handed out her flyers to her friends and fellow church-goers. After this, I was pretty hands-off in the process; I let Esi take over. Three weeks later, I hear word that her knitting machine is being rented out regularly and that her business has tripled. This was such a rewarding feeling – all I had to do was provide some moral support and print a few flyers and Esi was able to network and market her machine. This project was a bright spot of my summer for sure.

Coming back to America after this summer in Ghana working for Global Mamas, I've learned more than I could have ever imagined. When I left America at the end of May, I had no idea what was in store for me. I didn't know really what fair trade was, I

didn't know what "batiking" was (a main livelihood for some of our Mamas – it is the process of dying and patterning fabric), I didn't have any "real" marketing experience, and I sure didn't know much about Ghanaian culture. Hopefully, I left my mark on the great organization of Global Mamas by providing them with content and campaigns for the upcoming year, but in return, I was so positively impacted as well. Not only did I learn **so** much to benefit my future education and career in marketing, but I also believe I became more of an introspective and thoughtful person while working on this internship. These ten weeks abroad in Cape Coast were some of the best of my life, I couldn't have asked for a better summer!