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With the funding and guidance of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, I pursued a nine-week internship in Cochabamba, Bolivia, working through the Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD) at an organization called *Tukuy Pacha*. *Tukuy Pacha* is a local NGO that provides educational workshops for people with and without disabilities, offers physical therapy free of charge, and aims to increase understanding and proper treatment of the disabled living in and near Cochabamba. As a student of Hispanic heritage studying economics and music, my motivations for interning with FSD Cochabamba were both academic and personal. I sought to gain fieldwork experience, vastly improve my Spanish fluency, and become more culturally competent with South American Hispanic culture.

At first, I arrived at my organization a bit discouraged, because I felt under-qualified working for an NGO in disability services, a field in which I had no academic experience. I was nervous that I would lack the expertise to contribute to the organization in a meaningful way; plus, the language barrier--including the native Quechua--didn't help my confidence level. However, since all interns were expected to develop original projects for the local organization with a seed grant of \$300 from FSD, I began to look for and analyze the assets already present in the community. After speaking with my colleagues about their needs and wants for the organization, I decided to design a music therapy component to add to *Tukuy Pacha's* physical therapy sector. Specifically, I created a budget and a work plan for implementation, which could be used both during and beyond my internship.

I was nervous about whether *Tukuy Pacha* would find this project valuable or not but when I presented my plan at the team meeting, the physical therapist, Paola, enthusiastically supported my idea. I was relieved to receive the support of my team members because it meant I had found a way to contribute to their organization using my unique skill set. One objective of this new project was to create a music therapy CD to sell for fundraising purposes and to use in home visits. After some research, I compiled music to put on the CD and wrote up an instruction manual explaining why and how the selected music was therapeutic. Paola and I tried this music during home visits in order to ask opinions and gauge reactions to different pieces before producing the final product. These trials helped me write the manual, finalize the list of music, and - best of all - intimately engaged me with the community. In addition to working toward the final CD, I focused a lot of my energy on teaching Paola methods of music therapy to bring into her practice. I purchased a range of instruments for use in conjunction with physical therapy and researched music therapy techniques. This was valuable particularly for working on communication skills for kids with autism and strengthening particular muscle groups for certain physical disabilities. Although music therapy was not immediately valuable to every patient, it certainly did produce clear benefits for a handful of patients: for example, some showed enthusiasm for the new type of therapy, reporting that their normal exercises became more fun while using instruments or accompanied by the CD track. One woman showed very little emotion or expression during regular therapy, but she smiled and laughed when playing the drum. Another girl, 19 years old but with the mental age of 11,

absolutely loved singing and dancing to children's songs along with us. This became our listening and communication therapy for her, as well as a source of relaxation at the end of her therapy session.

I felt relatively successful with the music therapy project, but would have loved to help it evolve to produce significantly more benefits. As I learned firsthand, development is an extremely slow process, requiring feedback and continuous adjustment. I wish I could have known the communities and the individuals in them more completely before designing and implementing the two-month project. During the process, I kept running into changes I wanted to make or components I wanted to add or take away to improve results, but the time constraint was limiting. Therefore, I left Bolivia feeling like I could have done a more thorough job, but seeing how ongoing goals were only plausible with more time. Further, the language barrier was a definite hindrance to my progress because I was constantly asking questions, was less confident about doing tasks on my own, and had to write my CD manual slowly and then have it revised. Although this was frustrating, I saw the challenge not so much as a setback as part of the inevitable learning process. With persistence, I was able to complete my project, produce the CD, run therapy sessions, and train Paola to do future music therapy work (four weeks after I left, she informed me that she was still using the CD regularly with patients). Perhaps I benefitted *Tukuy Pacha* and their community in some way, but there's no doubt this brief internship was an invaluable learning opportunity for me. I know I will draw from this introductory cross-cultural development experience in future research and fieldwork because like with anything worthwhile, it takes practice to improve.

In addition to learning about general development techniques, I came to understand a lot more about Bolivia as an economically poor but culturally rich country. Without this internship, I wouldn't have thought to explore rural towns outside of Cochabamba like Punata or San Benito – and it was during these visits that I began to understand indigenous life outside of urban Bolivia. My host family (and grandmother) live in Cochabamba, so I was used to living in residential parts of the city. However, rural Bolivia is undeniably different than urban Bolivia. Because about sixty percent of Bolivia population is indigenous, the majority of people outside of Cochabamba speak Quechua, work in agriculture, and reside in starkly different living conditions than in the city. Some of the rural cases I was exposed to during home therapy visits left me inspired by *Tukuy Pacha's* influence, but others made me feel helpless, uncomfortable, or even guilty due to the privilege and comfort of my own life. People with disabilities are treated and viewed very differently than those who are able-bodied in Bolivia: many of the client cases Paola and I visited revolved around themes of neglect, malnourishment, abuse, or even complete abandonment of a differently-abled person. This learning experience put into context so many of the political and social issues I had read about but never thoroughly understood. Of course I will never completely understand or relate to the circumstances faced by these people, but I will always have a clearer, more empathetic, picture of Bolivia.

Finally, this internship was incredibly impactful upon me, also, because of my Bolivian roots. My grandmother still lives in Cochabamba, and for me to better understand her heritage and to speak her language meant a lot to her, especially

because I have had very few opportunities to get to know her. The time spent with my nonprofit organization, host family, and grandmother improved my Spanish extensively, and the immersion in a rich, diverse South American culture made clear how cultural competence is an ongoing growth opportunity for me as an American and as a student-scholar. I will continue to keep in touch with those whom I worked with in Bolivia, with plans to return to visit my relatives and new friends.

Meanwhile, I am especially grateful for the hardworking and inspiring people at the Kellogg Institute and FSD who made my nine weeks in Cochabamba such a challenging, humbling, joyful, and deeply-satisfying summer.