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Ndidor's Salt Business Proposal

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Iodine deficiency is a worldwide public health problem that is often unknown among developed nations, but it is decidedly a concern in certain developing areas of the world. In these certain areas, agricultural soil is iodine deficient but high in salinity. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, iodine is an essential part of our diet and is found in dairy products, seafood, and iodized salt (Office). The recommended daily consumption of iodine for adults is 150 micrograms. People who don't get enough iodine cannot produce sufficient amounts of thyroid hormone, which results in iodine deficiency. Serious iodine deficiency affects people's quality of life due to its severe symptoms, including mental disabilities, goiters, pregnancy loss, and high infant mortality rates. In this thesis, I will share with you about a community that has experienced the effects of severe iodine deficiency, and I will explain my proposed business project that will help this community overcome their iodine deficient health concerns as well as begin to earn a sustainable income.

In July of 2019 I had the opportunity to spend five weeks in Senegal, West Africa, and observe firsthand the impacts of iodine deficiency and malnutrition. After several weeks of evaluating World Vision Senegal's health and nutrition program through qualitative research, I thought I had a good understanding of the village life. At this point, I had become accustomed to the long drives on dirt roads through baobab trees, the intense heat, the language barrier, the food, and seeing the shock on kids' faces when they saw a white person for the first time. During this time, I was still working not to seem overwhelmed by the devastating realities that many of these villagers face. One humid 100-degree day, I piled into a Land Cruiser with World Vision's health program manager and translator and headed to the village of Ndidor.

As we approached Ndidor, children swarmed around us welcoming us with excitement. The chief of the village, Massene, greeted us and took us to his living quarters where we sat on plastic mats under a baobab tree and drank Senegal's traditional tea, *ataya*. I was there to discuss World Vision's current work in Ndidor and learn how World Vision could better intervene. During our conversation, I found it difficult to concentrate because there were easily fifty kids around us—many who had goiters and other severe physical disabilities. My translator then helped me understand Ndidor's health crisis: over 64 percent of the community suffers from severe iodine deficiency.

Ndidor has two large salt lakes where mothers go to collect salt for cooking. However, this salt is not iodized, and villagers cannot afford to buy iodized salt. Farmers are not able to grow crops because the soil's salinity is too high, especially during the rainy months between February and April (Massene). I learned from Massene, from mothers in the community, and from other key community members that they want World Vision to help them create a business where they can iodize salt from the two lakes, package it, consume it, and sell the remaining salt at the market. I also learned of their need for entrepreneurial and nutrition education so that they can learn how to run this salt business and learn nutritional practices to improve their health.

My thesis focuses on this need, and this proposed project will require the necessary equipment to create the salt business and tools to facilitate focus groups for the villagers. I have included my grant proposal to USAID in this paper as well. The tentative funds will provide a boat for the lake, a salt iodizing machine, potassium iodate, bags for the salt, and materials for the focus groups. In the focus groups, women and men will learn how to run this business as well as learn health and nutrition practices. This project could be a positive changing point in the

villagers' lives: it addresses the community's immediate and long-term need of iodine, and it empowers them to develop their community through the salt business's income.

To address the village of Ndidor's severe iodine deficiency rates, World Vision Senegal must implement a specific nutrition project that will give this community access to iodized salt. This approach will serve the 1,227 villagers who live in an impoverished region that has high-salinity soil. Based on my fieldwork done in Senegal, West Africa, this thesis will explore the strategies behind this project proposal and will address its necessary resources, method of funding, and the timeline for implementation and evaluation.

This thesis will develop two major sections: the extended project proposal itself, the Iodine Nutrition Deficiency Program, and then three essays that support approaches to the project and reveal ICD values and methods in that process. The project, described in detail, includes the need, qualitative research and literature. It also explains the iodine machine, the health focus groups, the evaluations, timeline and more, followed by the formal grant proposal.

THE NEED AND WORLD VISION'S ACTIVITY

World Vision has been actively working to improve Senegal's overall health and nutrition for the last forty years. Their work has shown success in that when World Vision started working in Senegal, the malnutrition rate was 45% and now it is below 7% (Diegan). I learned during my interview with World Vision Senegal's National Director, Teddy Mark, that their annual budget is 19.4 million dollars and 8.8% of their funds are directed towards nutrition programs. Currently, World Vision Senegal is monitoring the growth of more than 63,000 children to prevent, detect, and respond to malnutrition (Our Work). These nutrition programs are funded by Senegal's government, grants, private non-sponsorship resources, and by monthly child sponsorship donations (Mark).

World Vision has been working in the village of Ndidor for ten years and has developed a well-established relationship with the village chief and other key community members. The programs in Ndidor have focused on child sponsorship, nutrition, education, water sanitation, and hygiene. In Ndidor, World Vision has built one water-well and several water spigots, which give every family access to clean water. World Vision has been aware of the soil salinity and iodine deficiency crisis in Ndidor since their involvement in this community, but has not been able to address this problem due to limited funding.

FIELD RESEARCH (QUALITATIVE)

During my fieldwork in Ndidor, I gathered key community leaders and conducted group meetings to understand the community's greatest health issues. This time together also helped me learn how the community believed they could work together to facilitate their own development (Merriam 49). The core motivation of gathering these leaders originates in my belief and Van Niekerk's teaching in *Community-Based Disaster Risk Management* that community members should be "treated as part of the knowledge creation process" (9). The first person I met with in Ndidor was the village chief, Massene, who explained Ndidor's realities to me. He said because of the soil's high salinity, crops are unable to grow which is devastating because agriculture is the community's biggest source of income. The only crop they can grow is the hibiscus plant. Massene added that on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, a few appointed villagers take a horse-drawn buggy to the local market that is 4.5 miles away, sell hibiscus, and use the profit to buy whatever fruits and vegetables they can afford.

After my conversation with Massene, I went to the two salt lakes to see them for myself, and then I visited a common gathering place where grandmothers, mothers, and children were sitting. I sat with them and asked questions that have helped me guide this project proposal.

When I asked the women about their day-to-day life, they explained that they felt helpless because the soil's high salinity prevents their crops from growing and due to their poverty, they can't buy adequate food and iodized salt (Germaine). The women told me that they were aware of their iodine deficiency crises but explained that they didn't have enough money to buy iodized salt, so they collected their kitchen salt from the salt lakes. I asked if I could test their kitchen salt with my iodine tester, and the results indicated it was zero percent iodized. I asked these women how iodine deficiency has affected them, and their responses were devastating; the majority of the mothers have had stillborn births and many of their children have goiters, mental disabilities, and physical disabilities.

I continued the conversation by asking the mothers about their nutrition because it was apparent that most of the community was underweight. One of the mothers, Germaine, said that her children do not eat breakfast most days because the person who goes to the market never makes it back until 3 PM. On days where no one goes to the market, everyone eats groundnuts (peanuts), rice, and beans. At the end of our conversation, the mothers and grandmothers desperately begged me to help them.

SOIL SALINITY AND ITS PROBLEMS

Soil salinity is a severe environmental concern because it causes an excess amount of non-iodized salt in the soil, which halts good farming. A further result, then, is that there is no iodized salt, so poor communities must consume non-iodized salt. According to agricultural scientists, "Soil salinity remains one of the most severe environmental problems in the coastal agricultural areas in Senegal" (Thiam). Senegal is West Africa's largest salt producer, with an estimated annual salt production of 450,000 tons (Kupka). Fatick's small-scale harvesters are responsible for about one-third of Senegal's salt production, which is why Ndidor, a village in

the district of Fatick, deserves attention (Boland). The problem with this salt is that it is not iodized and yet it is being used as household kitchen salt, causing iodine deficiency. Unfortunately, surveys indicate that only 56% of Senegalese households have iodized salt (Kupka).

I have learned through my independent research that over 7 million people in Senegal are not protected against iodine deficiency disorders— 255,000 of whom are infants vulnerable to brain damage (WFP). In fact, "Iodine deficiency is the single greatest cause of preventable mental retardation—a problem that is easily and inexpensively prevented by iodizing all salt for human and animal consumption" (UNICEF). Each person "needs iodine to make thyroid hormones. These hormones control the body's metabolism and many other important functions. The body also needs thyroid hormones for proper bone and brain development during pregnancy and infancy" (Office). Learning this information and seeing the implications in Ndidor has helped motivate me to intervene.

IODINE MACHINE

My proposed salt iodizing business will entail collecting salt from the two salt lakes, iodizing the salt with salt iodization machines, packaging the salt, and then selling the iodized salt at the local markets. The salt-extraction harvesters go on the lake in boats, sift salt through a basket over the side of the boat, and then haul the salt back to shore (MacCharles). They next put the salt into a diesel-powered machine that mixes potassium iodate into it, after which, they can store the salt in a sealable bag. Packaging is important because sealed packaging keeps salt iodized for a long time (Knowles).

There are several similar and successful salt iodizing businesses throughout Senegal. For example, "at the Ndiémou site, about 700 salt producers from 28 villages work to harvest an

average of 500 tons of salt per month, which is iodized on site using the four machines" (WFP). This business not only provides iodized salt to local Senegalese, but it also provides an income for the company's employees. Apart from providing a livelihood for 15,000 people in the immediate surroundings, the health benefits are enormous (MacCharles).

Ultimately, it is because of poverty that Ndidor's community is malnourished and iodine deficient. Economic opportunities (such as this salt business) need to be available to Ndidor's men and women so that they can escape poverty and improve their quality of life (Adusei). This business can help their overall lives because skills and capacities that support such livelihoods help vulnerable communities develop with dignity (Sphere Handbook).

Stable income and economic development allow developing communities to become resilient and holistically healthy. Moe-Lobeda states that "economic democracy describes situations in which people and communities have a role in the economic decisions that shape their lives" (229). My desire is that this salt iodizing project will help Ndidor's community members not only improve their health, but also gain a greater sense of autonomy. I believe to enhance the identity of the poor, encourage them to take the responsibility and trust their ability, knowing that this opportunity will improve their pride and confidence. As Bryant Myers teaches, we must "encourage the community members to run the program and experience the joy of their success and learn from their mistakes" (4542).

FOCUS GROUPS

Because I believe that human health and knowledge are central to the creation of a safe and resilient community, I have incorporated focus groups as an aspect of this project proposal (IFRC). Karlan discusses entrepreneurship training in developing countries. In this article's study, "Treatment groups received thirty to sixty-minute entrepreneurship training sessions

during their normal weekly or monthly banking meeting over a period of one to two years" (Karlan). The findings show that training sessions are important in helping motivated individuals develop small-scale businesses in developing areas. This study in particular indicates that long-term training (at least two years) is important in helping business owners understand key entrepreneurship strategies. Because of this, World Vision's field staff must hold weekly focus groups in Ndidor for at least two years and teach women and men how to make a sustainable profit from this salt business.

Education is also necessary in encouraging people to consume iodized salt. World Food Program teaches that the first step in reducing iodine deficiency is through helping villagers understand why spending extra money on iodized salt is important. Villagers need to understand that food quality (micronutrients) is nearly as important as food quantity (Bosu). In the focus groups, WV staff will teach about the 'hidden hunger' that children suffer with because of micronutrient (iodine) malnutrition. It has become recognized by the nutrition community that "micronutrient malnutrition is very widespread and is probably the main nutritional problem in the world" (Allen). In the village of Ndidor, some villagers have enough rice to keep their bellies full, but they do not have the iodine to keep them healthy.

To decrease stillborn births in Ndidor, pregnant mothers need to understand their increased need for iodine. This is important because iodine deficiency during pregnancy, especially in its severe form, impairs maternal thyroid hormone metabolism, which can impair fetal brain development and increase risks of fetal and perinatal mortality (Kupka). The World Health Organization recommends that the average iodine intake to maintain normal thyroid clearance and cater for renal losses in pregnancy should be at least 200 micrograms daily for pregnant women compared to 150 micrograms per day for non-pregnant women (Businge).

Because this is a major concern expressed by the village chief and mothers in the community, World Vision staff will use the weekly focus groups to emphasize the importance of iodine intake for pregnant women.

RESOURCES AND FUNDING

World Vision's Operations Director, Diegan, has promised to implement this project as soon as the grant I have written is approved and the USAID funds become available. World Vision Senegal's Director of Health and Nutrition has already chosen the salt iodation machine, potassium iodate, bags, and business materials that will be used. Following my conclusion is my grant proposal to USAID to fund this project. Because World Vision Senegal asked that I include health insurance and PlumpyNut food packages in the proposal, I have included them in the budget.

EVALUATION

A section in my grant proposal discusses how this project will be evaluated. Expanding on what is written in the evaluation section of the grant proposal, Diegan has also told me that World Vision will monitor the progress of the salt business and continue coaching the employees through the weekly focus groups for at least two years (then they will re-evaluate). To ensure iodine deficiency rates are decreasing, World Vision's field staff will continue testing the iodine levels in household salt.

The primary purpose in evaluation as stated in *Evaluation: An Integrated Framework for Understanding, Guiding, and Improving Policies and Programs* is to improve social conditions. The author of this book explains that there are four methods to evaluate projects: "assessment of merit and worth, program and organizational improvement, oversight and compliance, and knowledge development" (Mark). The assessment of merit and worth will indicate to World

Vision "the value of this performance on the larger social good" (Hobbes). As World Vision evaluates this project, they will also evaluate whether or not the community members are growing in nutritional knowledge from the focus groups. They will glean this information through group surveys.

CONCLUSION

In this International Community Development program, I have learned that development programs work best when local community members lead and sustain them. Bornstein and Davis teach that "social entrepreneurs are most effective when they demonstrate ideas that inspire others to go out and create their own social change" (35). Because Ndidor's community members and I have collaboratively designed this project proposal, I believe social change will be a positive result of this project. Because this community has never experienced a business/personal opportunity such as this before, I hope they will "see possibilities for change" and understand that they have "the ability to dominate" (Willis).

While getting back into the Land Cruiser after visiting Ndidor, I promised myself that I would do whatever it took to help this community gain the resources to improve their overall wellbeing. I knew this goal would require that I address their economic situation as well as their health. I believe this project does both and that it helps the villagers develop resiliency and autonomy. I believe that World Vision is long-term invested in this community and that it will implement this project in a way that represents my love for the community members and Christ's love for them, too.

Iodine Deficient Nutrition Program

GRANT PROPOSAL

World Vision

NOFO: 72027819RFA00001

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Authority to Contract—Moussa Mbodji

August 18, 2019

I. Program Summary

The village of Ndidor in Senegal's Niahkar district has 1,227 residents. The soil in this area has high salinity but is iodine deficient, a combination that prevents crops from growing. Due both to the poor soil and to the extreme poverty in this village, the villagers suffer severely from iodine deficiency and malnutrition. While World Vision Senegal currently works in Ndidor and has a well-established relationship with the Ndidor village, World Vision needs an additional $122,000 to address the root causes of iodine deficiency and malnutrition. This proposal, however, hopes to aid World Vision in eliminating both.

The goal of this Iodine Deficient Nutrition Program is to reduce malnutrition and iodine deficiency in Ndidor's children through four specific methods. First, this program will provide therapeutic food packages for children under five. Second, this program will fund a potassium iodate machine and iodizing spray to enable villagers to iodize their salt from the salt lakes. Villagers will then be able to sell their extra salt to neighboring villages for profit. Third, this program will offer health and nutrition education through focus groups. Fourth, to encourage villagers to go to the local health post, this program will provide them two years of health insurance so that malnourished and iodine deficient children can afford to see a doctor. Essentially, this proposal addresses the immediate, intermediate and long-term health and economic needs of the community.

II. Organization's Description

"World Vision is a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organization dedicated to empower children, families and communities to reach their full potential by tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice" (Mission and Values). For 30 years, World Vision has worked with Senegal's poorest communities, and it has regional offices in 8 of

Senegal's 14 regions. The national office is in Dakar, Senegal, where 258 staff work on 29 long-term development programs, including 101 projects that will benefit more than 8.1 million children by 2021 (2018 Annual Report). Currently 69,321 children are registered in the sponsorship program in Senegal.

The annual budget for World Vision Senegal is 19.4 million dollars, and 67% of this budget is raised through sponsorships. World Vision also offers programs targeted towards advocacy, health, nutrition, education and everyday life skills, livelihoods and resilience, and child protection and participation. The World Vision Senegal Advisory Council consists of 7 external members as well as the Regional Director for World Vision West Africa and the National Director of World Vision Senegal. World Vision Senegal works with many partners—World Health Organization, World Food Program, VisionFund, USAID, and UNICEF to name but a few.

III. Project Description

64% of Ndidor's community suffers from iodine deficiency, and over 50% of the children are underweight. According to the village chief, the greatest health effects of iodine deficiency in Ndidor are stillborn births, goiters (enlarged thyroids), and mental retardation. Currently, the village has access to food three days a week via a horse-drawn-carriage; however, the trip takes seven hours, and children can't eat until after 3:30 PM. The village mothers say that children never eat breakfast and that a typical lunch/dinner is rice and ground nuts. This project will provide therapeutic food packages for the 238 children who are under five so that they can receive nutritious, protein packed meals. Each child needs 750 grams of therapeutic powder a day, which costs $405 per child per year. Each package is a

powder created from corn, groundnuts, baobab fruit, and beans—all local products. Les Femmes Catholiques, a close association of World Vision Senegal, creates the packages.

I had been unaware of the severity of this iodine problem, so I held interviews with the chief of Ndidor in Senagal. The following is an interview of Massene who specifically clarified this situation:

Me: What is the biggest health problem in your village?

Massene: Malnutrition and iodine deficiency is a huge problem here. We have two lakes here, but they are salt lakes, so people go to the lake to get their salt, but the salt doesn't have iodine. The soil is really poor here because the salinity is high and so we cannot grow crops (although this is the biggest type of job here).

Me: What are the consequences of iodine deficiency?

Massene: We have many stillborn births, children with goiters, and mental disabilities.

Me: Are people in your community aware of iodine deficiency?

Massene: Yes, we are all aware but we can't do anything without money. We know better because of World Vision focus groups.

Me: How can World Vision help?

Massene: We need a way to iodize the salt (because we can't afford iodized salt), and help with our soil.

Me: Do your farmers have troubles with the soil year round?

Massene: Yes, but February-April it is worse because when it rains the salinity is higher.

In the Ndidor community, the heart of this problem rests in two small hyper-saline lakes where the village mothers collect their salt. While World Vision has intervened and educated the community about the importance of cooking with iodized salt, the community cannot afford to buy iodized salt. This project will provide a way for the community to iodize their own salt. One salt iodizing machine costs $16,000 dollars, and the iodizing spray costs $33 dollars per ton of salt. Through our educative focus groups, World Vision will teach villagers to bag, sell, and locally market their excess salt for income. These focus groups will also teach important health practices to educate mothers about health and nutrition.

This program will also offer health insurance for 613 people, 50% of the population, at $7 dollars per year per person. This inexpensive health insurance covers 80% of each person's health costs, yet without it, villagers cannot afford medication, clinic visits, or the cost to deliver a baby at the health clinic. World Vision has seen that once villagers learn the importance of health insurance and develop relationships with doctors whom they trust, they are more likely to continue their health insurance and pay for it themselves.

The beneficiaries of this project are all Ndidor's residents who will have access to iodized salt, children under five who will receive the therapeutic packages, the parents who will attend focus groups, and the neighboring villagers who will be able to buy iodized salt from Ndidor. Partners who will assist World Vision in completing this project are the following: Les Femmes Catholiques in Niakhar (who makes the Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food Packages for malnourished communities), Iodine Global Network (from whom World Vision will purchase the potassium iodate machine and spray), and CEMETRA (the regional health insurance company).

III. Methods of Evaluation

World Vision will regularly monitor and formally evaluate this project annually, using both qualitative and quantitative analysis. This will include testing the iodine content in the salt used by mothers and weighing the children to guarantee their safe weight gain. The evaluators will also survey Ndidor's villagers to assess ways they are adopting the healthy practices taught in focus groups or if they need different training. World Vision's field staff will meet frequently with the health providers at the health post to ensure Ndidor's villagers are visiting the clinic for check-ups. Finally, the evaluators will interview beneficiaries to understand their perspectives and to learn how this project can be improved.

IV. Sustainability

Although World Vision is long-term invested in sponsored communities, this project's goal is to eliminate malnutrition and through our support and involvement, help Ndidor to become financially independent within the next fifteen years. The budget for this program will cover only the initial two years of this project's implementation, and we will evaluate then to know what additional funding is necessary. We may need to seek new revenue sources to sustain this project, but because World Vision's Child Sponsorship, these children will never fully lose their support. Hopefully, with the therapeutic food packages, iodized salt, and adopted health practices learned in focus groups, the village of Ndidor will become significantly healthier. With the additional income from selling the salt, our goal is that Ndidor villagers will be able to pay for their own health insurance and iodizing spray.

V. Budget for 2 years

Salt Iodizing Machine	$16,000
Spray for 1 ton of salt	$33
Health Insurance	$8,582
Therapeutic Food	$96,390
Focus Group Materials	$100
Salary for 1 Field Staff	$900
TOTAL:	$121,500

VII. Conclusion

Senegal has not yet reached the benchmark of having fewer than 7% of children affected by acute malnutrition. However, “this year through World Vision’s use of the core project model, World Vision has successfully reduced this rate to 3% across the 24 program areas while also strengthening local capacities to monitor and track growth and nutrition” (Annual Report). As estimated earlier this year, more than 850,211 people are seriously affected by the food crisis in Senegal. But then Bagana in Nguer ADP, located in the center of Senegal, has for several years succeeded in mitigating the effect of the lean seasons among its members with help provided by World Vision. So, this nutrition project in Ndidor is worth the investment because World Vision has an existing and well-established relationship in this community, and many of the village’s children are World Vision sponsored. Our nutrition program managers in the Fatick office are well aware of Ndidor’s health realties and are prepared to intervene and help this project succeed. The project itself promises both a more sustainable health and a more stable livelihood for the villagers, something much needed if they are to thrive in the future.

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ESSAY 1: CONTEXTUALIZATION

I vividly remember sitting at orientation in Oxford and learning from Dr. Inslee, Northwest University's MAICD department chair, about the International Community Development (ICD) term *contextualization.* As he spoke, I realized that this is the key principal often missing in development work. He described contextualization as "the practice of designing programs and processes with attention to the particular cultural characteristics and inherent resources of a given people, place and time" (Inslee). Because each community is unique and has its own distinct culture, it is inappropriate and unwise to have a "one size fits all" approach to development. Every community has their own needs, desires, and values that must be honored as we intervene.

In this essay I will discuss why contextualization is an important factor when designing and implementing programs, processes, and interventions. Drawing on my fieldwork experience in Senegal in July 2019, I will explain how creativity and innovation figure into the contextualization process. Because I intend to apply the values and practices of contextualization throughout my career, I will explain its value specific to my thesis project: Ndidor's Salt Business Proposal.

WHY PRACTICE CONTEXTUALIZATION?

As international development practitioners, we must earn our right to influence communities by first building a trusted relationship with them. Before developing a program, it is important to know the intricate dynamics of a community. Understanding their history, values, and desires will enable us to assist in the most appropriate way. Bryant Myers, author of *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* reminds us that "we study history, not to find out what happened, but to discover who we are" (4372). For example,

when getting to know someone well, we ask questions about their upbringing. When we are applying to a job, we want to understand the organization's history so that we better understand what they stand for. To contextualize programs, processes, and interventions, we must first learn the community dynamics.

One such valuable community dynamic to learn is their survival strategy. Even the most underdeveloped communities have established a unique way of life that has kept them functioning. Developers can learn this dynamic by observing and asking questions: who are the natural leaders in the community? Who are the influencers? What are the community's priorities? Who are the providers? What motivates the community during difficult times? Understanding answers to these questions will help developers expand on the community's existing strengths and using them to move forward toward social goals. Faith leaders are important in this process as well. Myer suggests that developers ask the community to locate God in their history to help them remember that God is still with them (4380). However history has influenced the community, developers must understand that history if they hope to design and implement effective programs.

Unfortunately, development organizations often enter communities with a set agenda for how they want to intervene. Consequently, they dismiss learning a community's abilities and desires. As we develop a relationship with a community and learn their cultural characteristics and inherent resources, we can use this knowledge to create development programs that use their abilities and are tailored to their specific needs. I agree with Myers that by dismissing what the poor know, we further mar the identity of the poor (4494). They may be poor, but they have capabilities and promise. Development practitioners must "encourage the community members to run the program and experience the joy of their success and learn from their mistakes" (Myers

4542). Encouraging their input and including them in the initial research will ensure the program's sustainability.

It is easy to assume in any industry that large corporations and organization do better work than smaller ones and are, therefore, more effective and influential. The book *Theories and Practices of Development* teaches that although the scale differences are apparent from individuals to large-scale global organizations, "it is important not to assume that there is an increase in influence as the scale increases" (Willis 26). Larger organizations may be able to influence a greater number of people but they may also provide less quality in those individuals' lives. An example of this difference is in the company TOM'S Shoes. It uses the same shoe distribution strategy in hundreds of communities even though foot protection is not a high priority to all of these communities. Without practicing contextualization, large-scale global organizations often impose themselves on communities. They do not seek what is truly best for each specific community but depend on using a broad, "global" technique. When we practice contextualization and honor each community's cultural characteristics, our work will ultimately be more effective and influential.

CONTEXTUALIZATION APPLIED IN MY PROJECT

I had the opportunity to practice contextualization during my fieldwork experience in Senegal with World Vision. While there, I interviewed many World Vision beneficiaries, which ultimately led me to designing a project for the village of Ndidor. This project is specific to the iodine deficient and impoverished realities of this community. While developing the salt iodization business for Ndidor, I sought to practice contextualization

and incorporate the knowledge I learned from research and from spending time with the community.

In the Culture Studies course, and from Hofstede in particular, I have learned that "for sustainable work to be accomplished in foreign countries, it is crucial to think objectively, through the local's perspective, and not ethnocentrically" (Hofstede). Contextualization is important in helping me understand the perspectives and personality of Ndidor's community because this will influence how Ndidor's community business functions. Again, studying Hofstede's cultural indices regarding a Senegalese community's interdependence was helpful as I researched and planned for my thesis project. I learned that Senegal has a low score of 25 in this dimension, which means that Senegal is considered a collectivistic society. As Hofstede teaches, "Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount and overrides most other societal rules and regulations. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group" (Country Comparison). This knowledge is beneficial to my project. Because I understand that the Senegalese culture values loyalty and providing for others, it is safe to assume Ndidor's community members will work well together and share the resources among the community. The salt business is intended to aid the entire community, each family and individual alike. Because it is engrained in the Senegalese culture to look out for one another, they will share both the profits and the iodized salt to sustain the the community. Practicing contextualization while developing Ndidor's salt business, I respected the community's culture by communicating first and primarily with their leader, Chief Massene. In rural Senegal, each village has a chief and when visiting villages, it is a cultural practice to pay a visit to the village chief before intruding (Gellar). To show respect for his authority, it was important for me to consult with him about my business proposal ideas.

Communicating with him was difficult though, and it took innovation because the language barrier between us was so significant.

I had learned that practicing contextualization in community development required innovation, but I didn't know how often until working in the field. Petra Kuenkel, author of *The Art of Leading Collectively,* teaches that to be innovative we must "create novelty and find intelligent solutions" (60). He also teaches that when we design programs and processes with attention to the particular cultural characteristics and inherent resources of a given people, place, and time, we must think creatively and be adaptive (60). I practiced adaptiveness by using two of World Vision's field staff to help me communicate with Chief Massene. I spoke French to a staff member who translated my message into Wolof, and then another staff member translated the message from Wolof into Serer, which is Ndidor's primary language. It was important for me to communicate with Chief Massene and other Ndidor villagers because I believe development practitioners must utilize the intelligence of the community members when creating programs. Community members are more aware of their capabilities than developers are, a fact that became evident in my dialogue with Chief Massene.

Chief Massene was the first person who helped me think innovatively about how to address his community's severe iodine deficiency. He told me during this first conversation when I asked him how World Vision could best serve his community. He answered that they desperately needed a salt-iodizing machine (Massene). It is important for development practitioners to consult with community members about the work they intend to do to. Local knowledge strengthens research, and as Willis argues, when community members have a say in what activities are carried out, their participation in such activities creates an environment where empowerment is likely (Willis 109).

Without visiting Ndidor in person and engaging with its people and learning their local assets and capacities, or their suffering because of salt deficiency, I could never have created this project proposal. It required my being there and actually seeing the salt lakes for myself, seeing firsthand the results of the salt iodization test, and interviewing local farmers and those suffering from iodine deficiency to understand the exact needs and desires of this community. After my meeting with Chief Massene, I joined other World Vision field staff and a local farmer in driving to the two local salt lakes.

I had never seen a salt lake before, let alone a salt lake so high in salinity that I could walk on the thick layers of salt crystals. After seeing it, I was better able to understand what Massene had meant when he said locals collected their non-iodized kitchen salt from the lake (Massene). It was one of World Vision's field staff, Merriem, who brought an iodine tester with us to the community to test the iodization of the salt that the villagers consumed. When I tested the salt for myself and saw the results, indicating zero percent iodization, I was able to understand why much of the community's population suffered with goiters, mental disabilities, and stillborn births.

I had to practice creativity when designing this program and attending to Ndidor's inherent lack of resources. I began brainstorming many potential solutions for how to address the needs of this community. According to a local farmer, Ernest, this community had *no* money to buy salt and *no* ability to grow crops for producing income. I needed his local knowledge to learn their limitations as well as their capabilities; Knowing both will help me create a business that will address Ndidor's health and economic crises.

APPLYING CONTEXTUALIZATION IN MY FUTURE WORK

As I think of the most influential people I know, the common denominator between them is humility. These people who work in development understand the value of the poor and the love that they can share with us. If we live in humility, "the poor will borrow from our story and we, if we are not too proud, will learn from theirs" (Myers 4365). Every time I have gone into an impoverished community, I have left feeling as if I gained more from them than they have from me. In my future vocational work, I intend to apply the values and practices of contextualization by being humble in my approach, truly getting to know and respect those I hope to serve, and seeking work with them to bring about positive change.

Specifically, I believe development organizations should hire local, native employees in their national and field offices. By working together as expatriates and native staff, the two will mutually influence each other. When my dad moved to Bamako, Mali, as the National Director for World Vision, he hired primarily Malian employees. He lived in West Africa for 17 years and served as the West African Regional Director. When I asked my dad, Torrey Olsen, his thoughts on contextualization and hiring locals, his response was as follows:

> The reasons I hire national employees is it is a legal requirement to do so, jobs are scarce and governments are looking for jobs amongst its people, national employees know the local languages, the people, and the culture, and most national staff will have a much greater longevity in the program than an expatriate will. Additionally, national staff need no time to be trained in what are the normal customs in food, agriculture, or health. This means that they become much better interpreters of new interventions. As a Christian organization, it also gives us the opportunity to hire Muslims, Hindus, or Buddhists for non-leadership positions giving them the opportunity to work with Christians up close,

> and it is often these people who are the first Christians in a country. There are three roles that development experts play— community mobilizer, technical expert, and resource generator. National contextualization will help with all three. It helps with the mobilization of the community because staff are known and speak the language. Secondly, it helps in their role as technical experts because they already know what the cropping rotations will be in agriculture, or who to contact in the ministry of health. And third in finally, national contextualization helps in resource generation because nationals know very well what the real needs are and what has been tried previously either succeeding or failing. (Olsen)

As I hopefully move overseas to work internationally, I intend to work with an organization that employs predominantly locals Because they have a better understanding of the context of our work and have a local, cultural viewpoint, their participation will help foster cultural relativism. As I have learned, cultural relativism is important to development work as a tool, a method for attempting to see things from a multiplicity of viewpoints so as to better understand them (Bizumik). My viewpoint as an expatriate is beneficial to development work in that I have an outsider's perspective and I have developed a different set of skills through graduate school and living in a Westernized society. I will need to be mindful to look at things objectively and not ethnocentrically. In this program, I have learned that ethnocentrism is a form of prejudice. "It is a worldview that assumes that a particular culture is the "normal" one and the others are less 'normal' than the one the ethnocentrist belongs to" (Bizumik). Donor countries, unfortunately, can tend to see themselves as the "normal." However, together, as development experts and locals, we can hope to share and benefit from our different experiences, cultures, knowledge, and perspectives.

While designing programs for many different communities, I can understand why development practitioners might think a "one size fits all" approach may work, but I will challenge my co-workers to remember that each community has a difference history, and therefore, each community deserves the time it takes to know them well before intervening. I intend to make as many field visits as possible to monitor the programs I manage and to maintain a personal relationship with the community I am serving. By doing so, I will be able to ensure the program aligns with the community's values, needs, and desires.

CONCLUSION

When I retire from being a development practitioner, I pray that I have been a blessing and have given and received respect and honor. Through my humility and personal transformations, I also hope that my "contact cleanses rather than pollutes" (Beck). As I serve other communities as a development practitioner, I understand that I will represent the organization I work for, Christianity, and America. As Torrey Olsen has said, local employees often become the first Christians in their communities after working in a Christian organization and witnessing their approach to life. This is a great reminder to live humbly and to serve with love.

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ESSAY 2: QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Unlike the research most people are familiar with, qualitative research is not based upon statistical analysis. Instead, it is conducted through interviews, non-verbal observations, and time spent with those being studied. Through qualitative research, International Community Development (ICD) workers learn directly from the individuals they are serving how they can best intervene. Workers can then avoid or overcome misconceptions through these direct conversations and observations. Qualitative inquiry enables development workers to go more deeply into a question or situation than mere quantitative data can provide.

In this paper I will discuss the values that inform qualitative methods and ways in which qualitative inquiry is particularly useful in the practice of community development. I will use my fieldwork experience in Senegal and the project I have proposed for World Vision as an example of applied qualitative inquiry. Using my project as an example, I will expand on the value of qualitative inquiry in evaluating social initiative programs, ones such as my Salt Business.

Quantifying the number of players on a field or the number of theater goers is fairly easy. It is difficult, though, to quantify many of the most important things in life. Imagine using numbers to express family dynamics or to identify personalities; it wouldn't be possible in traditional, quantitative ways. Qualitative research, though, enables development workers to analyze information that can't be quantified. These are values such as "dignity, diversity, inherent worth, and the ability of all individuals, families, and communities" (Winnipeg). The values that inform qualitative methods are similar to ICD core values: justice, equality, sustainability, community, and education. Development workers practice qualitative methods to better understand community dynamics that either catalyze or inhibit sustainable development.

Qualitative methods also allow development workers to assess integrity and justice within a community. The article, "The Value of Qualitative Research" teaches that, **"**The value of qualitative research is that it gives a voice to the lived experience whilst allowing for practitioners to gain deeper insight into the unique experiences and treatment needs of individuals" (Newcastle). Individuals who cannot voice their personal experiences and desires through surveys and polls find their voices through qualitative inquiry. During interviews and field observations, development workers can give a voice to those whose opinions are rarely valued and gain deeper insights into each individual's unique circumstance.

The qualitative approach is particularly useful in community development because to gather data, researchers go into natural settings rather than into laboratories. Further defining this approach, consider the following:

> Qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people. This method of research typically takes place in the natural world, draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of the participants in the study, focuses on context, is emergent and evolving rather than tightly prefigured, and is fundamentally interpretive. (Marshall)

Going directly into the community to research is key for international development practitioners because they learn the realities of life from the community individuals themselves. Because qualitative inquiry allows for emergent and evolving data, researchers can focus on marginalized subjects and hear their stories. Regarding these stories, the *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* argues the following:

> Ultimately, it is individual people who experience the deprivations of poverty, not countries or regions. Understanding what happens 'on average' or to the 'average' poor

> person or household can be an erroneous basis for decisions on intervention. In addition, "big" approaches can lead to the relative neglect of micro-level actors and informal processes in analysis and action. (Morrow)

Qualitative research allows ICD practitioners to learn from people who do not resonate with "the average"; these are people whom quantitative surveys often overlook. Families and individuals, even children, fill this list of the overlooked. *The International Journal of Social Research Methodology* explains, "A qualitative research approach means that children's descriptions of living in poverty are captured, and that they have a role in defining what poverty means to them and in identifying the changes in their lives over time" (Morrow). Meeting community members and hearing them explain what poverty means to them via their own lived experiences becomes possible through qualitative research.

QUALITATIVE METHODS DEMONSTRATED IN SENEGAL

To understand the culture of a group, development workers must practice qualitative research and spend time with the group being studied (Merriam). While living with different Senegalese families last summer during my fieldwork, I gathered around the teapot for many hours each evening; I sat on plastic mats and listened to stories. A part of the Senegalese culture is drinking traditional tea, ataya, in the evening with close friends and family. During these special times, I learned that "stories, like artifacts, serve to tell us about our informants' worldviews and function as data in our fieldwork" (Sunstein). While listening to many funny, interesting, and traditional stories, I was able to better understand the Senegalese culture and the day-to-day life of the people I was studying. Listening to family stories was a personal way to learn what is important to each storyteller.

Another method of qualitative inquiry is conducted through proxemics. Proxemics is "how individuals communicate nonverbally when in groups" (Sunstein). This method is important in ICD work because body language "speaks" significantly and is understood through observation. Nonverbal communication is equally as important as verbal communication, and through being attentive to body language, developers can observe interactions and realities that people may not feel comfortable talking about (Merriam). While doing my fieldwork in Senegal, I conducted many group interviews and observed group dynamics. Paying attention to proxemics caused me to make note of body postures, gestures, and communication styles. An example of proxemics that I added to my fieldwork notes includes the following:

> In the interview with Sass Mack's beneficiaries were twenty-four adults, and every adult was the wearing traditional, Senegalese "boubous." The children sat on a plastic, woven mats on the dirt ground in the center of the circle; the women and men sat on plastic chairs; mothers held babies on their laps and openly breastfed during the interview. Many children hid behind the baobab trees around us and observed timidly. Everyone was facing the middle, and no one had brought anything with them. Most adults were chewing on a small piece of wood called "chewing sticks." People were generally quiet as one person to talked at a time, but when people were finished talking, the chief initiated further conversation. Eyes were intently on me most of the time. It was the first time many of the children had seen a white person.

From this opportunity, I concluded that the community respected and appreciated World Vision's involvement in their community. The number of adults present and their well-dressed attire proved my observation. I also gathered that Senegalese breastfeeding modesty is less pronounced than in the west and that the people are comfortable with such natural, human

practices. As a qualitative researcher, it is important to include this data in fieldwork notes to further understand nonverbal cultural norms.

Qualitative inquiry enables researchers to gather data from various sources. While I was doing my fieldwork, I interviewed two village chiefs, 14 beneficiaries from World Vision's Health Insurance Strategy, doctors and nurses (who see 16,000 villagers per each health post), mothers of severely malnourished children, Les Catholique Femmes (one of World Vision's partners), the Marabout (a Muslim religious leader), 40 grandmothers from World Vision's Grandmother Strategy, mothers from World Vision's focus groups, and community leaders in Ndidor. Meeting individually with many people who are all familiar with health and malnutrition taught me the importance of understanding an issue from many perspectives. ICD is a dynamic field, and it differently affects everyone involved.

Qualitative research in my fieldwork has helped me better understand the culture, perspectives, and practices in Ndidor. For instance, I now understand the practical, cultural, and truly personal reasons that mothers in villages prefer having homebirths rather than going to a health clinic to deliver their babies. The health clinic I visited in Fatick, 20 miles from Ndidor, has one doctor, one nurse, and one midwife, and it serves 16,895 people (World Vision). The information I learned from the village doctor, Felix Diuf, parallels that which I had learned from World Vision's employees but contradicts what I had learned from the villagers who were directly experiencing the complications about home births. The village doctor explained the following perspective:

> The biggest issue here is that babies are born at home and not in the clinic. This last year 1,486 babies were born at the health clinic and 416 babies were born at home. Of the homebirths, over a hundred of the mothers and babies died due to hemorrhages and other

> birthing complications. The reason mothers didn't come to the health clinic is because they have no cars, they have to ride on a horse trailer for five kilometers, and the roads are bad. The women also believe a cultural belief that they are stronger if they birth their babies at home. (Diuf)

After learning these facts from Dr. Diuf, I presumed that World Vision must buy cars and help drive pregnant mothers to the health clinic for birthing. It wasn't till I interviewed the mothers that I learned that they preferred homebirth because they felt most comfortable with their mothers and their traditional midwives in their own homes (huts). I gathered from this information that a better solution might be teaching traditional midwives healthy, modern birthing practices. There are many complex health realities in the villages, and qualitative inquiry allows for development practitioners to hear first-hand from the community members what influences their health practices.

Using qualitative methods in Senegal helped me identify these complex health realities, ones that take field time and personal communication with community members. It is well worth the time commitment. In fact, my initial plan for my thesis project changed after seeing first-hand Senegal's significant health and nutrition concerns. It took my coming in as an outsider and objectively analyzing World Vision's nutrition program to identify the existing major gaps. For instance, and for different reasons, the World Vision national office didn't know to address the iodine deficiency crisis in Ndidor. Through spending a month visiting World Vision's villages and interviewing many of their beneficiaries and partners, I can now confidently offer my objective analysis and propose the need for a salt business that addresses the root causes of Ndidor's severe poverty and iodine deficiency.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

To assess whether or not programs are effectively and efficiently producing the intended outcomes, a program evaluation is necessary. The primary purpose in evaluation is to improve social conditions. Mark et al. explain the four methods to evaluate projects: "assessment of merit and worth, program and organizational improvement, oversight and compliance, and knowledge development" (Mark 49). Although organizations often rely solely on quantitative analysis for program evaluation, it is not the best approach by itself. Program evaluation is important in the ICD field, but it is especially difficult because numbers alone can't represent success in an ICD program. Subjective and objective dimensions exist in the development field, and these require dynamic evaluations. To fairly evaluate a development program and accurately reflect its impact on a community, program evaluators must use qualitative and quantitative approaches.

UTILIZING QUALITATIVE & QUANTIATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

My project will also require qualitative and quantitative methods. Because a USAID grant will initially fund my project proposal, I must present a thorough evaluation of the project. For my project to receive continual income from USAID, World Vision's field-staff has to monitor the project and provide consistent and specific feedback. As Bornstein and Davis teach, "Social entrepreneurship is characterized by a rigorous focus on results" (61). These results indicate to donors that their investments are being stewarded wisely. Unfortunately though, there will be more rigorous program evaluations for projects such as my salt business proposal because "translating a social change into a meaningful number is an artful task" (Bornstein). A quote from William Bruce Cameron aptly applies to this project: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts" (1963). Nowhere is this saying more true than in the social sector, where attempts to measure results are notoriously difficult

(Bornstein). This difficulty is congruent with what I learned in the program evaluation course in studying Stringer's research. Stringer teaches that "numbers are illusory and usually reflect a distorted version of the research process. Nevertheless, there are occasions when some quantitative information is useful and may be properly included in an evaluation process" (Stringer 183). This fact indicates that in addition to qualitative inquiry, a quantitative approach will also be necessary to evaluate certain aspects of Ndidor's Salt Business.

Development workers must practice qualitative inquiry in program evaluation by interviewing the individuals who are directly influenced by their programs. Interview questions will include those about the business and about improved health via the informational focus groups as well as by iodine intake. As a result, development workers will learn ways in which the individuals have benefitted and ways the business and focus groups need to improve. I have learned that "a commitment to evaluation also demonstrates a commitment to ongoing improvement of program delivery and outcomes" (ORS). To ensure that Ndidor's Salt Business is genuinely helping the long-term development of Ndidor's health and economics, I have included several outcome markers that I will assess in a future hypothetical evaluation of this project. Following are examples of interview questions before, during, and after the salt business is in operation:

<u>Questions to be Asked During Interviews (Qualitative)</u>

- How do villagers use their income from the business?
- What health practices have villagers learned and applied from the health focus groups?
- How do villagers see progress in their personal economics because of the business?

- Is there improvement in their personal wellbeing from having increased income?
- How does this business inspire them to create social change in other aspects of their lives?
- Is this salt business functioning the way the villagers had hoped?
- How can this salt business be improved?
- What do they notice as a result of having increased iodine in their nutrition?

Quantitative Outcome Markers

- What is the iodine content in household salt? (Percentage measured by iodine testing kit)
- What is the iodine content in individual's urine? (Tested in health clinic)
- Are rates of stillborn births, goiters in children, and mental disabilities decreasing? (Monitored by health assessments at health clinic)
- What is the average monthly total income accumulated by Ndidor's Salt Business?
- How many villagers are going to the health focus groups?

CONCLUSION

World Vision's field staff will closely monitor and evaluate Ndidor's Salt Business. During my time in Senegal with World Vision, I noticed that this organization relies heavily on quantitative analysis, and because of this, I have asked them also to incorporate qualitative methods for this project. Qualitative approaches to inquiry will help make World Vision's staff and any other development worker more influential agents of social change. Through qualitative inquiry, development workers become personally involved and create genuine relationships with the people they are serving and learn the varying dynamics in each

community. Through these relationships and personal field experiences, development workers like me will also become closer friends and coworkers with the local people. This deepening relationship will inspire them to work even harder for social change.

As a development worker, I believe we all choose this career because of our compassion for the poor and through a desire to serve. Through spending time in the community and practicing qualitative methods to learn its people and their needs, I became personally invested in helping improve Ndidor's health and economics. In many careers, our jobs can become more bureaucratic, and it is easier to disengage personally with the work that we are doing. Qualitative research, however, affirms development workers of their lifetime vocation and purpose in the ICD field.

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ESSAY 3: ICD VALUES

The values engrained in the International Community Development (ICD) program have broadened my interpersonal and global perspectives. Although I have always had a strong sense of justice, this program has given me insight for how to practice social justice in my daily approach to life. It has also taught me how to serve communities in a manner that dignifies community members and improves the sustainability of their social impact. Through this program, I have grown in my capacity to do the hard skills involved in development work as much as I have grown in my philosophy and theology for how to implement this work well. These values play a key part in my thesis project proposal and implementation. Indeed, ICD values are at the beginning of my service intentions and philosophy. In this paper I will discuss the various specific ways this program has influenced my values: my personal transformation, social justice, copowerment, and my philosophy of service.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

The last eighteen months of being enrolled in the ICD program have been an arduous journey. The challenging realities of graduate work, a job, a recent onset of seizures, and the consequences that have come with them has catalyzed my personal development. While at times merely keeping up with the required reading for this program felt impossible, as I reflect on this journey, I see that some of the program's material has had a true impact on my life. Certain required resources have helped me identify my vocation and have challenged me to evaluate the alignment of my values and practices.

For example, in the Leadership course, I read *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker Palmer. This book has influenced my personal transformation in that it has taught me the importance of identifying my vocation and staying true to the person God has created me to be. As I continually

meet new opportunities and am influenced by the world around me, Palmer reminds me that I have a unique identity and that I will feel most fulfilled when pursuing my own vocation.

Understanding my vocation has been a process of trial and error and true submission. My early twenties have been years of exploration that have led to living in many regions, changes in my career path, and the development of many relationships along the way. During this time, I have sought counsel about my vocation from my close friends, mentors, and family members. It was not until reading Palmer's book, though, that I clearly understood the meaning of vocation. Palmer teaches us that to understand our vocation, we must remember who we were when we first arrived and reclaim the gift of true self (12). This counsel has challenged me to do some honest self-reflection.

Palmer teaches that, ultimately, our vocation is not "a goal to be achieved but a gift to be received" (10). There is great peace in this understanding. It was only when I slowed down in the first month of this program and became attentive to God's subtle guidance in my life that I received my vocation. My passion to help Africans is a part of my true self – the person I was when I first arrived. I was born in Mali, West Africa, a country that has been in civil war since the 1990s. This war fact is applicable to my vocation because since the time that I was a young girl living amidst Mali's poverty, I have had a compelling love for Africans. As other circumstances have changed, my desire to do relief work in Africa has remained constant. I deeply resonate with Palmer's expression that "vocation is something I can't not do" (25). My vocation is inevitably connected to ICD work; my calling to serve those who are in the hardest places is simply something I can't not do.

Palmer teaches that "inner work is as real as outer work… and if people skimp on their inner work, their outer work will suffer as well" (91). I have realized that when there

has been unrest in my spirit during this program, my schoolwork has usually been affected by it as well. During the time when my health was suffering and I had continual due dates for school, it felt like mere survival to keep going. Thankfully, with the support of my professors and family, I have been able to maintain my schoolwork and process the internal challenges I have faced simultaneously. As I now reflect on the growth I have experienced through this season, I see that I have transformed as a person because of my journaling, counseling, and processing. I did not realize until after the hard season had passed that I had been gradually maturing spiritually, mentally, and emotionally because of my intentional 'inner work'. Lives are broken down into different seasons, and for each season, there are certain challenges. I am thankful for this season because I know it has been one of considerable growth.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

My strong sense of justice is what has led me into the field of international development. To me, social justice is the equality of health, wealth, opportunity, wellbeing, and safety amongst all people regardless of their circumstance. Because vulnerable populations are more prone to experiencing injustice, my desire is to advocate for these people and work on their behalf for social change. In this program, I have learned how I can serve as an influence in protecting children, farmworkers, sweatshop workers, and others affected by injustice.

Social justice issues are prevalent all around us but are often covered up and misunderstood. Our lack of awareness regarding these issues happens because we often know victims of injustice more as facts and not as humans through actual experiences or relationships (Moe Lobeda 96). I have learned that to address social justice issues, development workers must

become attentive listeners and encourage community involvement. This participation is challenging because people are often quicker to give financially to social ventures than to become available emotionally, mentally, and physically. Groody teaches though that “charity expressed as justice leads to transforming social structures” (Ch. 4). Because I seek long-term transformation in fractured social structures, Groody challenges me to advocate for victims of injustice and encourage community involvement. I believe the “inner work” I have done throughout this program has also helped me become a better listener and more emotionally, mentally, and physically available to those affected by injustice.

Serving as an influence for social justice and protecting children is a strong part of my vocational calling. Unfortunately, when economies grow in countries that do not have child protection laws, there is usually an increase in child labor. Around the world, at least 132 million children under the age of fifteen work in agriculture, factories, quarries, sweatshops, mining, domestic labor, and other industries (Child Labor Today). Not only do these children lose their childhood, but they miss out on education, too, and are often forced to work in unhealthy and dangerous environments. As reported in a New Lanark case study: “Children are employed at the expense of going to school. In Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajiskistan, for example, it has been reported that rural schools are closed during the cotton harvest” (Child Labor Today). Children in my hometown near Seattle are protected from the extreme heat, chemicals, and long workdays with minimal food that some children overseas, unfortunately, are exposed to. I seek to see the same protection for all children in developing countries. To serve as an influence for this social injustice issue, I am interested in the ICD work that challenges legal authorities to rethink and build strong child protection laws.

At the same time, I need to realize that I can be part of the problem. For example, in the Social and Environmental Justice course, I learned to be mindful of my daily choices. Clawson writes in *Everyday Justice* that we can honor others and portray justice through buying products that are environmentally safe and fair to the people who created them. Some of Clawson's challenging questions that have provoked me to be more mindful about my clothing consumer habits are these: "What resources were used to produce the fabric? What chemicals were dumped into the environment to grow the fibers or to dye the colors? Who physically constructed the piece, and were they paid and treated fairly?" (122). Unfortunately, ethical fashion is unpopular among many of the largest clothing companies. Los Angeles is America's garment production capital and also a hub for sweatshop factories. This social justice question continues because Americans want cheap clothes and immigrants are desperate for work. The discussion of sweatshops makes most Americans feel uncomfortable, yet they feed into the system by purchasing inexpensive clothes from stores like Forever 21, TJ Maxx, and Ross (LA Times). It is the hidden costs behind these bargain stores that make purchasing from them so irresistible. Since learning about this social justice topic, I have begun talking with my friends and family about ethical fashion, and I have started purchasing clothes from fair trade companies.

I have also begun practicing social justice by being mindful of my food consumption. I learned in the Social and Environmental Justice course that our modern food-production system directly affects the lives of others, animals, and our environment. Every day, by purchasing processed and imported foods, people contribute to the production of carbon dioxide and transnational waste, the use of pesticides, and the exploitation of farmworkers.

We often see food in our local grocery stores that has been imported from all around the world, and we rarely consider the extensive process it has gone through to get there. We also see

semi-trucks carrying food traveling across state borders without acknowledging the effect it has on our environment. In, *Resisting Structural Evil*, Moe-Lobeda writes "that a forkful of produce travels an average of 1,300 to 2,000 miles to reach an American plate" (206). International food trade often has negative environmental and social consequences on exporting countries. For example, Moe-Lobeda shares a story from a woman in Mexico. The woman says, "Our children die of hunger because our land which ought to grow food for them, is used by international companies to produce strawberries for your tables" (24). Many American companies that own land in foreign countries are motivated to maximize their profit in America and are not concerned with their effect on small, foreign communities. To reduce my influence on international food trade, I have committed to eating locally grown foods.

Eating local foods is a realistic way to practice social justice because the synthetic pesticides used on conventional farms' produce have adverse effects on farmworkers and consumers. As Clawson writes, "Only in modern times have genetically engineered foods—sprayed with all sorts of fertilizers and pesticides, or crowded into factory farms that feed animals unnatural diets and pump them full of antibiotics and hormones—become the norm" (98). This norm is largely due to our nation's desire to maximize profit and produce mass amounts of food at low prices. Unfortunately, the hidden cost of conventional produce often translates to underpaid farmworkers. Currently, there are three million farmworkers in America (Ramirez). I have learned the following about this population:

> Farmworkers in the United States constitute a population at risk for serious environmental and occupational illness and injury as well as health disparities typically associated with poverty. Pesticides are a major source of occupational injury and illness to which farmworkers are exposed. (Arcury)

Not only are farmworkers underpaid and without health insurance, but they are also forced to work long hours where they are exposed to hazardous chemicals. Even the biggest fruit company in the world, Dole, has been sued for using dangerous pesticides on agricultural farms (Levitt). By eating local produce and unprocessed foods, we limit the amount of social injustice directly caused by our food-system.

Although child laborers, farmworkers, and sweatshop workers are very different, they are all distinct populations who are being treated unfairly for the convenience of others. Advocating and protecting these individuals is important because we are all made to be treated equally. Through being mindful in our daily consumer habits and talking about these realities with our friends and family, each person can help eliminate these injustices.

COPOWERMENT

I understand copowerment to be similar to empowerment but without the hierarchy. For example, those who practice empowerment ask, "How can I help you help yourself?" And those who practice copowerment ask, "What do you want to do with your life and how can we work together to get there?" "How can we help each other?" "What can I do for you and what can you do for me?" And, "How can we both walk away better from this experience?" It is a mindset that ICD workers should adopt if they hope to positively influence community development.

In my future work, I will seek to express the importance of community ownership and participation in ICD related programs. Throughout my work in this field, my goal is to incorporate qualitative research in the knowledge creation process so that community members feel heard and supported. Van Niekerk, author of *Community-Based Disaster Risk Management,* teaches that communities should be "treated as part of the knowledge creation

process" (9). I have learned that community members must understand the importance of the implemented community development policies, programs, and lifestyle changes and understand how to sustain them.

I practiced copowerment during my fieldwork in Senegal last summer. While I was interviewing villages sponsored by World Vision, I always asked them how they would like to see World Vision respond differently. I asked them what World Vision could do to help them improve their overall health. I wanted to put the power into their hands and dignify them and their answers as they made decisions for themselves. This approach was much appreciated, and by copowering with them, we have created the business I have proposed for my thesis.

PHILOSOPHY OF SERVICE

My theology of service will influence my future vocational choices in that I will make prayer the first step in my decision-making. As Marjorie J. Thompson reminds me, "Prayer is not a substitute for action; it is an action for which there is no substitute" (40). As I take on new jobs, travel internationally, and work for the betterment of others, I want to make sure I am doing so with God's guidance. Ultimately, I will experience burnout if I try to play the role of god in the lives of those I serve. I need God to sustain me and lead me to the difficult places. I don't want to be led out of a desire for adventure or because I want to 'feel good' about what I am doing. Groody writes, "Every time we look upon the poor…there is the face of Christ…the face of Christ is dying of hunger in the children who have nothing to eat" (Ch. 6). I remember that when we serve those who have nothing, we are truly serving Jesus.

Listening well to those I serve reminds me of how Marjorie Thompson explains listening to God; she explains, "It requires unhurried time and an open heart" (19). Listening to those who can voice their opinions is invaluable in my future work. Thompson teaches the

importance of listening before we speak, and I was in Senegal doing my fieldwork when I realized the importance of this listening (33). I found that when I was quiet, the doctors, chiefs, and beneficiaries were more likely to share their experiences, and I was equipped to ask them even more meaningful questions. I realized when I went into interviews and focus groups with a set agenda of what I wanted to talk about, I took away their voice. For example, one day I interviewed a mom with four severely malnourished kids. I initially had questions for her lined up, but her answers frustrated me because it was obvious that she didn't want to change her behavior. It wasn't until I was quite and listened to her that I really understood that her behavior was defined by her culture and her differing perspective. As Friedman advises, "It is only when people relax their hearts and their minds that they are open to hear and engage with others" (392).

When I am my most authentic self, the person who God has created me to be, I am passionate about serving the poor. Living in a world that so easily distracts me from my deepest desires, I often need being reminded of God's calling on my life. Miroslav Volf, a theologian at Yale University, has challenged me not to exclude myself from the will to be myself (92). Essentially, I must embrace who I am and my desire to serve the poor. I have learned through Volf's book *Exclusion & Embrace* that by embracing myself, I will be better equipped to embrace others. As I reflect upon the times that I have wanted to help others, I realize that when I am at peace with myself, I do a better job serving them.

CONCLUSION

I have so loved about this program the integration of all these forms of "inner work" into our vocational aspirations. As my philosophy of service has expanded and I have developed more as a person, I feel better prepared to enter my vocational

calling. Understanding the value of listening and asking the right questions will equip me as a change-maker and through practicing copowerment, I know that I will continually grow during my entire career.

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