



Community-based Development in Sierra Leone

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For the month of June this past summer I dwelled with locals of the Loko clan in rural Northwestern Sierra Leone while interning with an NGO founded right here at Penn. As a region healing from a devastating rebel incursion ending in 2002 and lying at the epicenter of the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, inland Sierra Leone is among the most indigent regions of the world. To combat the stagnant pace of development in the area, I designed a package of projects in conjunction with village leaders to revitalize one of the community primary schools. I lead a team of locals to repair crumbling parts of a decrepit schoolhouse, organized a returning education program for local teachers to earn graduate-level certifications, wrote a grant to the US State Department to bolster regional foodstuff production, and coordinated with regional administrators to ensure that all children in the region have access to socialized primary education. With a stable food supply and thriving primary school, the area will have a proper foundation for generations of development projects to come.

Governmental or NGO development work is a likely career path for me after graduation, and Penn's generous support this year thrust me into the inspiring field work of a community development organization not unlike the multitude of NGO's that implement international aid funding in disadvantaged communities across the globe. I now have a reinvigorated sense of purpose for my instruction in politics. Our modern, globalizing world contains a drastic inequality in standard of living, and tactfully crafted and implemented development projects are the vehicle for attainable and sustainable progress in often neglected regions. A degree in political science paired with summer exposure to international development challenges is a recipe for a career of navigating and mending governmental and non-governmental institutions to effectively assist impoverished men and women regardless of race, creed, and nationality.