

Dear Class of 1995,

My name is Joe Barrett. I am a History major with a South Asian Studies certificate and since my experiences as a participant on the 2009-2010 Bridge Year India Program, I have had a serious interest in development work. During this past summer, I interned with the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a U.S. government foreign aid agency, in the nation of Lesotho in southern Africa. In September of 2013, MCC completed a five-year project, or compact, with the Government of Lesotho. This project, which consisted of a 362.2 million dollar grant, primarily targeted Lesotho's health and water sectors.

In Lesotho, I helped MCC's resident country mission plan for the imminent completion of MCC's compact and the future sustainability of the projects that have been implemented during the past five years. In particular, I synthesized lengthy completion plans into concise documents that will allow MCC to monitor its numerous projects. I also wrote posts for MCC's public affairs blog about specific projects, such as rural water systems and health centers. Before writing these blog posts, I would visit the site locations to interview the beneficiaries of the projects, such as nurses at new health clinics and people in a village with a new water system. These interviews would enable me to learn how the projects were affecting daily life across Lesotho. For example, during my interview with Majoseph May (see photo above) I was able to see firsthand where she used to collect water from the local spring and the ways in which the new water system had altered her daily routine. These trips also enabled me to begin to understand why some projects had failed while others were very successful and which types of projects seemed most beneficial to local communities.



Over the course of my final month in Lesotho, I worked on a case study of MCC investments in the \$450 million Metolong Dam and related infrastructure. This project is funded by multiple donors and the construction phase will last beyond the MCC compact. The case study will provide MCC with essential information regarding how it can best leverage the resources of other donors to complement its own investments and how it can ensure the sustainability of its investments in projects in which it does not

control all of the infrastructure. Aside from its benefits to MCC, this project provided me with numerous insights into the intricacies and global politics (the project involved South African,

American, Italian, Basotho, and Chinese firms) of large-scale construction projects, knowledge that is relevant across the developing world. While researching this project, I interviewed many of the independent engineers and government officials involved in the project and made multiple trips to the project sites and affected communities to deepen my understanding of the project.

While in Lesotho, I also had the opportunity to travel around much of the country (and some of the neighboring states in South Africa) for both MCC projects and for fun. These travel opportunities were one of the best parts of my summer, as they provided an opportunity to learn a considerable amount about Basotho culture and the complex cultural, historical, and economic relations between South Africa and Lesotho.



For me, the primary goal of this internship was to learn about how bilateral aid organizations work with partner countries to design and implement projects to address specific problems and to see how these projects are implemented on the ground. I believe that I was successful at achieving this goal, as I was able to work with many officials in Lesotho government and spent considerable amounts of time at project sites discussing projects with their engineers and the staff who will one day use the facility. This internship further confirmed my interest in development as a field and I plan to leverage the information and experiences that I gained from this internship in other development projects in the near future.

Furthermore, as a history major with an interest in the evolution of development theory, this summer provided me with an important modern context for my historical research. This year, I will be working on a thesis about the Peace Corps and 1960s development theory. Although my paper will not discuss contemporary agencies such as MCC, my experiences at MCC have influenced both my interest in this topic and some of the questions that I will ask while researching this paper.



In short, my experiences in Lesotho were incredibly beneficial on many levels and will impact my academic and professional goals for years to come. I'm very grateful for all of your assistance. Kea leboha! (Sesotho for thank you!)

Sincerely,

Joe Barrett