

Bethany Wilinski
SKJ Fellowship Report
Summer Intern (2012) – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

With support from the SKJ fellowship, I spent the summer working for World Learning in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia as a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Africa Bureau intern. For the past three years, World Learning has been the primary implementing agency for the USAID-funded education program, School Community Partnership Serving Orphans and Vulnerable Children affected by HIV/AIDS (SCOPSO). The SCOPSO project takes a multi-faceted approach to improving the academic outcomes and general well-being of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). Recognizing that the factors which affect children's educational outcomes extend far beyond the classroom walls, the project provides support for children in seven interrelated areas: education, health care, food and nutrition, psychosocial support, shelter and care, protection, and economic strengthening. In addition to providing children and families with direct support ranging from school supplies to free medical care, the SCOPSO project endeavors to build the capacity of schools and communities to ensure the well-being of the OVC beyond the life of the project.

My primary task at World Learning was to conduct a small qualitative evaluation of SCOPSO's economic strengthening activities. SCOPSO economic strengthening activities are implemented at multiple levels, targeting individuals, households, and schools. My research focused on two household-level interventions, the Asset Transfer (AT) program and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA). Under the guidance of the World Learning monitoring and evaluation team, along with SCOPSO program officers and school liaisons, I designed a qualitative study with the goal of better understanding how parents and guardians perceived that their participation in the VSLA and AT programs affected their children's education. Over the course of four weeks, we conducted interviews and focus group discussions with VSLA and AT

participants at six schools in Addis Ababa. I spent the remainder of my time at World Learning analyzing interview transcripts and preparing a report based on our findings. This report will be submitted to USAID in the coming year as a supplement to quantitative program data.

In addition to compiling this report, I was able to support the SCOPSO team by editing a variety of project reports and success stories that will also be submitted to USAID along with the final project report when the project wraps up in 2013. Editing these documents was an opportunity not only to assist my World Learning colleagues who so patiently assisted me with the design and execution of my research project (including hours spent transcribing and translating interview data from Amharic to English!), but a chance to learn more about the implementation of the SCOPSO project in different regions of the country. Due to time constraints, my own research focused only on schools and project beneficiaries in Addis Ababa. Reading and editing reports and success stories, however, gave me a better sense of how the project affects the lives of its 52,000 beneficiaries nation-wide.

As a doctoral student studying Educational Policy and Curriculum & Instruction, with a focus on early childhood and comparative education, my goals for this summer internship were to gain experience working in international development education, to expand my understanding of education by learning about and experiencing a new educational system and culture, and to build relationships with colleagues working in international development by assisting them with the important work that they do. My summer internship with USAID/World Learning enabled me to achieve these goals. I am deeply grateful to the Scott Kloeck-Jenson Fellowship and the Kloeck-Jenson family for making it possible for me to have this experience. This unique opportunity to experience a new country and culture and to learn about Ethiopia's educational system was an important learning experience and one whose influence on my academic trajectory and career will be far-reaching.