

## **Partners in Health Internship Mid-Term Report**

I am in my fourth week here in Boston with the Haiti-Rwanda Commission at Partners in Health's headquarters, an office of about 150 passionate and busy employees. These past several weeks have been an incredible learning experience. To speak broadly, my interactions and conversations in the office have allowed me to shape a more nuanced understanding of PIH's approach to health and health care in the communities it serves, as well as a more thoughtful personal perspective on these issues. A social justice organization, PIH sees health as a basic human right, and this rights-based approach informs the work it does. PIH's initiatives in the ten countries it serves are designed at the invitation of and in collaboration with these countries' governments. PIH programs align, when possible, with Ministry of Health plans in these host countries, because the organization sees this scale-up as an effective way to develop stronger health systems and to thus guarantee a larger number of patients their right to health. But if such plans do not exist, PIH works closely with the government to lay out and implement a strategic plan that reaches even the country's poorest and that strives to comprehensively promote patients' health and wellness. To PIH, health means more than access to medicine's most advanced technologies in the form of medications, vaccines, or procedures; it means transportation costs for hospital and clinic visits; money for food, water, and shelter; and educational opportunities. PIH rigorously pursues this comprehensive vision of health in its programs, and it is within this framework that I carry out my day-to-day work with the Haiti-Rwanda Commission.

PIH's Haiti and Rwanda sites are the organization's largest projects. For that and many other reasons, the Haiti-Rwanda Commission is a unique and special program within PIH. The Commission is a bilateral mechanism to facilitate exchange of post-genocide policy and lessons learned with post-earthquake Haiti. The Commission's major initiatives include policy exchanges focused on decentralization, women's empowerment and inclusion in government, and displaced populations; a Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) aiming to increase girls' leadership development and participation in primary and secondary education in Haiti; and an Education and Leadership Program, through which six Haitian students are currently studying at university in Rwanda on scholarships provided by the Government of Rwanda. These programs are designed to increase communication among high-level officials from both countries, and to invest in Haiti's future generation of leaders, policymakers, and informed citizens.

To date, I have spent time working on all of the Commission's major projects. Guided by the Commission's policy exchange emphases, I have researched areas for South-South cooperation between Haiti and Rwanda, as well as other countries of East Africa. For the WGI, I have been developing a curriculum for the Commission's monthly Girls Club meetings targeting at-risk girls in Haiti's tent camps. I am maintaining a database of organizations doing similar work with women's health and rights and leadership skill development in communities around the world, and reaching out to them for educational materials to build the curriculum. For the Education and Leadership Program, I have organized student files and

correspondence, developed an end-of-year evaluation rubric for the Commission's leadership to use in evaluating the students' progress, and interviewed two scholarship students that I will ultimately write feature stories about for the Commission's website and donors. Lastly, I have been developing content for and designing the Commission's website for launch later this summer. For this project, I have completed a comprehensive search on recent Haiti and Rwanda news pieces, edited existing content and written new information for the site, and developed the site's design and visual content. The launch of the site later this summer will be a crucial step for the Commission as it enters its second year of operation, expands its programs (its scholarship program in particular), and continues to develop its relationships with the governments and stakeholders of both countries. The site will connect PIH supporters with the Haitian and Rwandan populations and communities the Commission serves and, in doing so, increase the Commission's impact.

This work has allowed me to use my two months of research in Haiti last summer to inform the Commission's projects. My familiarity with Haiti's on-the-ground conditions, community needs and priorities, and culture have allowed me to contribute ideas and content to the projects in a unique way. More importantly, my past experiences allow me to more personally relate to the communities we work with, their daily struggles, and their potential for growth. As I continue my work over the next five weeks, I am excited to continue making progress on each of these projects, learning more about the communities we work in and the national health systems in which they are situated, and developing stronger connections with the HRC team and students in Rwanda and partners in Haiti.