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Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications, "Gardner-Webb Global Studies Major Completes Summer Internship in Asia" (2015). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 1128.
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Gardner-Webb Global Studies Major Completes Summer Internship in Asia

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Office of University
Communications

September 9, 2015

Nathan Buckner ('17) Spends Summer Working for World Vision Bangladesh

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – As a 12-year-old boy, Nathan Buckner may not have realized the impact his family’s move to China would have on his own future career goals. In the seventh grade, his mom, dad, and sister moved from their home in Clemmons, N.C., to Hong Kong where his father served as head of an international Christian school. His passion for global studies was kindled during those years, and his decision to attend Gardner-Webb University has offered even more opportunities for him to further develop his international inclinations.

Now a junior at GWU, Buckner is majoring in global studies and took advantage of an opportunity to complete an international internship over the summer while his parents were living in Bangladesh. Dr. Michael Kuchinsky, assistant professor of political science and Buckner’s advisor, encouraged him to connect with World Vision Bangladesh (WVB), a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to the wellbeing of children, families and communities.

“It was a great opportunity with regard to skill-building for Nathan, but also to give him insight on the new policy direction that this development community has to move towards,” Kuchinsky reflected. “Every organization involved in international development has to be willing to see things in a different light and process things differently.”

Buckner emailed WVB and inquired about the possibility of a summer internship. “Dr. Kuchinsky and I initially decided it would be great for me to work towards an internship with an NGO (non-government organization),” he shared. “Bangladesh is a third-world country with tons of things going on right there. I knew it would be a really cool opportunity to see development first hand.”

He was offered a summer internship position and spent the first couple of weeks in the national office, where he worked on research for the United Nations’ “Sustainable Development Goals” for international development. “The new goals focus on resource management, population control, improving health care, maternal health, disease, and other efforts,” Buckner offered. “One of the main things I saw were the ‘Millennium

Development Goals,' which were established about 20 years ago by the United Nations to help improve maternal care, reduce diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria, increase primary education for children, reduce hunger, things like that.”

During his first day in the national office, the second of two large earthquakes in Nepal occurred in May 2015, and he felt the aftershocks in the office. “That was a really scary moment,” he declared. “But besides that, fortunately, the office work was relatively uneventful.”

After a few weeks in the national office, he embarked on a weeklong trip to Pergande in the northwestern portion of Bangladesh near India. “I was able to work with a great area development program there, which is like tiny offices set up in each region,” he explained. “I really got to see the needs of the individual communities. I saw some income generation through sewing training and farming, through getting seeds and planting training. World Vision has helped get into these areas and offer proper training, for instance on hand washing and basic hygiene. The goal is that the development program can begin to focus on other important needs.”

Because the economy is mostly agricultural, Buckner said that children have not had as many educational opportunities. “You hear about it all the time, but to see it firsthand? It just breaks your heart to see 12-year-olds who chop wood all day and earn a dollar,” he said. “World Vision has helped set up schools in these areas to give basic education to the children. One of the children I met, Muhammad, couldn’t read when he was 10 years old. Through help with World Vision, he has school supplies, books, and is reading on a second or third grade level. He is 13 now, so it’s not perfect, but it’s way better than it was.”

Buckner is considering work with another NGO next summer, perhaps in China, since his family is back in Hong Kong now. “It was a really eye-opening experience. I had no idea just how NGOs worked and how they help communities,” he offered. “I had never really thought about how people go to these countries and gain trust and develop relationships and really work with the people there. They foster a bond and share the love of Christ. It was really helpful to see and a blessing to know that Christians all over the world are working together to help those who need it.”

Click below to listen to the full interview with Nathan Buckner.

World Vision Bangladesh (WVB), a Christian humanitarian organization, is dedicated to the wellbeing of children, especially the most vulnerable children, their families and communities. It is committed to serve and partner with people in need regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender and ability. At present, World Vision Bangladesh is serving around five million people including one million children under 31 districts.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University provides exceptional educational opportunities within a Christian environment, preparing students to think critically, to succeed professionally, and to serve faithfully as members of their local and global communities.