

FIRST PERSON

Enjoying the challenge

My name is Dianne Oliphant and I have been working as a Local Economic Development Specialist intern with the Canadian Urban Institute in Iloilo City, Philippines for the last five months. This opportunity has provided me with a great deal of experience to work on all areas of the Project Management Cycle, including project design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

This has been my first experience being actively involved in using and applying these concepts and practices after studying them in a post-graduate college certificate program in Canada last year. It is exciting for me to be actually applying knowledge and skills that I gained from my educational experiences in the “real world”.

The Canadian International Development Agency’s youth internship program that I am involved in has provided me with invaluable first hand experience of working in the field of international development. After this experience, I am excited to continue to work in this field and to broaden my knowledge, skills and experiences in all areas of international development.

My internship in the Philippines has also given me the opportunity to work in a different culture. I have often visited and lived in different cultures than my own, but this was my first time working abroad. Working in a different culture has many intellectual and emotional challenges and tested my ability to handle different and therefore often difficult situations and experiences. For example, at the beginning of my internship, I



had difficulty adjusting to the Filipino concept of time, especially when beginning meetings and conferences. However, I have grown to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of starting a meeting anywhere from a half hour to two hours late, because it provides time for participants to chat about work and life and, of course, take advantage of the snacks provided.

Yet, there are work related challenges that I continue to struggle with, even after five months of living and working in the Philippines. These include my inability to speak my mind in certain, stressful situations, communication inconsistencies with people I work with due to language and cultural barriers, and the time I had to spend waiting to discover and begin the work

that was expected of me.

It is important for me to mention that many of the challenges I faced during my internship are common experiences that can happen in any workplace around the world. Some work experiences are universal, no matter who you work with, who your boss is and what kind of work you are doing.

Overall, my experiences have provided me the opportunity to learn from the various challenges and frustrations I encountered and work to improve the way that I react and respond to them. Without putting myself in such an environment, I would never have been able to change and hopefully improve myself in these ways. Every work experience has its ups and downs and I am privileged to

have begun my career facing and learning from my challenges in such an interesting and stimulating environment.

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