Mia Blakstad

Mia is a junior Nutritional Sciences major in the college of Human Ecology. She spent her summer in Tigray, Ethiopia, looking at the implementation of the country’s National Nutrition Program (NNP) as part of a small research team sent by Professor David Pelletier, of the division of Nutritional Sciences. Ethiopia recently revised the NNP to shift the responsibility of nutrition issues from lying solely within the health ministry to include eight other ministries. Mia’s focus was on identifying impeding and facilitating factors for effective implementation of multisectoral nutrition, as well as identifying promising nutrition-specific or sensitive practices that can be scaled up to reduce stunting rates in the country. Through her work, she gained valuable insight into the complexities of scaling up development programs, and will take the knowledge with her to the Cornell global health community, as well as to her future work within international development.

Katherine Kuang

Katherine spent the first seven weeks of this past summer with Bless China International, an NGO with a mission to "care for the poor, share knowledge, and love the people of Yunnan Province." She visited several sites throughout Yunnan, China and participated in a range of projects from lending a hand to parents of children with cerebral palsy as they practiced exercises (to enhance their coordination and movement) to shadowing doctors at an international clinic. During the last two weeks of her summer, she also had the privilege to visit Hidden Treasures, a home for orphans with special needs, in Fujian, which is at the opposite end of China, and volunteer with the staff,
feeding and playing with the precious children there. She feels this trip opened the door to future career possibilities as well as her heart to appreciate the life and wealth of opportunities she has been given!

Sundus Ahmed

This summer, Sundus worked in Machala, Ecuador, collecting primary data for her senior thesis as part of a research study on dengue (a mosquito-borne viral infection currently hyper-endemic to the city) through her research lab in DNS. Partnered with the Ministerio de Salud Publica (Ministry of Health), Sundus was part of the primary field team responding to new cases of dengue in the area. The work consisted of going into the houses of patients diagnosed with dengue and conducting household and clinical surveys, taking blood samples and anthropometric measurements, and collecting mosquitos to later identify. Her primary job was conducting the surveys in Spanish from each family member willing to participate in the study. Because Machala experienced a dengue outbreak this summer, Sundus was working on a new case just about every day! In addition to the field work, she also spent time shadowing a doctor in the local hospital, working in the laboratory, taking a medical Spanish course in the Andean city of Cuenca, and attending an infectious disease conference in the capital city of Quito.

Sundus believes this has been an invaluable learning experience for her because it allowed her to work in public health on a research project she is very passionate about while also immersing herself in a foreign culture and learning the language, customs and traditions native to the area. After two years of studying the disease at Cornell, being able to interact with the affected population first-hand was especially rewarding for Sundus because it gave her an entirely new perspective on the illness and allowed her to understand the complex array of factors that contribute to its prevalence. Awed by the beauty and diversity of this country and the humbleness of its people, Sundus hopes to return to Latin America someday and continue work in infectious disease research.