

# **My work at the WFP in Tadjikistan**

Sciences Po has a partnership with the World Food Programme. In 2016-2017, five Students from Sciences Po had the chance to do an internship in one of the WFP offices. A very selective process, as 22 positions were offered worldwide... Sciences Po did really well placing five students! Interview with

## ***How did your internship go overall?***

My internship at WFP (World Food Programme) Tajikistan was most definitely a memorable experience. In my opinion, you need to stay and work in a country for a longer period of time if you truly want to get to know a place. As a tourist you will not have to create a new daily life for yourself with your own routines like you do when you have a job. During my internship, I experienced life in Tajikistan and working for WFP: exactly what I had hoped for. Also my internship assignment was super interesting.

## ***What did you learn, professionally and personally from this internship?***

Professionally, I experienced how hard it is for International Organisations to solve problems of a structural nature. Few people have heard of Tajikistan whilst the situation with regard to food security is worse than in its neighbouring country Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, there is a war and a newsworthy crisis. In Tajikistan, underdevelopment and food insecurity are caused by structural problems such as climate change, bad governance and gender inequality. These issues are extremely complex and very hard to solve. Also, this also makes it hard to get funding from donors.

Personally, I learned that I definitely want to work abroad and continue to discover new cultures. The greatest compliment I got from a local colleague Gulnora was "Emily you are so simple"; I replied: "simple is not positive, haha" She explained "I don't mean simple, I mean modest, you are so open to new cultures" I believe modesty is one of the most important things when entering a new community and encountering cultural differences.

## ***Any memorable good and/or funny and/or difficult experience?***

My most memorable experience was a project sight visit to the Pamirs, the mountainous area bordering China and Afghanistan. There was only one road to connect the two villages to the rest of the world and it often gets blocked by snow or mudflows. The nature was unique, overwhelmingly beautiful and so rough. We stayed with local people in the village for one night because of the long journey. At night, I slept on an outdoor bed with two Tajik girls underneath the stars and you could see the entire Milky Way. In the morning, I picked apricots and mulberries right from the trees in the surrounding garden and they were the best I ever tasted. The grand finale was our trip home from the Pamir Mountains back to Dushanbe (the capital of Tajikistan): we got to travel by helicopter ! My greatest challenge was my own health. After two severe cases of food poisoning, my local colleagues were joking I should eat the WFP SuperCereal porridge for malnourished children.

## ***Would you recommend the program to***

## ***your fellow SP students and why?***

I would most definitely recommend the OSZ summer internship programme to other students. I really appreciated the way in which I could design my own internship assignment together with my supervisor and the amount of responsibility I got during a (short) three-month summer internship. I ended up studying the differences between the vulnerability of project beneficiaries in different districts in Tajikistan. This assignment allowed me to travel through the country and study Tajik society. Many internships are spend behind a desk,filling in excel sheets and doing chores for your supervisor. The OSZ summer program was a great learning opportunity and an adventure.