

### **Reflection Paper – Jordan National Red Crescent Society**

This past summer, I was fortunate enough to intern with the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JRC), in Amman, Jordan. The JRC is a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and represents Jordan within the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). As one of the countries to border Syria, Jordan has experienced an influx of about 1.4 million Syrian refugees since the crisis began in 2011. I previously studied abroad in Amman in the fall of 2015. With my programme I was afforded the opportunity to visit Za'ateri, the largest Syrian refugee camp in the world. Za'ateri is located next to the Syrian border, around an hour outside of Amman. It was during this visit, after speaking with many of the camp's residents and realizing how awful Za'ateri was, that I was able to gain an insight into the horrors and suffering of the Syrian war. The visit resonated with me and I decided that I would like to return to Amman one day to help with the refugee crisis. My internship opportunity with the JRC and the funding I was awarded allowed me to do so this summer for two months.

At the JRC, I focused on two main projects. The first was conducting English lessons for refugee children, while the other involved working on a publication that would be sent to the IFRC. This publication outlined the closure of a hospital in the Azraq refugee camp and the unstable partnership between JRC and a consortium of three other Red Cross national societies that led to said closure. I encountered quite a few difficulties with both of these projects, but was able to work my way through them and learn a great deal about myself. The English lessons proved to be quite problematic because I was simply thrown into a room of young children (ages 7-10) for two hours

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with no instruction. While I have been learning Arabic for over two years, the language is very difficult and complex and I had some trouble communicating with the children. I had to figure out what to do all on my own and somehow teach these children useful skills. While my task was difficult at first, I began to grow more and more comfortable with my role as time passed. I realized that with no one to guide me on what to do, I was free to conduct lessons however I saw fit and have fun with them. I enjoyed my time with the kids greatly and I know that they learned a lot, as I saw their progress as the weeks elapsed.

Regarding the other project, I ran into difficulties when trying to ascertain what exactly happened leading up to the hospital's closure. The culture in Jordan is quite different than the one in the United States; things are more disorganized and there is less of an emphasis on facts. It was difficult for me to gain a clear picture of the events, despite my interviews and document reviews, seeing as how the story seemed to be constantly changing. As well, people often scheduled meetings and then simply did not show up or would keep changing their minds about when and where to meet. My supervisor and I worked together to overcome this issue and had to learn to be more adaptable and understanding.

Overall, I learned a fair amount about myself and my leadership style. I realized that I am often afraid to take charge, but that when I do, I am able to do great things. I need to be more confident in my abilities and this internship helped me to really realize that and apply it more often. Had I not been persistent about meeting with people, the interviews would have never even taken place. In order to complete my job, I need to be the one to take initiative. I also learned how much I dislike uncertainty or disorganization

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and realized that I need to be more flexible, especially when in a different culture. When teaching English, I remembered how much I love working with children. They made me smile and I had a lot of fun with them. I also realized that despite the atrocities they have lived through, they are still normal kids.

The most important contribution I made to my organization definitely came in the form of the report I wrote. Most of the people at the JRC speak English as a second language, and so I was able to help write the document in order for it to be presentable to native speakers. It is crazy for me to realize that as an undergraduate, I have worked on a document that will be discussed globally, with the entire IFRC.

I have always envisioned myself helping others when I imagine my future career. My internship allowed me to glance into the humanitarian field. To be honest, I'm not sure if this is exactly what I would like to do. I often felt as though my efforts were being wasted and as if I could be doing more to help the crisis. While I'm still not sure exactly where I would like to work after college and grad school, I've realized that I don't want to be in the humanitarian field permanently. I want to find another way to be more effective in making the world a better place, perhaps through going to law school.

Overall, I'm so grateful to have been afforded this experience. This summer internship at the JRC allowed me to return to Amman and further explore my interest in the Middle East, while also helping out with the refugee crisis and learning about myself.