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Final Intern Report

SEDEJ-Santiago, Chile

September 2007-December 2007

My first day at SEDEJ involved a brief meeting with the owner and a tour of the place along with an introduction to everyone and what their position was with SEDEJ.

The very next day I got the opportunity to head out to some of the worksites of SEDEJ, mostly school-type environments where at-risk children are taught lessons and encouraged to cultivate their creativity. We went to 5 different sites, all in obviously impoverished neighborhoods. It was a good opportunity to see the side of Santiago that I hadn't yet seen, because my apartment was located in the center of Santiago. The children were great and invited us to the Independence Day party they'd be hosting that weekend. By the end of the day, I was entirely exhausted. At each site we sat down in a meeting to discuss whatever issues happened to be pertinent, and I realized that it was the first time in quite awhile that I'd been exposed to so much Spanish for a long duration. Not only that, but Chilean Spanish is extremely fast and slurred and full of slang, much the opposite of the Ecuadorian Spanish I was exposed to before. At any rate, I tried my best to follow the fast flow of conversation in the meetings.

Wednesday was my first day of actual work in the office. I arrived early to meet with Loreto (my advisor and team leader) and she discussed the basics of what I'll be working on. I was very fortunate to meet with Denisse, my predecessor, in Portland before I came to Chile. She had her portfolio and was able to show me everything that

she'd worked on throughout the internship and gave a basic explanation of what I'll be doing. It was nice to have an idea of that beforehand. Basically SEDEJ is trying for the first time to receive international aid. For the last 30 years SEDEJ has relied on the Chilean government and other national businesses in order to fund their projects. The problem is that the Chilean government will only provide funding for 1-2 years on average. Once applicants reapply, the majority of the programs will not be re-approved to continue. Therefore, SEDEJ is now looking to receive funds from international sources. This is also a challenge because of Chile's wealthy status and many agencies don't put Chile on their "severely at-risk" list.

There are currently three projects that SEDEJ is interested in funding. They are completely written up with descriptions, duration, cost, objectives, etc. They're essentially ready to be launched in all aspects-except they're lacking the money to do so. The three projects are: *Taking care of Senior Citizens*, *Social Development in Children*, and *The Building of a Snail Farm and Cultivation of Snails*.

After my first week "crash course" I delved into the grant-writing process by searching out viable granters, which proved to be a long and tedious process. I also worked on translating the projects into English so I could have a solid grasp on what exactly I was trying to get funded.

About one month into the internship, I realized that the grant writing wasn't going to get me very far, because the majority of company donations had already been expended for the year. My internship took a turn from the office to the field as I taught English classes for children and performed workshops with the Social Development Workers. I also accompanied several workers out to the field to observe what they did.

In the office I continued my grant research while compiling a synopsis on the structure of SEDEJ through personal interviews and field trips to their prospective sites.

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Overall this internship taught me more than I could have ever fathomed. I had the opportunity to work with a fantastic group of people who are working hard for the betterment of humanity. I feel Don Rene, the director and one of the founders of SEDEJ, has truly found a perfect balance in NGO management between actually helping the people and continuing the funding processes, and it's hard to argue with that considering SEDEJ celebrated its 30-year anniversary this year. Even in his old age Don Rene still accompanies many of the events, he is always available for support, and he always has the most genuine smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye. Everyone I have spoken with at SEDEJ has told me that they are more than pleased with their job, the way things run, and how they are treated. The whole office is truly like a family, which I really found comforting.

If I were to change one thing about the internship, I would have liked to be on an actual team. While SEDEJ has expressed a strong interest in launching an international funding project, they are lacking the team to execute it. Loreto and a few others have experience in that area, but they also have several other projects going on and so they don't have the time. That was one problem I feel that I ran into during my internship, because everyone was so busy I felt like a hindrance if I asked for help. Loreto was fully supportive of me and she was patient enough to sit down with me when I had questions and needed further explanations. But after our meetings I was back on my own to figure

out a plan. If I were to have a team, I feel like we could accomplish much more by putting our heads together and working from more than just one source.

Another obstacle I faced was the duration of my internship. I felt that 4 months was far too short to achieve any measurable progress. It was really good for me to learn the art of patience: discovering how long the funding process really is, and how relaxed Latin American business ethic can be in comparison to that of the US. My work in the office opened my eyes to opportunities within the networks of NGO's worldwide; I now have a much better base of knowledge regarding them.

Working at SEDEJ has taught me so many valuable lessons. I have learned so much about the grant-writing process; it was interesting to read the project proposals and how they are formatted. I urged them to call on me for anything they might need in the future, and I hope they do. I have all the projects in my email, so I could easily write a proposal in English and email it to an organization if SEDEJ happens to encounter a viable one

I am also really grateful that I completed a project based on the structure of SEDEJ. It gave me the opportunity to talk with a lot of people in the office that I only knew in passing, and learn about what they actually do. It was also interesting just to learn about the composition of the individual programs. They all differed in aspects such as the duration of the program, the primary granter, the location of the programs, etc.

Out in the field I also learned so many invaluable things. In accompanying my coworkers to their individual sights, I learned firsthand about the diverse work scope on which SEDEJ operates. It was so nice to meet with the people face to face, and see where SEDEJ is making a difference and affecting individual lives. It was also great to

work in locations outside of downtown, considering that these little communities are where the majority of “Santiaguinos” live, and their lives are certainly much less glamorous than the typical vision of a “downtownner”.

My classes with the children were so very meaningful and worthwhile. I learned so much from these children, with their genuine and sometimes brutal honesty, their positive attitudes and eagerness to learn, and their warm and accepting hearts. When reading the case histories of some of these children, I simply cannot understand how one could cope. But they have such a vivacious attitude towards life and it has really been a humbling experience to work with them.

All in all, I am more than pleased with the experience I had at SEDEJ, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.