The University of Montana

International Development Studies

February 2010

IDS News

Many Minors

As of Spring semester in its fourth year, the IDS minor has enrolled more than 160 students, with approximately 45 currently enrolled. These students' majors vary widely: while the majority come from the College of Arts and Sciences, with majors in Political Science, Economics, Sociology and other disciplines, many also come from other schools, including Resource Conservation, Business and Journalism. The currently enrolled minors hold a median GPA of 3.4.

Looking Into the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve in India
(Story page 2)

IDS Applied in China

Clark Begger has just returned to Montana after spending nearly two and half years working abroad. One month after graduation he was on a plane to China to teach English and witness the Chinese version of development first hand. He spent six months in a rural, elementary school in Shandong Province, and two years at universities around Shanghai. "Teaching is highly rewarding and it's a good way to make a direct impact on the youth," he says. "I can't really say enough about how well the courses in the IDS program prepared me for working abroad. I was really surprised by how many things we talked about in class actually happened to me." Besides working in China, Clark had a chance to travel throughout Southeast Asia and also spent a summer volunteering in India. His time in India was spent in Pune, a city about 3 hours southwest of Mumbai, working on a housing reconstruction project in an urban slum. He recalls, "This was a great opportunity to get involved with the administrative side of NGO and non-profit organizations and to see the intricacies of working in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual environment. You have to remember that things don't necessarily operate they way they do here in the States. In India, the afternoon's work doesn't start until after you've had tea. If there is no tea, then there probably isn't much work getting done that afternoon. Dealing with issues like these is another area where I really called on what I had learned in the IDS program." Clark is currently back in Montana, researching graduate opportunities in development and working for the World Affairs Council.

New Core and Content Courses

ASCRC this past fall approved the following changes to the course offerings for IDS: PSCI 463, Politics of Global Migration; GPHY 141S, Geography of World Regions; and RECM 451W, Tourism and Sustainability are all now Core IDS courses. In addition, ECON 317 is now ECNS 217 and is still a Core course. FOR/RECM/GPHY 352, Himalayan Environment and Development, and FOR/RECM/GPHY 352, Tourism, Livelihoods and Sustainability in the Himalaya have been added as Content courses.

New IDS Scholarship Announced—See Page 2

For questions/comments about this Newsletter or the IDS Program contact:

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Please send stories, updates, or story ideas to Marian.
Learn more about IDS at http://www.cas.umt.edu/IDS/default.cfm

Scholarship Announced for International Student in IDS

The Peter H. Koehn & Phyllis B. Ngai Scholarship has been established to provide an annual one-time-only scholarship award of $1,000 to a sophomore, junior, or senior who is registered for the minor program in International Development Studies and is not a citizen or permanent resident of the United States. The recipient's overall grade point average must be at least 3.0. Applications are due by 12 March for the 2010/2011 academic year. Please submit a résumé and a letter of no more than one page, double-spaced, outlining related future plans and past accomplishments, to Marian at marian.palaia@mso.umt.edu or in hard copy to LA 350. Awardee will be announced in April.

If you are interested in funding a scholarship for the IDS program, please contact Kelley Willett at kelley.willett@mso.umt.edu

Faculty Spotlight—Ranjan Shrestha

Ranjan Shrestha, Assistant Professor of Economics at UM, teaches ECNS 450-Advanced Topics in Economics, as a Core course for the IDS program. A native of Nepal, Ranjan grew up in Kathmandu, but his family roots are in Salyan District in the mid-western region. He received his doctorate from Ohio State University in 2007 and began teaching at UM that fall. He has been engaged in a research project in Indonesia using the Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS), a longitudinal survey that has collected information from the same groups of people in 1993, 1997, 2000 and 2007. Ranjan and his co-author from Gadjah Mada University are studying the effects of the decentralization process, which was started in Indonesia in 2001, on health service delivery. They are using responses from Puskesmas (Community Health Centers) in the surveys to discern the changes that have taken place in service provision since decentralization. He says it is too early in the process to talk about causality, but initial results suggest that rural areas have not seen much improvements in health services. Despite the increase in the number of doctors available nationally during that period, there appear to be fewer doctors serving in rural areas than in the past, when the central government required them to serve a year or two at the Puskesmas. Furthermore, only about half the sampled Puskesmas experienced improvements in availability of drugs and medical supplies between 2000 and 2007.

CFC Students Travel to the Himalaya to Learn About Environment and Development

The inaugural India Himalaya Field course (instructed by Keith Bosak) left the US on May-18 bound for New Delhi and twenty two days in India. The group traveled into the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, a World Heritage Site for its biodiversity, and at approximately 1.5 million acres, one of the last great wilderness areas in the Himalaya. We spent that evening at 3000m at Ganuk where it rained heavily, so class was held in one of our four-person tents. Sixteen people is a lot in one tent! From Kanuk, the group hiked the short but steep trail to Lathi kharak at 3800m where we stayed two nights in a Forest Department hut and learned about the sacred landscape as well as people-protected area conflicts. From Lathi Kharak it was up and over a pass at 4210m and down to the village of Tolma. At Tolma, we stayed in village homes and learned first-hand about how community-owned ecotourism can work in the Himalaya. From Tolma, the group trekked across the valley to the Village of Suki and onward towards Rishikund, a high meadow and ground zero for the collection of the fungus Cordyceps Sinensis, which is widely valued for its medicinal properties and can fetch locals as much at $7000.00 a kilogram. Here, the group discussed changing livelihoods and globalization. From Suki, we traveled by jeeps to the town of Ghamshali at 3352m on the border with Tibet. It was in Ghanshali that students got to see the remnants of the lucrative trade with Tibet that many people in this region enjoyed until the border was closed in 1962. We stayed two nights in this wonderful village and thoroughly enjoyed our interactions with the people, especially the cricket game with the Indo Tibetan Border Police. From Ghamsali it was all downhill back to the bungalow with a stop at Lata again to discuss the hydroelectric projects being built in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve and what effects they might have on the biodiversity and culture of the area. After the bungalow we made our way back to Delhi, sorry to leave the mountains. In Delhi the group had its final class and we all gathered for a banquet. Some students were off the next day to see the Taj Mahal while others were going back home. Regardless of our destination, we were sad to be leaving India but comforted in knowing that we had made many good friends and learned many things along the way. ~ Keith Bosak

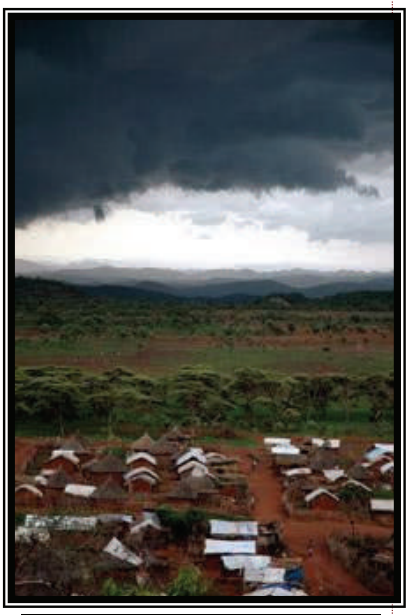
Sixteen People in a 4-person tent. Cozy!

New Program Coordinator

IDS's new program coordinator, Marian Palaia, is a good fit for the program. A Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal from 1998—2000, Marian taught English to 4th and 5th grade Nepali kids in a small village in the "middle hills" (some of those hills 3000m high), and in her second year conducted teacher-training programs at a Secondary Education Development Unit (SEDU) , in a town called Dhulikel, situated about forty kilometers east of Kathmandu on the road to Tibet. She also worked with the Ministry of Education on a re-design of the less-than-optimal English textbooks used in the Nepali school system. In Saigon, in 1994, Marian worked with a Street Kids outreach program, teaching homeless children life and work skills. All 40 or so kids in the program, when given job-training options, chose to become circus perfomers, and wound up apprenticing with the Saigon Circus. Marian says she wishes there had been an IDS studies program at Evergreen, where she received her BA (she also has an MA in Creative Writing from San Francisco State and an MPA from UM), as it would likely have made her adventures abroad slightly less mind-bending as she learned the ropes. Still, she says, she would not trade her experiences for anything—not stability, not security, not the job her mother always wanted her to get with IBM. She loves working with the students and faculty of IDS, and is (almost) always available to talk about Peace Corps, teaching English abroad, or strategies for not getting snookered on the billiard table.

Letters From Ethiopia

Rebecca Forde LeBlond



Shimelba Refugee Camp in northern Ethiopia.
Photo: The IRC

Not long after I got to Shimelba I realized that the day, month, and year they came to the camp is a touchstone for almost every refugee. I was really hesitant at first to ask people about when they came, how long they have been here, where the rest of their family is, etc. It seemed so intrusive and I was still figuring so much out (and still am, of course). Then I remembered that most people want, and even need, to tell their stories, refugees included. I realized that the only thing holding me back was – surprise, surprise – me. As I become more comfortable in my own skin here, it gets easier and easier to connect with other people. And most people are so eager to share. It's almost rude not to ask because it's such a defining time and experience in everyone's life, it is the elephant in the room. Everyone can tell you precisely how many years and months they have been here, and many even the days. Shimelba is sort of like a waiting room and everyone knows exactly how long they've been waiting.

Less easy to have a conversation about is the actual experience of escaping Eritrea and crossing the border into Ethiopia. For most people this does not start simply with when they began the journey but months, or even years, before. One woman I've come to know fairly well told my colleague and I about her experience and so I relate it here…. Her parents divorced when she was young and she lived with her mother in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea. Her father also lived in Asmara but she did not have a lot of contact with him. When she was eighteen the police came to her house and asked her where her father was. She answered truthfully that she did not know (though her feeling was that he had fled the country). They came back repeatedly and eventually took her to jail where she was kept without reason, interrogated and beaten. She was released after three days but knew that she would not be left alone and that her life was at risk. She decided to flee to Ethiopia and left without telling her mother of her plan. She paid $3000 to the person who helped her escape and traveled through the bush for three days without any food or water. She was with other people who were also fleeing and they happened to find a puddle of standing, dirty water which they drank and may not have survived without. Eventually they arrived in Ethiopia and she has been in Shimelba for 4 years. Now she is waiting to be resettled to the U.S.

*Rebecca Forde LeBlond was a student in the Intercultural Youth & Family MA program here at the University of Montana. Although not IDS, we hope her reports might be of interest to IDS students by offering an idea of what to expect in the field. Rebecca now works in Shimelba, Ethiopia for the International Rescue Committee (IRC). For information about the IRC visit the IRC website at www.theirc.org.