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2018 Liman Fellow Summer Report

During the summer of 2018, I interned at UNICEF. UNICEF is the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. UNICEF is tasked with saving and improving children's lives as well as defending their rights. UNICEF works with children from infancy through adolescence. UNICEF has local offices and chapters in over 100 countries, but I was working at the UNICEF Headquarters in New York City. The opportunity to work at a large international organization was an incredible one, especially understanding how internal policy and the legal implications of such policies play out on a large scale.

At UNICEF, I worked on the team for Social and Behavioral Change Communication (SBCC), otherwise known as Communication for Development (C4D). The goal of the team was to come up with sustainable, culturally sensitive, and effective ways to communicate ideas or information about development goals in a way that respected and resonated with the local populations. For example, how do you convince individuals that putting girls into school is a good idea that can be compatible with their traditional cultural and social practices? How do you encourage safe and sanitary behavior in refugee camps where there is limited capacity to distribute information? How does one incentivize parents to accept possible changes that are different than their current parenting techniques, such as prioritizing the need of the child to be vaccinated? It is questions of this nature that C4D attempts to answer. My specific project in C4D focused on how can UNICEF leverage partnerships with religious organizations in order to have a greater success of communicating with civilian populations in different host countries.

The project I was involved in had four main components. First, I had to identify what were the relationships that already existed between UNICEF country offices and religious groups and leaders. Second, I had to use this data to understand key trends of the work that UNICEF was doing with religious organizations, in terms of what religions were they working with, what were the major issue areas for which work was being done, what age groups were such practices targeted. Third, I had to identify ways issue areas or obstacles in UNICEF's existing work with religious organizations. Fourth, I had to design a set of recommendations of how UNICEF could standardize its work across country offices in order to maintain efficacy and improve on existing lags in the system. Collection and analysis of this information involved contacting a variety of country offices, reading through "country mappings" about religious organizations and religious-based work, turning quantitative reports into sources of quantitative data, and performing analysis in Excel as well as quantitative written analysis. This was then organized into a presentation that was shown to over 50 UNICEF officials in Bangkok.