

Two Sides of the Same Story:

ALYSSA SMALDINO

GlobeMed at George Washington University, 2011



“There are so many reasons why I love GlobeMed... but most of all, it’s the Rwandan children and women who benefit from our partnership.”

Alyssa Smaldino entered George Washington University (GWU) in the fall of 2007 with a desire to improve the health of others. Lost in a sea of hundreds of psychology majors, she sought to connect her passions to a greater cause. That year, GlobeMed launched on GWU’s campus.

GlobeMed immediately attracted Alyssa. She realized that by partnering with a grassroots health organization doing effective public health work, her dedication would result in tangible contributions to global health. She joined the founding team of GlobeMed at GWU – a decision, she says, that has defined her undergraduate experience.

For Alyssa, the value of GlobeMed lay in the relationship with their health partner, the Rwanda Village Concept Project (RVCP). The organization's director, Vincent Ndebwanimana, is a Rwandan student and community organizer.

Through this partnership, GlobeMed at GWU collaborated with RVCP on projects such as bringing water and electricity to the Huye Health Clinic,

launching a joint maternal health and income generation program, and developing a maternal health curriculum. Alyssa directed her energy into organizing events on GWU’s campus that raised more than \$15,000 to support these projects.

Currently, Alyssa is a senior at GWU and the GlobeMed chapter Co-President. After graduating this year with a degree in Public Health, she plans to pursue a Masters in Public Administration with a goal to bring her valuable experience and vision to nonprofit organizations.

Alyssa's work with RVCP is a reminder that through partnership, students around the world have the capacity to improve the health of people living in poverty. Together, these young leaders and thousands more like them will build a healthier and more just future.



GlobeMed

The world needs more young people who devote their lives to global health equity.

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Vincent Ndebwanimana

Rwanda Village Concept Project,
National University of Rwanda, 2011



“I was always asking myself, how can I help improve the health of people living in poverty?”

Between May and July of 1994, 100,000 Rwandans were slaughtered in a genocide ignited by deep tensions between the country's two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. Machete-armed Hutu militias ravaged the nation for 100 days as the world stood by watching.

At the time of the genocide, Vincent was 11 years old. Spared by the conflict, he grew up as Rwanda began the difficult process of rebuilding. He spent his youth traveling between urban and rural communities, observing the vast disparities in people's health. “No one, especially young people, had a choice to be born in a town or in a rural area,” he noted, and yet this distinction determined their opportunity to live a healthy life.

In 2006, Vincent enrolled in the National University of Rwanda, determined to become a doctor and alleviate the suffering of the poor. There, he discovered the Rwanda Village Concept Project (RVCP).

RVCP was founded and led by students of the National University of Rwanda. Their mission is to improve the living standards of poor communities in Rwanda's Huye District and to train their students to be health leaders.

In RVCP, Vincent found “my opportunity to try to contribute to the improvement of those vulnerable groups” whose suffering he had grown up witnessing.

The GlobeMed at GWU partnership with RVCP has allowed students like Alyssa Smaldino and Vincent Ndebwanimana to unite over the common question, “How can I help improve the health of the poor?”

Since 2008, the GWU chapter has raised more than \$15,000 to support projects such as bringing electricity and clean water to the Huye Health Clinic and launching a program that allows women to exchange livestock and produce for maternal health services. This partnership shows the strong impact that students and grassroots health leaders can have when joining together in the fight for global health equity.

The world needs more strong partnerships to improve health around the world.

