INTRODUCTION

Ibis Reproductive Health is an organization that drives change through bold, rigorous research and principled partnerships that advance sexual and reproductive autonomy, choices, and health worldwide.

OBJECTIVE OF INTERNSHIP

This internship provided the opportunity to discuss women's sexual and reproductive health and partake in research and partnerships that advance sexual and reproductive autonomy, choices, and health worldwide. My objective was to familiarize myself with the state of sexual and reproductive health in South Africa and around the world.

WORK PROFILE

- Overall objective is to promote justice, equality, inclusivity, integrity, and autonomy in the area of sexual and reproductive health (SRH)
- National abortion study was conducted to assess access to and experience with safe abortion services as well as determine the precise number of health facilities providing abortion services in South Africa
- Published literature reviews on topics related to SRH
- Created a comprehensive data base of all facilities providing SRH services across all provinces in South Africa

REFLECTION

- Researchers at Ibis publish and conduct studies on sexual and reproductive health issues, such as the number of unsafe abortions taking place in South Africa in spite of South Africa's progressive SRH laws
- Located in Cambridge, Johannesburg, and Oakland, Ibis deals with various SRH issues around the globe. Much of the work is focused on access and use of safe and unsafe abortion, access to contraception, etc. I learned much about the state of SRH in Johannesburg through research I conducted and by interacting with many women.
- I researched second trimester abortion services and published some of my own writings on the subject

- While working at Ibis, I learned about the various complexities pertaining to SRH, from women's utilizations of unsafe abortions as a way of avoiding stigma to the high HIV infection rate among South African women.
- Hearing about different women's experiences with SRH gave me insight I wouldn't have had otherwise into just how complex SRH issues are. These are issues that should be dealt with delicately because they affect billions of women around the world.
- South Africa has some of the most progressive SRH and abortion laws, namely the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1996. Despite this, unsafe abortions in South Africa still outnumber safe abortions. This really speaks to how complex SRH issues are. They are the product of various political and social complexities. Focusing on only one aspect will fail to produce the results many SRH advocates, like Ibis, are fighting for.

LOOKING AHEAD

- My summer experience with Ibis further motivated me in my pursuit of completing medical school and becoming an obstetrician.

QUESTIONS

- How will the current U.S. administration affect SRH services within the U.S. and around the world?
- How can societal and political norms be influenced to change public perception of SRH services?

CONCLUSION

- Although much progress is being made in providing women around the world with access to safe, quality SRH services, much work still needs to be done.
- Many SRH issues are political and social in nature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Ibis Reproductive Health, Kelly Blanchard, Tshego Bessenaar, and Dr. Mpume Simelane. This summer would not have been possible without the generous funding of CHW and IIP.