Introduction

• Ibis Reproductive Health uses research to advance sexual & reproductive health of young women through
  • Comprehensive sexual education
  • Contraceptive use and access
  • Safe abortions
  • Removing the stigma surrounding sexual health

Objective of Internship

This internship provided the opportunity to be exposed to the health sector beyond a clinical setting. My objective was to learn more about the health needs and issues that women face in another country.

Reflection

• I was able to work with researchers on different studies and campaigns they were conducting such as comprehensive sexual education, HIV teen pregnancy, and an ECHO study.
• South Africa has an extreme inequality gap. While the organization I was with focuses on women’s health, I was still exposed to the nation’s poverty, mental health issues, and government corruption.

Work profile

• Managing social media
• Designing HIV related merchandise to promote campaigns
• Created literature reviews, concept notes, M&Es, and posters for various projects (HIV, safe abortion, stigma, teen pregnancy, CSE)
• Attended meetings with partners (NDoH)
• Attended site visits to both the private and public sector

• Although abortion is legal in South Africa, women choose to have very dangerous backstreet abortions due to the stigma and fear that surrounds abortions and contraceptives.
• There was an emphasis on aiming sexual education at girls, boys and all key populations because everyone in society needs to be educated in order for women to feel comfortable with accessing safe services.
• This internship gave me the opportunity to observe the interactions between government, researchers, and civil society. As a young woman, I was able to collaborate with other organizations on how to better the lives of women.

Looking ahead

• This internship solidified an interest in global health and health policy. I plan to attend medical school and because of my summer experiences, I aim to find ways to work in the public sector in the future.

Questions

• What is the effect of the Global Gag Rule, especially in places with high HIV infection?
• What can we do to help repeal the Global Gag Rule?

Conclusion

• My time spent with Ibis in Johannesburg was both eye opening and impactful. The inequality gap, HIV incidence, lack of education, gender based violence and social stigma that plagues the nation is heartbreaking. However, the work done by Ibis and other partners to empower women is inspiring. I hope to uphold the principles that Ibis lives by.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the entire Ibis staff, especially my supervisors Bongeka Cutshwa and Jewelle Methazia. This summer would not have been possible without the generous funding of CHW and IIP.