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Guyana Alumni 2005

No reports. No executive summaries. No PowerPoint presentations. I was on uncharted territory. This was not a regular day at the office, writing and designing websites about developing countries. Here I was, witnessing first-hand why Canada has such a large presence in Guyana.

I work as a Communications Officer for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)—the federal agency that administers foreign aid. Last year, I decided it was time to step away from my desk and get on the field myself. I wanted to see how projects with non-governmental organizations are actually making a difference in rural communities.

I chose to work with Youth Challenge International (YCI) in Guyana for many reasons—one being that YCI provides a number of departure dates so full-time employees taking a sabbatical have more flexibility.

Not only would I be contributing to a cause and community—living, breathing and developing the project—but once I returned, I could also be better at my day-to-day job. Communicating the priorities, policies and projects would be that much easier.

I was sent to Central Rupununi, Guyana to teach the communities about the dangers of HIV/AIDS and to empower them as a group but as cliché as it sounds, I managed to learn a lot myself. I not only discovered an endearing culture but I also expanded my knowledge and skills. I learned new research methods such as participatory rural appraisals (interactive workshops based on shared community needs) and gained skills as a facilitator and evaluator. These techniques should prove to be useful throughout my career.

While development is always just as complex, I feel as though my experience with YCI in Guyana has given me the context and confidence to continue to accurately communicate to the Canadian public the issues affecting this country.

For more information on federal projects in Guyana, please visit the CIDA website:
<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/guyana-e>



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