

PROLINNOVA Wrap up

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I attended the International Partners Workshop of PROLINNOVA in Senegal in May 2016 and had one of the best experiences of my life. I was asked to partake in the conference by my professor of Global Development at the University of Virginia, David Edmunds. He has been affiliated with PROLINNOVA for several years, attending the last three IPWs. As the third set of students to partake in this annual event, our goal was to continue to strengthen the relationship with PROLINNOVA and the university, while gaining experience as students in the world of development. I am particularly interested in sustainable agriculture in my undergraduate degree, and with PROLINNOVA 's goals of promoting local innovation and ecologically oriented agriculture I was able to gain practical knowledge in my field of study.

Within my time in Senegal I gained so much, with three major takeaways. First, this trip was significant for me because it was my first time out of the country. With studying international development in my undergraduate degree, this trip was huge for me. This was my first opportunity out of the country and to now know I can handle the stresses of travel and being in a new culture was a major takeaway. The second was what and how I learned about development. To witness development work and its inner workings first-hand was incredibly rewarding to me. From observing different techniques of facilitating discussions and presentations to a multi-national and lingual audience, to learning different ways to gain support on local and national levels of government, I learned an endless amount of indispensable information. PROLINNOVA and its mission of bottom-up development was a great initial entrance into development. The third major takeaway from this trip was the newfound love for Senegal. I knew little about Senegal when initially approached by professor Edmunds for the trip. But after spending a week there with PROLINNOVA and another week exploring the country, I felt I came to know the country as well as one could in such a short time. Obviously I did not become an expert on Senegalese culture in two weeks, but the things I encountered made me come to love the country and its people, longing for more. In my time there I witnessed the sunset over the ocean for the first time, ate incredible quantities of Yassa and learned words of the local language *Wolof*.

A particular experience that stood out was a field visit to a Senegalese farm. There we conversed with farmers and for several hours we sat and learned and taught and gained legitimate relationships. There I learned the true nature of the Senegalese, an incredibly respectful people that look to satisfy all around them. These experiences I encountered were foreign to me, and through all of these I became a richer and better person. I thank everyone involved in PROLINNOVA, Professor Edmunds and the University of Virginia for allowing me to partake in this conference and for enabling me to grow as a person. PROLINNOVA taught me so much and I will never forget this trip.