2012 CIDA International Youth Internship Program
(http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/IYIP)

The Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health (ACEWH) has two CIDA IYIP Interns based in Cape Town, South Africa this year. Fiona Guerra and Meredith Evans are hosted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), which conducts health-related and other policy-relevant social science research.

Meredith Evans
I completed a Master of Arts in Gender Studies from Central European University and a Bachelor of Music from Dalhousie University. After graduating, I worked in research on women’s health in Halifax at the ACEWH, as a teaching assistant at Dalhousie, and as a policy advisor in Accra, Ghana for a local NGO. In Halifax I was actively involved with the Dalhousie Women’s Centre and the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project. My academic background paired with my experience working in feminist research, policy, and community organizing supports my ability to critically analyze the important roles of both gender and sexuality in shaping health realities for individuals, communities, and populations.

I am currently working on two projects in the CEO’s office as the “Program Assistant - Sex- and Gender-Based Analysis” CIDA IYIP intern at the HSRC. The first project is analyzing quantitative data from the 2010 findings of the HSRC’s nationally-representative South African Social Attitudes Survey and co-authoring a paper with the CEO, Dr. Olive Shisana, on Gender Differences in Public Perceptions on National Health Insurance (NHI), a universal public health system that will be implemented in South Africa over the next 14 years. This paper considers how NHI has the potential to reduce gender inequality in the health care system and critically analyzes the gender differences in rates of support for the new health system. The second project is a collaborative effort with two post-doctoral researchers at the HSRC and fellow CIDA IYIP intern Fiona. We are developing a resource tool to support social science researchers incorporate an intersectional gender analysis in all stages of the research process (to be adopted from the ACEWH’s SGBA e-learning tool). The tool will be launched at the HSRC in December during the 16-days of activism campaign.

Fiona Guerra
I completed my undergraduate studies at McGill University, where I earned an Honours degree in Microbiology & Immunology and a Minor in Gender Studies. As a result, I approach health research through an anti-oppression lens, mindful of the intersectionalities of vulnerable groups and the importance of sex- and gender-based analysis in research. Having decided that

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communicable disease research would satisfy my desire to positively impact health, I enrolled in the PhD program in Immunology at the University of Toronto, where I studied the humoral immune system. Towards the end of my PhD degree, I came to realize that I aspire to have a more direct role in health, beyond the laboratory. My experience in the nascent stages of health research thus fostered my interest in population health. I now seek a career with an interdisciplinary, population-level approach to health improvement with a focus on communicable diseases.

My CIDA IYIP falls into the “Improving Health Outcomes” sector, and my position is formally “Program Assistant-Health Promotion.” At the HSRC, I am situated in the HIV/AIDS, STIs, and TB (HAST) unit. My internship consists of three independent projects, each developing very different skill sets. Based on my interest in health promotion, I joined a research project that is focused on using educational and counseling materials created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and adapting them to the South African context. The materials -a poster, a counselor’s guide, and a flip chart for use in clinics- are intended for people living with HIV, with a particular focus on including most at risk populations (MARPs) in the messaging. Another project that I am working on is to create a tool for training social science researchers to integrate sex- and gender-based analysis in their methodology. Thankfully this hefty task is shared with the other CIDA IYIP intern, Meredith Evans, and two post-doctoral researchers at the HSRC. A key priority is that the tool be suited to the South African context and the needs of the HSRC researchers. In addition, I’ve combed through the 2008 national household survey data and reports, and conceptualized a manuscript on female-controlled tools for sexual and reproductive health in South Africa. More specifically, I’ll be looking at the data on attitudes and behaviours related to condom use and knowledge of female condoms.