

PRINCETON IN AFRICA

Fellow Report: 3-month

This report focuses on the specifics of your fellowship experience thus far. The following questions are meant to help you evaluate your first three months in Africa. Your comments will also be used to assess partner organizations, site placements, stipends, and overall logistics. The information you include may be shared with the Board of Directors and future Fellows. We may use your comments to give feedback to partner organizations as well. Please indicate when information is not to be shared outside of PiAf and rest assured that we will honor your request.

Your Personal Information

Organization: World Food Programme
City, Country: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Your Work

1. What is your job title?

Public Information Fellow, or just Fellow.

2. What are your primary responsibilities? Please list your job duties as you would on a résumé.

This is my TOR (Terms of Reference)

- Write (content and format/design) WFP Ethiopia Annual Report.
- Writing success stories concerning WFP activities and beneficiaries for WFP website and other publications. In order to collect necessary material, the Fellow has to travel to project sites in different regions of the country.
- Develop a newsletter for WFP Ethiopia to be shared with donors and partners. Work with different units to develop content of the newsletter.
- Preparation of fact sheets and briefings on different WFP activities in Ethiopia for media and donors.
- Support the preparation of media visits and visits of WFP ambassadors.
- Support the development of a local youth outreach strategy with international schools to advocate on hunger issues.
- Contribute to the joint efforts of the UN Communications Group.
- Update and contribute to the Ethiopia country page on WFP website.
- Write monthly brief review of WFP Ethiopia activities for use by Executive Director in press or media situations.
- Perform other related duties as required.

3. Describe a representative day at work.

Each day is a bit different. Check and reply to emails. Depending on what project I'm working on, talk with necessary people in various units to collect information. If I'm working on the annual report, a typical series of tasks might be talking with the heads of the Nutrition and Logistics units to fact check information; looking through photographs on our shared drive for use and editing them; discussing with the head of Donor Relations the best way to publically discuss funding shortfalls we experienced and then discussing it again with my supervisor, talking with a programme officer who works on refugee livelihoods projects to find out the status of bee keeping projects; reading another UN agency's draft paper on the definition of "resilience"; writing a couple of pages on a programme; checking with UNHCR for the latest data editing the WFP Ethiopia website to reflect newest refugee figures for Ethiopia, etc.

4. Please describe in greater detail 1-2 specific projects you have undertaken or accomplishments you have made so far.

I made a whole new design for the Newsletter, published in November. It's an appealing design and I got a lot of compliments on how professional it looked. I am just wrapping up the Annual Report (it's the end of January—I was a bit late with this report), and it's looking really great. Also, I traveled to the southern region of Ethiopia and spoke with lots of beneficiaries and wrote a story on an innovative project we're doing, and I really like how the story turned out.

5. On average, how many hours per week do you work?
40

6. What is your office environment like? Please comment on the size and structure of the office(s) where you do most of your work.

It's a really large office—260 people or so—and there's always a new face to meet and greet. There are three or four separate buildings all sort of clustered together, and I'm on the second floor of the "main" building, in the wing/area where all the top managers also sit. The Country Director, the two Deputy Country Directors, my boss (Head of Public Information), and the Head of Programmes, all are in my direct vicinity, as well as my colleague in PI and two other assistants. It's a good location.

7. To whom do you report? (Please specify name & title of all applicable persons.)
I report to the Public Information Officer (aka Head of the Public Information Unit)

8. Do you receive adequate direction/support to perform your job?
Yes.

9. What opportunities for travel has your work included so far? Do you anticipate work-related opportunities to travel in the future? How does your organization handle the arrangements/costs/plans for your work-related travel?

I traveled for about 4 days in the south—Awassa, Damot Gale, and Wolayita Sodo, Ethiopia, in October. I covered four different programmes, and ended up writing a story on two of them, as well as taking about 600 photographs to be kept for other publications. On a couple of occasions, my supervisor wanted to send me to Dollo Ado refugee camps in the Somali region, but it is a "Phase 4" security zone and as a Fellow, I am not permitted to travel there. I will be traveling to the Afar region following the PiAF retreat in March. I also hope to go to the Beneshangul-Gumuz region refugee camps around Asosa to cover how things are going there, but this is not confirmed. In total, I may travel out of Addis four times for work. I think the amount of travel you do is equal parts contingent on external demands (are there a million donor, partner or media visits that you need to accompany, or is it pretty much quiet?), the supervisor's idea of what you should be doing, and how much you balance your office work with a push to travel. I received a DSA (Daily Stipend Allowance) for each day I traveled, and I had to arrange my own hotel accommodations. Getting my DSA was kind of complicated because I don't have a work account (most of the time DSAs are deposited into employees' work accounts). I ended up getting a check for the amount about a week and a half after I returned from my trip.

10. What goals do you have for your work in the next 6 months?
Finish the Annual Report and wallpaper my room with it (just kidding)! Post-AR work life should be much more relaxed, and I hope to see more of our work outside of Addis and produce content on it.

Your Arrival in Africa

11. How did you travel to your host country? Please be specific in terms of what airline(s) you flew, what cities you flew to/from, how much your plane tickets cost, and how you found/purchased your tickets. *For example: "I purchased my ticket from the Cape to Cairo travel agency based in Washington, DC. I flew on British Airways from JFK to London, London to Johannesburg, and Johannesburg to Maputo. I have also booked a return flight for next May to return through the same cities. The round trip ticket cost \$2,277."*

I flew direct from Washington DC to Addis on Ethiopian Airlines. I used a travel agent based in DC that my family knows, but I would recommend also looking online a bit for flights: kayak.com and skyscanner.com are great. Put in your flight dates and flexibility and sign up for email alerts. My round trip ticket was \$2,090.

12. What kind of visa/work permit do you have? How did you obtain it? What costs were associated with obtaining it? Any suggestions to help future Fellows navigate this process?

I'm Ethiopian, though a US citizen, so I was able to get an "Ethiopian Origin ID card," which is extremely helpful and basically like a green card for Ethiopia. It's a 5 yr business visa, 5 yr work permit, and has random other privileges, like I can buy land (...). If you have at least one Ethiopian parent, get this! That said, THE VISA SITUATION FOR ETHIOPIA IS CRAZY. I don't properly understand it because I haven't had to deal with it, but from what I have gathered—you HAVE to have a business visa. A TOURIST VISA IS NOT KOSHER. And there are other crazy rules.

13. What vaccinations were you required to obtain prior to your departure? How much did your vaccinations cost? Typhoid, Polio (additional IPV dose), Meningococcal, Rabies. \$1,220.

14. Comment on your arrival and first week in Africa. Any improvements that could streamline the assimilation process for future Fellows?

My first week was fine! A bit overwhelming, but that's completely normal. Was frustrated with some things, but gained some wisdom on it pretty early. My advice: Just take it easy. Expect everything to go wrong and laugh at yourself. Laugh at yourself!!!! Say, "Look how crazy I look! I don't know where anything is or how to ask simple questions in the local language! Aren't I a joke? Hahaha!" Don't expect to have internet or a phone for two or three days, and plan accordingly—don't expect to be able to talk to your mom or sister or girlfriend or boyfriend in any substantial way for a day or two. And try to be ok with this. Go get a beer and read a good book. Do some yoga. Play with some little kids. Take a deep breath. If you want to go do something relatively easy, expect it to go wrong, and be ok with this. If you want to buy a cell phone, the store will probably be closed because it is a weekend or random holiday or because the shopkeepers had to go to a wedding. And that's ok. Expect to be pointed in the wrong direction to the grocery store, and when you end up somewhere totally wrong, just be like—oh, what a cool part of town! Expect no ATM in the city to be functioning the day you need money, and get creative with how you're going to eat lunch. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Plan for the worst, and when things aren't so bad, you'll be like, cool!!

Your Housing & Local Transportation

15. Is housing provided by your organization?

No.

16. Please describe your living arrangements. Include the following details:

- i. Are you living in a house, apartment, guest room, etc.?
- ii. Are you living alone or with roommates?
- iii. How did you find your housing?
- iv. How do you travel between your home and your work?

I live in a house with my relatives. There's 10-12 of us depending on which cousins are staying over. 3 aunts, 2 uncles, 5-6 cousins, and me! The arrangement got a lot better a couple of months in when I helped repair a part of the house, and people could move back into the formerly out-of-commission part so now it's more spread out and we're all happy. I combine private taxi and minibus to get to work bc minibuses don't go to my work location.

17. Is your local transportation adequate? Please briefly describe your options and their related costs. Shared minibuses (seat 12-14 ppl) are really cheap, less than a dollar usually. They're often slow/delayed/overcrowded/overwhelming, but I'm generally satisfied with them and even a bit impressed at how organized they SOMETIMES are. So minibuses are definitely my go-to during the day. But they stop running around 9pm, so if you're out late, you'll have to take a taxi, and those are expensive, usually between \$5-11, depending on your route. A \$6 taxi might not sound like a lot, but if you're a crazy kid and wanna stay out of the house past 9pm three nights a week (!), \$20 for taxis a week really adds up. Tip: Share taxis! Even if you're not neighbors with your friends, getting a cab to drop multiple people off will still usually be a bit cheaper, you'll just have to be willing to sit around in a car for a while if you're not first up. If it's 8:45 and you've just finished dinner on a weeknight, don't be super lazy and get in a taxi, try to share a minibus with friends, but if you're a woman it's not a good idea to walk around too late alone, so keep that in mind. Instead of going out, have some wine at home and watch a movie every now and then (this one's a little sad, sorry). Be innovative and try to figure it out. Make friends with someone with a car!

Your Surroundings

18. Do you live and work in safe areas?
Yes. My neighborhood is lively, but I feel very safe. Just not alone at night. Travel in numbers.

19. What has been your experience with crime so far?
None.

20. Describe the crime and general security situation within your city/town. Could you recommend specific areas future Fellows might consider for safe housing? What about areas that should be avoided?
Petty crime. Friends have had issues with cell's getting stolen. Keep your belongings close and be smart. Don't go anywhere alone too late at night. It's annoying and you might feel like your independence is being compromised, but it's just not smart to go places alone late. This is if you're a woman. If you're a man, you're probably fine going out alone at night, but you might be a target for crime if you're a foreigner. Just be smart—everyone has different things they're comfortable with. Just err on the side of caution until you can formulate for yourself what feels safe and what doesn't. Mercato and Piassa are full of pick pockets so be extra careful there, but they're great so still go.

21. Comment on the local languages, your proficiency in them (if any), and your subsequent ability to get by. There's lots of languages in Ethiopia, but Amharic is the major one in Addis and I am actively learning it. Already had background from family, so I'm doing well. Can get around/ask for anything I need/communicate almost everything, though it's usually not perfect. Ethiopians are really excited when people try to speak Amharic, so don't be shy and try out everything you know. People will laugh at you, but it's kind of cultural—people laugh at each other all the time. Don't get self-conscious, just keep talking, they'll forget about the mistake you made in 5 min, and even if they don't, whatever, you don't care about them anyway.

22. Comment on appropriate clothing for work and outside of work.
Work: work clothes! It's the UN! That said, ladies—definitely ok to wear cardigans instead of blazers/suit jackets. I wore blazers/jackets for about a month but then realized that most of the people in the office just had sweaters on so I got lazy and wanted to be more comfortable, so now I usually only wear them if I have a meeting or something. Flat shoes are fine, heels are fine. I've heard some people say when they wear heels they feel like they're being taken more seriously. I wear them sometimes, mostly because they make me feel cool, but usually flats. Guys—you can wear a suit, but it seems like only the heads of units consistently wear suits. There is something to be said for dressing for the job you want or whatever, but you're more than fine without the jacket. Dress pants, nice shirt of any variety. Fridays mean summery dresses and dark jeans and khakis/chino pants and flats.
Outside of work: whatever you want, except it *is* more conservative than in the US. Nothing too low cut for ladies. Also, for ladies, don't show too much leg. Two inches above the knee is all you're going to want to do. This is mostly because people on the street will be creepy and be like “hey lady, I like your legs,” and nobody wants to hear that. I sometimes wear shorter things with tights underneath. That's fine. People will wear skin-tight clothes, but as long as you can't see

their skin, this seems to attract less attention. Really don't understand it. Anyway, people like to look nice usually, so don't plan on only wearing sweatpants all the time.

23. How have you been spending your free time? What kinds of opportunities are available for socializing in your city/town?

Lots! Tons! Art, music, movies, restaurants, bars, clubs, markets, sports, holidays, cafes. It's great.

Your Reflections

24. Any frustration with living arrangements or with work?

Living—I get a bit doted on, which sounds like a silly complaint, but when you walk into the kitchen to get some water and your aunt's like "Ida! What's wrong! Are you thirsty? So, you're hungry. Do you want to eat?! Why aren't you eating?!" it can get kind of tiring. That said, I love my family so much and it's a great arrangement. Ethiopians are very family oriented and FOOD IS A BIG DEAL. Regardless of what they say, you do not have to keep eating. Just stop eating when you're full—it's ok, they'll get over it, though they won't stop tsk tsk-ing about it (shame). Also, we don't have a proper kitchen and I really miss being able to cook things that involve more than boiling or sautéing (that was Microsoft word auto correct... definitely did not put that accent in myself).

Work—The UN is a big system and there are power dynamics and politics, but that is true of any office environment. Tips: Don't sweat the small stuff. Don't let people make you feel bad for asserting your existence (just because you're a Fellow, doesn't mean you're worth less). Most people will never do this to you, but if it happens, just let it roll off. Make friends with the national staff. A lot of international staff tend to somehow keep to themselves, but it's silly, and you should be friends with everyone. Work is work, don't take it home.

25. Has there been anything that you have needed but have not been able to locate or acquire?

Sunscreen, face lotion, toiletries are all available, but they're marked up like 400%, so if the thought of buying a 3 oz face lotion for \$20 doesn't sound good to you, I'd bring that stuff from home. Don't expect to go clothes shopping here—nice clothes are way too expensive. Just bring the clothes you want to wear. Same with shoes—nice ones are expensive. But, if you want leather goods and are willing to pay a lot (though less than in the US), that stuff's great here.

26. How did you deal/are you dealing with "culture shock"?

Laughing at myself. Taking it easy. Being patient. Opening up myself to learn new things, and accepting being wrong. Laughing in general. Thinking big picture (try not to get down about a bad day, reflect back on your goals in life and the people that matter to you and you'll feel better). Watching American movies every now and then (you can buy bootleg DVDs on the street for about \$2... sorry if you're super into intellectual property rights and are offended). Exercising regularly (do it!). Every now and then, I just gotta talk to the parents or the sis- nothing beats it.

27. What about your experience thus far has been the most...

Surprising?:

How much I love it here. I had low expectations to be honest, and I've been so surprised. Having low expectations is actually the smartest thing you can do in my opinion. Now that I've said I love it here, though, that might be hard... Sorry.

Pleasant?:

Weather, except at night when it's super cold and the rainy season. Otherwise, beautiful.

Frustrating?:

Gender inequality. This frustrates me in the US, too, but here there's not as much dialogue on it and feeling like people "don't get it" is sometimes really tiring, but it's also inspiring to be around women here and talk with them about their experiences and open up dialogue. Bug bits (fleas, I think). Expensive transportation at night.

28. So far, what would you consider to be your biggest success or proudest moment?

Dealing with a bad experience in a healthy way, standing my ground, and having a great time here despite the challenge.

29. What would you consider to be your greatest challenge or biggest learning opportunity so far?
I'm not sure. Making myself calm down and mellow out all the time has made my life a lot better, and I'm proud that I was able to rise to the challenge of culture shock/frustration and learn to really like it here. I'm more chill than in college. Big challenge also learning Amharic. Yikebdal (it's hard).
30. What are the Top 3 things you miss the most from the US? (Can be food, amenities, movies, etc. Cannot be people—although we know you miss us in the PiAf office terribly, and we thank you! We miss you, too.)
Healthy/Easy Food/Cooking, Wide Internet availability (only bc it's often so challenging to talk to people back home), Ginger Ale and Ginger Snaps.
31. What are the Top 3 things about life in Africa that beat out the US?
1. The weather—it's not humid at all here, I'm from Virginia where the middle of summer feels like drowning. 2. People's kindness and honesty—if you walk into a shop at lunchtime, the owners might be sitting in the middle of the store eating their lunch, and if they are, they'll be like, "Come eat! Let's eat!" And they're only partially being polite, like if you were like, ok!, they would definitely share with you. It's nice when people seem like they care about you even though you're a stranger. 3. You learn something new and important or get some insight into the way the world works and is moving (economically, socially, politically) and the way you are moving in the word and want to move in the world, all the time.
32. Please comment on your relationship with the Princeton in Africa office. Include the following details:
i. Are you receiving sufficient support, materials, and information from us?
ii. What could we improve?

Yes, sufficient support, materials, information. Maybe there could be something more of a professional development support/advice aspect...? Not quite sure how that would work... Continue the alum advice thing, please!

Your Stipend & Budget

33. If you are receiving stipend monies directly from your partner organization, how are you being paid?
i. Biweekly, monthly, etc?
ii. In US dollars or in another currency?
N/A- organization-provided stipend disbursed through Princeton

34. Have you undertaken additional work to meet expenses?
I babysit occasionally. Found families online through two google groups (addis-diplo-list@googlegroups.com and oddsnsodsnaddisabeba@googlegroups.com) It definitely makes me feel like I can go out to dinner after a tough day at work or to celebrate something.

35. Please provide a sample monthly budget of your average expenses (in US dollars).

Rent/Utilities	\$family asks me for amount depending on the needs that month, I have a whole room to myself in the house, so I give generously and fairly based on what it would most likely cost me elsewhere.
Phone	\$15-25
Internet	\$40-45
Transportation	\$160-180
Fitness	\$0
Entertainment	\$25-40
Food	\$275-300
Travel	\$10-30

Medications \$100
Laundry \$10
Other (specify) \$40 Language Classes