

DM&E Profiles

This document contains profiles of Fletcher alumni who have taken Professor Scharbatke-Church's Design, Monitoring & Evaluation course series. It is intended to better inform potential, incoming and current students on the ways in which the course series is used by alumni. Participants in this profiling consented to the public posting of the document.

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Name and Graduating Year: Lisa Inks, 2010

Fletcher DME Courses taken: DME of Peacebuilding and Development Programs

Current Position/Organization: Director of Conflict Management Programs, Mercy Corps Nigeria

I oversee Mercy Corps' conflict management division in Nigeria, which is composed of various donor-funded programs integrating peacebuilding, economic development, and governance. I am responsible for setting our conflict management strategy, ensuring the programs' success against our objectives, and leading research and M&E initiatives.

Professional interests and passions: integrated peacebuilding and economic development programming; research on conflict/poverty linkages; governance and peacebuilding; monitoring, evaluation, and learning of conflict mitigation programs

Things I wish I knew before taking the courses: This will be your chance to soak up theory, and after Prof. Scharbatke-Church's classes you will never feel like you have as much time to absorb the great wisdom of the M&E giants. Read every word and reflect on what you think your personal approach to DME is, and how you see this playing into your work. If you go into the rest of your career with a clear understanding of how you see yourself in the DME world and what your ideals are, you'll be more effective.

Most valuable takeaways from the courses and how these have helped in your career:

What I learned in that class was more than a collection of tools, strategies, and facts: I adopted a completely new mindset of how to implement development and peacebuilding programs. Constant iteration is absolutely necessary for programming effectiveness. The way Prof. Scharbatke-Church modeled continuous learning and improvement is the way we should all run our programs. I think about that often and how I need to stop, evaluate, and reflect after each step of an activity—and always get the direct input of participants (this seems obvious, but it wasn't until I took the class that I truly internalized the importance of direct feedback and closing the feedback loop). And in a very practical way, the class forces you to become excellent in writing clear goals, objectives, outcomes, and indicators, and I guarantee you no matter which role you are playing in a development program (M&E, programmatic, etc.) you will need those skills. Also, through the class, I learned how to think logically and precisely to develop a program with a clear and testable theory of change and to monitor its effectiveness. A year after graduating I was training people throughout my organization (prior to Mercy Corps) in how to develop DME systems. Prof. Scharbatke-Church's class will put you ahead of the curve. All that I learned is just as relevant for my role as Director of Conflict Management Programs, as good management of programs and coherent program design require deep knowledge of DME.

Any other comments that you think might help an incoming graduate student interested in international work to determine if this course series was relevant to them.

If you plan to work in development at all, take this course. This class should be a 'must' for anyone who wants to work in an NGO or for a donor. Many former Fletcher classmates express clear regret over not taking at least the Intro to DME course. I also regret not taking the advanced course because I was too late in my Fletcher career. Prof. Scharbatke-Church's class is rigorous, challenging, and humbling, but if

you are serious about development—and are serious about doing high-quality development work that responds to the needs of those you are trying to serve and that is based on evidence and learning—you should take it.



Name and Graduating Year: Brian Heilman, 2010

Fletcher DME Courses taken: (1) Design, Monitoring and Evaluation for International Development and Peacebuilding; (2) Advanced Seminar in Evaluation and Learning in International Organisations (note: Brian took the equivalent of all three modules when they were offered in a different format).

Current Position/Organization: Independent M&E Consultant. Prior: Gender and Evaluation Specialist, International Center for Research on Women (2010-2015).

Professional interests and passions: Gender equality, Prevention of all forms of violence against women, Engaging men and boys in efforts to advance gender quality, Utilization-focused evaluation, Quantitative data analysis and visualization

Things I wish I knew before taking the courses: Honestly, the professional value of these courses is about triple that of the average Fletcher course... with a workload to match! I wish that had been clearer to me before joining. Also, despite the modules' titles - and I suppose not all incoming first years are immediately familiar with DM&E concepts - these courses were the most fertile ground at Fletcher for deep discussion and analysis on the ethics and effectiveness of international development and peacebuilding programming.

Most valuable takeaways from the courses and how these have helped you in your career: These courses taught me:

- To demand clarity and logic from international development program designs - but not by sacrificing imagination.
- To demand and uncover evidence of these programs' relevance, effectiveness, and/or sustainability prior to large-scale investment - but not by allegiance to methodological "rigor" as narrowly understood.
- To demand that we value *usefulness* over *interestingness* in the application of precious program, evaluation and research resources.

These and other insights from the courses - as well as from Professor Scharbatke-Church's broader mentorship and support - helped me come into my own as a professional evaluator, a career path that honestly I hadn't imagined for myself prior to attending Fletcher. I have now collaborated on and led a range of evaluations and M&E collaborations in diverse settings - from the Pacific Islands to South Asia to Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere - and I apply principles from these courses throughout. I am still so grateful that I took a chance on the first DME course in my first semester - it changed everything!

Any other comments that you think might help an incoming graduate student interested in international work to determine if this course series was relevant to them: In terms of topical interests, these courses are fantastic for the Fletcher student with broad interests in international development practice. If you're like I was, you've got some constellation of interests including: human rights, grassroots programming/activism, data collection and analysis, development/foreign aid policy, and/or others. You can take many classes at Fletcher that dig into these areas specifically but conveniently ignore the implications of the others - especially the crucial question of how best to ensure that your program/practice/policy continues to learn from itself and improve over time.

These courses bring all of those topics together, but perhaps more importantly, they do so while also

taking the notion of the “professional degree” far more seriously than most Fletcher offerings. They are designed and taught very thoughtfully as preparatory courses for professionals. The projects and work you undertake mirror the projects and work you will undertake after graduating. Teamwork. Project designs and proposals. M&E plans. Data collection guides. And so on. And the teaching emerges from adult learning principles. Don’t underestimate the value of this! If you don't plan to write 30-page papers as a professional, then why spend time in grad school learning how to do that!? Better to practice what you will, you know, actually practice.



Name and Graduating Year: Jessie Evans, 2010

Fletcher DME Courses taken: DME and Adv. Evaluation & Learning

Current Position/Organization: Conflict Stabilization Specialist, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, U.S. State Department

I support broader State Department and interagency efforts to advance U.S. foreign policy by applying conflict expertise and supporting Embassies in countries and regions affected by conflict. I design and implement conflict prevention and stabilization programs and advise on U.S. government policy. I am expected to quickly gain familiarity with specific conflict-impacted countries to identify gaps where my Bureau's tools, including strategic planning, conflict assessment, financial assistance, and deployable staff, can enable the U.S. government to develop better policy and programs leading to improved outcomes. I've served in Afghanistan, Burma, and Bangladesh.

Professional interests and passions: Countries transitioning from conflict to peace, conflict prevention, reconciliation mechanisms, trust-building, civil-military relations, gender.

Things I wish I knew before taking the courses: I wish I had known the DM&E classes I took at Fletcher would be by far the most practical, relevant courses I would take in graduate school. I also wish I knew more M&E vocabulary before starting the course. I had only been in the workforce for a few years before Fletcher with limited program design experience; so much of the lingo was new to me.

Most valuable takeaways from the courses and how these have helped in your career: I am more strategic, always asking myself what changes I would need to see in individuals and societies I work in to determine whether the money, time, and effort we spent was "worth it". The course also taught me the importance of going beyond calling an intervention a success solely because it met its originally stated objectives and goal. I learned to ask the even tougher question, like ... was it the right intervention in the first place? Did it have the intended outcomes and do those outcomes amount to something greater, a larger impact? Could it have been done more efficiently? Will it be sustainable? I just wrote an evaluation scope of work for one of our projects and I relied heavily on what I learned in DM&E class – looking back at course material as I drafted it!



Name and Graduating Year: Jennifer Catalano, 2011

Fletcher DME Courses taken: DME and Adv. Evaluation & Learning

Current Position/Organization: Director, Youth Economic Participation Initiative at the Talloires Network (Tufts University).

I oversee a 4.5-year demonstration grant program at the Talloires Network, an international association of universities committed to civic engagement. This program provides sub-grants to 8 universities in the global south in order to expand and learn from their efforts to prepare students for entrepreneurship and employment. Additional program elements include a learning partnership with the University of Minnesota and a global community of practice around the topic of higher education and

youth employment/entrepreneurship.

Professional interests and passions: Gender, youth, ethics, the aid system, higher education

Things I wish I knew before taking the courses: It's rather intense, and has a significant workload. (But I had heard that through the grape vine). Actually the intensity set me up well for the rest of grad school.

Most valuable takeaways from the courses and how these have helped in your career: So many things... I drew on Program Design skills during the first phase of my post-Fletcher work, which involved coordinating the process of designing the program I now work for.

The M&E knowledge has been extraordinarily helpful during the past year. The program I work on includes a significant multi-year monitoring/learning effort. My M&E studies helped with the process of selecting an evaluation team and working with them to set up the collaboration. The whole process would have been daunting if I hadn't had known how to create a TOR, the right language to use, what to look for in Evaluators, etc. Knowing this process so well also helped me to advocate for decisions that were in line with my values.

Now as we move into a phase of active collaboration with our learning partners, my M&E skills enable me to contribute in a far more substantive and meaningful way to the process.

Any other comments that you think might help an incoming graduate student interested in international work to determine if this course series was relevant to them.

This is one of the most practical and useful courses you could take at Fletcher if you intend to work anywhere in the aid chain. I highly recommend it.