

Project Description

I am writing to request funding for a summer internship with QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA). QASA is a non-profit organization which represents quadriplegics and paraplegics in South Africa. QASA is a member of South Africa Disability Alliance (SADA). I will be working in Johannesburg and Durban for 6 weeks.

QASA's services include advocacy and lobbying to government at national, provincial and local level; conducting awareness campaigns on the cause and prevention of spinal cord injury; publication and distribution of information for people with disabilities; developing income-generating business projects to sustain individuals and regions; provision of funding for education and facilitating skills development through internships and training workshops. QASA also provides mobility aids and peer-counseling as empowerment responsibilities.

With QASA, I will be working on a number of skills development and training projects which aim to empower the lives of people with disabilities. I can assist in evaluating the success of these projects. I will also help educate people with disabilities about valuable employment opportunities and develop entrepreneurial opportunities for disabled people while developing partnerships with employers.

Through interacting with disabled people, I hope to understand the issues they face everyday to make a living, such as employment, skills, mobility and public policy. I want to implement what I have learned in coursework and develop ideas and implement projects to help improve the lives of people.

As a junior in the ILR School, I learned in depth about labor market and employment issues, social policy, human rights and human resources management. Some classes I'm taking are corporate social responsibility and labor markets in developing world. I've developed deep interest in income and social inequality within a country. Promoting the living standards of persons with disabilities through economic empowerment can be one step toward equality and poverty reduction. I want to get involved in activities that will truly result in significant social change on issues that I deeply care about.

I have a wide variety of personal and educational experiences that will allow me to take maximum advantage of this internship and also allow me to contribute more substantively to the environment I am hoping to work within. I spent my last semester at ILO in Geneva, Switzerland. In the Conditions of Work and Employment department, I helped with the preparation for legal framework for domestic workers' rights. Domestic workers are a class of workers who do not have legal protection in national level. Helping work with creating an international standard that covers a whole sector of employees with

no practical protection was really rewarding. In the fall, I worked at the Bureau for Employers' Activities which worked with Employers' Associations to address the labor market issues around the world. Working with the employers and business' associations have granted me a new perspective, other than labor, to view the world of work. I hope to contribute to QASA by bringing in employers' views as well as working for workers' side.

Since I had worked at a macro-level policy scale, I would value field work to complement my past experience. There are components of learning that cannot be satisfied by learning in classroom only. I would like to experience and see for myself what it is really like to work for an organization that supports people with disabilities in a different country. South Africa is a unique and diverse country that may have issues based on economics, race, social justice issues, politics and more.

Disability is an area of labor and employment that needs a lot of work in many countries around the world. It will be interesting to see how a country like South Africa deals with employment issues for disabled people. With my prior background in related coursework and internship experience, I will be able to interact with underrepresented group and gain first-hand experience in projects that address the problems disabled people face in terms of employment and skills development and be a part of making change happen that provides for enhanced employment opportunities. I will be able to better understand the area and direction of the policy improvements for reducing inequality and poverty and continue further research needed to achieve the desired longer term goals of societal change. With this new found knowledge and experience, I hope to continue to work to promote legal, social and economic rights for disadvantaged sectors in the future.

Since the internship is unpaid, I'm applying for this funding to cover the flight costs. I plan to finance the needed anticipated additional living expenses from my personal savings.

Thank you for your consideration.