Alumni Profile

Maia Sparkman '18
Ecological Systems

After graduating from SU, I joined the Peace Corps serving as a sustainable agriculture extension agent in Zambia. I lived in a village of about 200 people where I partnered with local counterparts and NGOs to implement sustainable agriculture projects. I worked in partnership with the local health clinic and school district to encourage female empowerment and healthy livelihoods to lower malaria and HIV/AIDS transmission rates. After my Peace Corps service, I returned to the States and started graduate school at Clark University where I am working on a MS in Environmental Science and Policy.

Serving in the Peace Corps gave me the opportunity to integrate into the community in which I worked. I learned that to be the most effective Peace Corp volunteer, I needed to understand the needs of the community. To do that, I learned the local language and built strong working relationships with the villagers. I was most valuable when working as a liaison connecting leaders in the village with NGOs and government officials in the provincial capital to expand access to education and training in sustainable agriculture practices.

Upon completion of my Master's degree, I hope to pursue a career in addressing the intersection between climate change, food security, and humanitarian conflict both domestically and internationally. My career goal is to provide inclusive and equitable policy recommendations to ensure that the most vulnerable populations have the resources and support to adapt to the changing climate.

One of the most valuable skills that I developed from my EVST degree that has helped shape me as a young professional is my ability to evaluate complex environmental challenges from a holistic and interdisciplinary perspective. The EVST program at Seattle University has shaped my ability to address and evaluate today's complex environmental challenges considering the social, environmental, economic, political, and cultural scope of the problem.