

Staff Spotlight: Emma Shiffman

When moving on to a new adventure, it is natural to look back on all the steps you have made to bring you to where you are now.

At the end of this week, I will be leaving my position as communications advisor at HAI to pursue my master's degree in Epidemiology at [Utrecht University](#). Although I am anxious to begin, I truly believe that the thing that most prepared me for this next step was the year I spent working at HAI.

On day one, I knew what I was getting into when our communications manager gave me a [110 page communications guide](#) to edit and format, using a software which I had never used before. Three months later, I would be on a plane to Dar es Salaam nervously re-reading that same guide to help me prepare for a presentation I was about to give on storytelling at the [Health Systems Advocacy Partnership](#) Joint Action Planning Meeting. Only a few months after that, I would be at the World Health Assembly in Geneva— running on complimentary croissants and the never-ending enthusiasm of my manager, Alex— busily preparing for a side event that I was managing, and delivering a statement in front of over 100 delegations.



What more could I possibly ask for from a first job out of college? Although nothing can prepare a person for the inevitable panic that is to come during exam season, the confidence and practical experience I have gained since starting here will undoubtedly drive

me to be successful in my masters and beyond.

In my motivational letter to Utrecht University in December, I wrote the following:

“This position has allowed me to understand the policy decisions and anthropological limitations to controlling health crises, which would allow me to make more realistic and well-informed inferences about what factors may be rate-determining steps in disease spread.”

If I could rewrite this statement, now 8 months later, I would say:

“This position has taught me that with world-class research, intelligent and well-informed policy recommendations and masterful communication, huge steps can be taken to impact the health and wellbeing of those impacted by health crises—even those that have been neglected for years.”