



## Staff Spotlight: Elle Ruggiero

Scale Up Intern, Center for Innovation and Impact (CII)



**Q: What is your role at USAID?**

**A:** I'm a Scale Up intern with the Center for Innovation and Impact (CII) working predominantly on the Saving Lives at Birth (SL@B) portfolio. My work focuses on finding ways to highlight our innovators and showcase their achievements for our partners. In addition to that work, I've been helping some of our team members on the recently released Zika evaluation to showcase how our Zika and Future Threats Grand Challenge winners have pivoted to respond to COVID-19.

**Q: What did you do prior to joining CII?**

**A:** The summer after my sophomore year was my first exposure to international development and global health that occurred outside of the classroom setting. I worked remotely with Child Family Health International, conducting research on the high adolescent fertility rates present in Bolivia. With the guidance of a local pediatrician, I aimed to pinpoint the underlying causes and develop potential policy recommendations that could serve the population in need. This internship sparked my interest in maternal and child health, inspiring me to work with International Planned Parenthood Federation Western Hemisphere Region this past year. With IPPFWHR, I co-authored a report that refines the World Bank's definition of inequality so that it better incorporates the inequalities that exist within countries, specifically with respect to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

**Q: What drew you to CII?**

**A:** The work that CII has done with the Saving Lives at Birth Grand Challenge drew me to the organization. After reading the description of the intern position, I went online to SL@B's website and read that "every 2 minutes, a woman dies in childbirth." I immediately felt both compelled to do something and excited by the prospects of working with a team dedicated to improving health outcomes of mothers and babies.

**Q: What makes you passionate about your work?**

**A:** At the end of the day, I want to help people. Growing up as the daughter of two doctors, I wanted to pursue a career in medicine so that I, too, could make a meaningful impact on the lives of others. However, upon arriving at Princeton and exploring the possible paths of study, I realized the impact that fair policies and representation can have on the wellbeing of marginalized populations.

**Q: What do you like to do outside of work?**

**A:** Outside of work and school, I am a member of the women's varsity squash team at Princeton. I've been competing in national and international competitions since I was 9 years old, so it has been a part of my life for a long time now. Outside of being a college athlete, I love to draw and use creative outlets and to open up that side of my brain. I also enjoy spending time with my family and friends.

**Favorite Book or Podcast**

**A:** Being a student, it's hard to find time to read anything outside of my class work. However, I love to put my headphones in on my way to squash practice and listen to a podcast. One of my favorites is Kaiser Health News' "What the Health?" podcast that comes out every Thursday. It keeps me updated on all of the important health-related news coming out of Washington.