Miki Watanabe
I spent my childhood frequently moving between Tokyo and an underdeveloped region of China. This experience made me realize that many social issues, including poverty and human rights, are greatly correlated with commercial systems and business operations. Ever since, I have been active in exploring ways to practice business principles that would bring out positive social changes throughout my education. This intern opportunity is where I can further develop my skills and understanding of social entrepreneurship, as well as a platform an experience, to turn my passion and knowledge into impact.

The Cambodian government recognizes the importance of diversifying the economy and stimulating entrepreneurship to alleviate poverty. However, it is challenging to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities that are economically sustainable and socially responsible at the same time. One of the most effective tools to create opportunity for the poorest is to extend credit to poor entrepreneurs. When carried out as part of a well planned campaign, microfinance can be the difference between an unstable temporary job and sustainable self-employment. The business development project let me contribute my knowledge and talent to microfinance initiatives in Phnom Penh. Not only I was utilizing my skills, I was also training the locals to effectively use the funds when managing their business, to ensure the long-term sustainability of the projects.

The organization I work at is called Farmer Livelihood Development (FLD). Under it, there are subsidiary social enterprises that contribute to different aspect of developing lives of rural Cambodian farmers. The subsidiary I worked for was called Khmer Farmer Product (KFP). KFP serves as the medium between the commercial market and the poor farmer in rural area of Cambodia with little or no knowledge or business skills. KFP is a social enterprise that packages, trades and markets products on behalf of farm businesses and small-scale handicraft and food processor groups, all of whom were trained by FLD. It allows former trainees to gain commercial confidence in their new skills, and facilitate them entering the commercial market.

Though it may sound like an opportunity where I contributed to the community I worked
with, it is actually an amazing chance for self-development. With this chance to explore what I am passionate about, I can now take every step following in life with firm faith and unstoppable belief. The ones who march on a path that has never been visited before are the ones who truly inspire. And those people are true leaders who make a difference in the world.