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Tanzania Alumnus 2008



I was born, raised and schooled (from grade school to university) in Ottawa and although I am well-travelled, everything that has constructed my perspective of the world was formed in this city. As a future medical professional, I have always been an advocate of international health issues, HIV/AIDS, the environment, gender equality and even basic education—they are all related. However, I didn't feel like I was making a difference by taking part in fundraisers and seminars. In the effort to better international health and facilitate international development at the community level, I wanted to see the change firsthand and more importantly, see if the given aid addresses the more important issues. I wanted to be personally involved and add to my perspective. After looking at different organizations, I found YCI to be the safest and one of the more effective organizations to help me realize my endeavor.

I spent only six weeks in Zanzibar, Tanzania, but YCI had existing framework, programs and collaborative efforts there, which made it very easy to jump in and do something productive. I worked mostly with the youth at ZANGOC, an NGO in Tanzania, where I had many memorable experiences.

Along with HIV/AIDS prevention, I took part in facilitating gender equality workshops for men in the community. Here, I had the opportunity to really get to know the youth, learn about their culture and way of life, all while sharing my own views in open discussions. The environmental club program was also very intriguing as I learned how different their infrastructure is from our own. It took weeks to find out how and where to get the community centre garbage cans! The best experience I had was teaching the youth how to use computers: Microsoft Office, how to browse the Internet, use email and even Facebook. Presently, I still keep in touch with many of the youth I worked with—one of them has even used his Microsoft Office skills to acquire a job in the government!

YCI was particularly good in that they are very open to personal initiatives. I had the opportunity to conduct a case study where the youth and I created a bilingual jingle about HIV/AIDS prevention. Overall, this was a great experience in firsthand international health and development. It also taught me a lot about myself as well: my adaptability, resourcefulness, strength of character, ambition and

understanding. It was as much a learning experience for me as it was for the youth I worked with.

Upon returning home, it felt as awkward as it did when I first set foot in Zanzibar. My memories of these six weeks are something that will be kept for a lifetime and my experiences have reoriented my perspective of international health and development, where I find that I can better understand what I have been taught with respect to health sciences. My peers could also benefit from this type of experience and thus, I spent a year promoting YCI's program around my university and adjacent colleges. Sharing my story just barely quells how much I miss Zanzibar and so, I intend to return someday after my degree and hopefully have more to offer and more prominently, much more to learn!

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