ABSTRACT

On January 8, 2016, I began my journey to Tanzania, Africa—specifically the rural Mara Region to focus on observing and critiquing community development. Our group visited several community development projects such as schools, clinics, and agricultural centers and farms. Likewise, we met with a multitude of local Tanzanians, educators and students, and community leaders.

My wider project revolves around dissonance, or what I thought I knew versus what I learned. The deeper understanding of this experience is an ongoing process. Some of my questions were answered, while others I hadn’t thought of notably caught my attention.

PRIOR TO THE TRIP: CRITICAL QUESTIONS

My original questions aimed to draw back on a communication and sociological context, relating to my majors.

Five critical questions I submitted to focus on while in the country:

1. How does the relational dynamic of Tanzanian families compare to American families?
2. What opportunities in education are children given based on their genders?
3. What morals, taboos, and customs do the people of Tanzania share/differ in relation to Americans? What stereotypes are believed?
4. How do communication-based technological advancements, or lack thereof, help or hurt the Tanzanian communities?
5. How do communities express themselves spiritually?

CONCLUSION AND POST-TRIP EXPERIENCES

Understanding change and the future: what’s next for Tanzania?

In terms of development: what is needed isn’t always what is given, it’s our job to listen when lending a helping hand.

• Cultural differences: like falsely believed stereotypes and language barriers aren’t always barriers. People are kind everywhere.
• Communication technology: might not seem like a priority, but is needed to conduct business within communities.

What’s next for me?

• Applying what I’ve learned to everyday life
• Educating others on how to help in the smallest ways
• Constant inspiration for an aspiring writer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mentors, Mara Huber, PhD. and Dan Nyaronga, PhD., without whom this project and opportunity would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank each and every person who helped fundraise for the communities we visited on this trip. You all helped us change lives.