

Personal Development Case Study

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Cycle 1: Machakos, Kenya

Placement: Light Of Hope Youth Initiative

What have I learnt?

Taking part in ICS has been the most incredible learning experience for me whilst also proving the most challenging thing I've ever done. Right from the beginning I had to learn how to adjust my lifestyle to that of a completely new culture and I have since been continually learning the ways of the culture and the people who live it.



This has not just been a cultural learning experience for me, but a personal one too. Skills I wasn't very sure of when the programme began such as team working, confidence and initiative have all improved through working in the ICS team. I'd say the main skill I've gained is in event organisation and management. This came with communication skills and overcoming new and exciting challenges.

Before taking part in the ICS programme I was a fairly quiet person and found it quite difficult to express ideas and opinions, especially in a large group of people. I was very interested in learning about new people and cultures even before I came, and I think ICS has heightened that interest. By working in a big team for almost three months it has also been a necessity that I project my views and ideas. Through this and meeting many new people over the course of the programme, I have strengthened my confidence and ability to publicly speak.



I've taken part in uncountable Global Citizenship Days and numerous Community Action Days which have taught me so much about the issues of the world and the views on them from the eyes of both British and Kenyan citizens. This really enlightened me on global development and how it is personal to each and every person.

ICS has introduced me to so many new and interesting people with inspiring stories that I won't forget anytime soon after leaving. I have

learnt so many things just from talking to these people, becoming friends with them. More than

anything, the people are what have impacted on me most during my stay here in Machakos. It has been the most eye opening experience sharing stories with volunteers and locals from Kenya and Machakos and even with those from the UK. The ICS experience has taught me more about people than anything else.

Some of the everyday ways in which I have changed as a result of taking part in this programme;

- I've become more resourceful of the materials around me - with a limited budget and minimal resources I've learnt to make the best of what is available
- I'm inspired by and respect the talent people have acquired during their lifetimes - for example my host mama's bead work and the carpentry skills the prison inmates hold
- I feel I am more committed to work and more driven and determined to get projects done
- I am more sociable and confident in big groups now and will happily go and introduce myself to new people
- I feel more aware of the different views we have cross-culturally and have learnt just how important it is to respect these opinions
- I think realistically in terms of getting work done, because, although being ambitious is a good thing, aiming too high can lead to disappointment, especially with a tight budget and limited time
- I've become much more appreciative of the way people live completely different lives in different cultures and I think I won't take things as much for granted on returning home to a life where everything is so easily accessible
- I believe in myself more after taking part in the programme. ICS has presented me with challenges which I have managed to overcome – some of them I didn't think I would be able to do before the programme
- I feel I have gained skills that will stand me for life. I feel having attained so many new skills, I can do whatever I want. Although still sticking with my university course of music and theatre, I'm now interested in studying a module in development as ICS has heightened my interest

One memory from my experience that stands out...

If there's one memory that stands out for me, it's a very simple one. It is, however, definitely my favourite. It was about midway through the programme, the 5th November and one of the volunteer's birthdays. As it was the right day, we decided to celebrate it with a traditional English Bonfire Night (which of course was taken over by lots of Kenyan songs and scout games around the fire!). We were on an open plane with views of the hills that spanned for miles and miles in either direction. I took a moment to myself, away from all the singing and laughter, to just sit and take in the cool air and the landscape around me. Looking across at the hills they were dotted with housing and street lamps and the place looked alive, yet so quiet at the same time. When I looked up at the sky it was blanketed in stars. It was then I was reminded of the beauty of nature. In the bustling, noisy streets of a developing town such as Machakos, it is a gift to be able to simply sit in peace and awe at the beauty of the Kenyan scenery – like something off a page from a novel. If someone says African skies are the most beautiful in the world . . . they're not lying!