



## **Personal development case study**

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**Cycle 1:** Machakos, Kenya

**Placement:** Exodus Communications Development Program

### **What have I learnt?**

To sum up what I have learnt on this programme is quite difficult. No matter how much experience you have volunteering it all changes once you enter your allocated place. For me this programme in Machakos Kenya has pushed me to the limits of my abilities and made me a preserver and I thank this programme accordingly.

On a personal level I have been given a great opportunity to live in a different country and community and immerse myself with everything this has to offer and the challenges

that I will also face. I have much respect first for the people of Kenya as the daily everyday tasks that are necessary I believe many within the United Kingdom take for granted. Simple things such as washing clothes are hand washed, but to undertake such activities they need access to water, and in Machakos there is a massive water problem. It isn't until you have to hand wash your own clothes that you start to realize just how lucky we are to have washing machines and in many cases dryers. Where I lived in my host home was off the main road on a dirt track that once rained became very muddy and in cases hard to walk down especially the hills. Most of all it is the women of these communities I have such respect for to have the cultural expectation to look after the house and the family. Many have jobs or are creative entrepreneurs who create a variety of objects with their hands such as handbags, table mats as examples that are sold within the community. Here it is a case of if I don't do it, who will! If I don't go out and work who will keep the roof over my head. It is this which comes close to my heart as especially in the UK and studying social policy and politics some of us many graduates believe we are above jobs. Why should a graduate work in a supermarket when I have a degree. However, the logic should be what job and or experience should I get while I wait for my opportunity within my field.

Economically, Machakos is quite a built up area compared to what I was expecting but behind the surface of the many hotels, petrol stations and supermarkets lies a lot of need for development not maybe in what we would expect such as basic education but the capacity to develop colleges and universities as a space for the creation of new and innovative projects. It is hard to work out how a county with scarcity of water affecting agriculture one of its major revenues that it has a massive park that was constructed on one in Abu Dhabi. A lot of projects are held up because the county government has to get involved which slows down a lot of our potential projects.

At a social level, I feel that Machakos County for me could easily be a home from home. Unlike many other programmes in this community English is a national language. So there has not been such a

problem with regards to communication. In addition, learning about the family culture and the close knit communities really makes you see just how many of our towns and communities have broken down, but also how we view members of our family.

**Describe yourself before the programme**

As a social policy and politics graduate I was aware of issues affecting communities domestically and I have also been exposed within communities volunteering with different organisations from Pilgrims Hospice to Catching lives the latter a homeless shelter to name just a few. From these experiences gained over the last three years, I have developed and enhanced a variety of skills such as communication, team work, analytical skills to name but a few that is sort after in communities and future employment

**Describe yourself now**

Due to my previous experience with volunteering after three months in Kenya compared to others I have just further enhanced skills already attained. I have had experience in policy development, strategy planning and programme development which has been exposed me further around my degree. Additionally, I have experience of working with Kenyan counterparts which has exposed me to a different side of working but also networking within communities has increased my persuading skills.

There isn't anything I am doing now or plan to do that I wasn't doing before as I have always enjoyed volunteering. However, what this programme has done is confirm my commitment to volunteering and working within the third sector. Additionally, it has refined my interests for my master's application to start in September 2015.

Due to ICS I have been able to network with many of my Kenyan counterparts and hopefully have the opportunity to come back for research for my masters' dissertation around the topic of education and engagement.



**One Standout Moment**

One memory that stands out for me for this whole programme is resulting from me being on the committee for the community action day (CAD). This was organizing an event in Mutituni community on Drug Abuse and Youth Empowerment to which the latter was known to be prevalent in that area. We as a committee managed to organize over 10 workshops and over 250 people attended the event. To me this was a good development initiative and one that is a personal highlight of my three months in Kenya.