

# Personal Development Case Study

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*Placements: Masaku School for the Physically Disabled and Light of Hope Youth Initiative*

### My Learning

One word to explain the past three months in Machakos would most definitely be **challenging**, yet it is these challenges that have enabled me to develop and learn so much from the entire experience.



Having been to Kenya before I arrived and thought I knew so much and the three months would be much like any other time I had been in Kenya before. There I was very wrong. The last three months have been immensely challenging and different from any other experience. From living in a host home, to organizing CADs, to placements it has definitely been a learning curve.

The three main learning points for me have been **communication**, **leadership**, and **patience**. Together these have opened my eyes up to so much **opportunity**.

Through organizing the first big CAD in Mtituni I learned the different ways of communication in Kenya. By this I mean it is a step away from the keyboard and all communication is face to face. This really was an incredible opportunity to forge networks both for our team and for future cycles. It also gave me more confidence meeting new people, especially when we were meeting senior bank managers and suchlike when securing sponsorship for CADs. Living in a host home and working and living in a cross-cultural environment has further boosted my communication skills. While my major regret out here has been the lack of Swahili I have learnt communication has remained a central issue and is definitely an area I have developed.

The CAD organization has also boosted my leadership skills. In organizing the first CAD I more or less became the leader of the committee – it was definitely a test, but with great results. I really learnt the importance of delegation and dividing responsibility. As a result we pulled off a brilliant CAD which utilized all the teams' skills and talents, and I personally feel it improved my leadership skills.

The final major learning experience for me has been patience. The learning curve here ranges from waiting for my host sister to make sure we arrive at GCDs on time to being patient with work counterparts and supervisors in decision making for events and placements. The importance of working with all views, opinions and decisions has been highlighted throughout and I feel this is an invaluable life skill that I have developed. In terms of timekeeping, or lack thereof, this is an issue I am still working on – as a time conscious Brit I fear I will spend much more of my life waiting for meetings, hence the importance of patience!

With these new and developed skills on top of the whole experience in Machakosa plethora of opportunities have opened up as I now have a greater understanding of how development works on a day-to-day business in the field. The best thing that has not changed about me and my view of the world is that I remain even more committed to pursuing a career in development and coming back to Kenya to continue to challenge myself to change my world.

## Story



Asked to write a story about my time here, I could either refer to my early morning runs – one of my favorite parts of my everyday routine where I see Five Hills wake up and all walks of life coming together – but the main thing I will remember of my time here is the achievement of the CAD. The CAD report crosses the 't's and dots the 'i's of the event, but in 'my story' I want to write about my personal accomplishment and what the day meant to me.

The day began waking up at 5:30am and hearing rain pour down outside. From there the next few hours were a bit of a nightmare. No Matatus to take Alex, Lee and I into town so by the time we arrived we were drenched. The rest of the morning continued similarly – the low points: no access to the PA from Red Cross, the pick-up getting stuck in the mud, arriving at Kasiani and seeing a collapsed tent due to the rain – and the rain continued to pour. However, all these challenges and issues added to the achievement and remarkableness of the day – it kicked off only an hour late, the sun came out we listened to speakers outside under the tree and the workshops ran smoothly. By the end of the day together as a team of 23 VSO volunteers alongside other volunteers we had shared our own skills and knowledge with 200 youths. A huge football game concluded the event and it was then I realized just what we had done as a committee and as a team. That was the one day from this entire experience where I felt the biggest achievement and saw the immense potential we all have as VSOs and opportunity all the youths in Mtituni now have.

