



## **Personal development case study**

Priscilla Sowah, UK volunteer

**Cycle 1:** Machakos, Kenya

**Placement:** Terry Child Support and Youth Resource Centre

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

This journey has been more than I anticipated. It has been challenging in ways that I did not imagine and pleasantly surprising.

I arrived in Kenya, with few expectations and an open mind to learn more about who I was and what I was capable of and also the team I would be working with. Having grown up in West Africa, I thought I would be easy to adapt to the culture and environment, but little did I know that I would be greatly challenged in this area.



Looking back at the last couple of weeks, time has flown faster than I imagined, however it's been an eye opening experience. With two weeks to go, I have been amazed at the various unexpected areas I have been challenged in. There have been the good times and the not so good and I have learnt to be patient and have seen my leadership, people skills and decision making skills fine tuned over the past 8

weeks. I have been encouraged and inspired by some volunteers as my team leaders to be the change I want to see. I have also come to the realisation that development starts with me and the little that I do makes an impact.

Working cross culturally was very frustrating at times mainly because of the language barrier and the community's assumption that I spoke Kiswahili. This has taught me to patiently understand the reasoning behind people's actions, and not take the matter to heart. I also have come to learn that English is commonly understood however Kiswahili being the national language is the one that comes most naturally to many so and it's not so easy to keep speaking English continually. The difference in backgrounds and culture can make working with people from different cultures challenging as there are different perspectives. However one thing I have learnt is communicating any concerns to team members and finding a solution everyone is comfortable with if there are any



problems. This is not always easy as it means letting of your ego and pride to ensure that things work smoothly.

### **One memory from my experience that stands out...**

One memory that stands out to me during this programme is a day my host counterpart and I got back from Sunday church service and she had two weeks of laundry to do. Looking at the clouds it was threatening to rain. We both we extremely exhausted and she was concerned about washing as it would soon be cold and wet. She took the chance and begun washing at the laundry area outside the house. I was then on the phone so afterwards I went to check on her only to notice the pile of clothes she had and the fast approaching rains. I quickly put my hands to the task and begun rinsing and hanging the clothes she had washed.

As soon as we had finished and tidied up the laundry area, the rains begun. We just burst out laughing as we had just been saved by the skin of our teeth from the rains.

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

- I think I am more patient and more able to communicate any frustrations I have in a polite but honest manner.
- I have come to appreciate having a good host home to stay in, which has made me appreciate the more my family.
- I am more appreciative of leaders who make a difference. Having watched my team leaders selflessly put their needs last to make sure that volunteers have what they need and are taken care off.
- I am now more conscious of the decisions I make and the importance of taking responsibility and making decisions. - I have come to realise that in a team.
- I have come to realise the importance of knowing who you are and having a purpose in everything you find yourself doing – I realise that at a point, you can get exhausted and when it gets very challenging, you can loose focus. Knowing yourself and your purpose enables you to persevere through the challenges.
- I believe I have gained confidence in my ability to lead and taking responsibility for my actions, learning to work with and adapt to different personalities.