

Personal development case study

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National volunteer

Cycle 1: Machakos, Kenya

Placement: Exodus Communication Development Program



What have I learnt?

The VSO quote says 'challenge yourself to change the world' and certainly it was a challenging and learning experience for me during the program in Machakos County. This journey started when I had applied and got an interview in which during it I remember we had an exercise where we were to design a notebook and one of the rules was not to assign anyone a role but to team work little did I know this was the backbone for my 3 months staying period through the program I have learnt to be proactive and the importance of the little things we are

ignorant of such as a work plan, that phone call to confirm a meeting and that a task is done and also that acknowledgment to your counterpart when you have effectively completed a task just to give them a pat in the back.

Community development is my choice of career, and this program gave me a platform to use my skills that I have learnt from my previous job and volunteer working experience making it certain that I am in the right profession. Thus this program has enhanced my personal and professional development to embrace the diversity of different cultures, backgrounds as well as my perception on the current emerging issues in Kenya and globally. I can further give an example of such occurrence when it happened that me and my counterpart from UK Courteleigh Smith had been invited to a local college in Machakos and we had been asked to conduct an informative session to the participants who were mainly youth taking different causes ranging from ICT, community



development and social, so we decided to talk about MDGs (millennium development goals) and on asking the participant to name a few they had no clue what we were talking about... I feel disappointed but this was the genesis of one of our projects the youth dialogues where we had different topics such

- International development
- Millennium development goal

- Roles as youths in community development
- Leadership and life skills

And the results were remarkable to see you can transform the perception youth have towards development by giving them the right information and for them to hear from their peers was a strategy that we used to impact the knowledge.

My personal development has two phases pre-program where I was used to the same routine of work and post program where I have learnt the skill of time keeping, sticking to deadlines and how to work as a team with a direct impact on me. IT team effort that have enable me to overcome one of my greatest fear `heights`. My host home was at a place called five hills and as the name suggest hills it was special thanks to Alex, Larry, Kengah for being my support system even when I had to stay for 10mins to walk through these steep terrains as they waited patiently to make each step and this I will take home, that's my phobia is not completely gone but I have managed the weeks through it and I always clap for myself when I successfully walk down the heal.

Have also learn the value of time and getting things done and sticking to the work plan ignoring the notion `wapwanihawanaharaka` people from the coast are in no hurry to do thing .Shila is always in a hurry and she will get her work done on time and effectively and efficiently.

I have learnt that the urge and zeal to see a change community or just a change in the perception of people's minds towards issues affecting them is attributed to commitment and passion of doing it like my involvement in the waste management survey in partnership with some of the volunteers placed at Redcross to lobby for a cleaner town and lobby for dustbins around the town put me to the task that it starts with me :that paper that I litter on the street contributes to the huge chunk of dirt I see on the street thus I have learnt to walk with my rubbish in my bag till I get to a place with a proper bins. Simple projects which hopefully the coming cycles can pick up and eventually implement.

This program has also enhanced my ability to take up challenges and new task like solving a communication problems and conflicts among team members and also with superiors such as placement supervisors who at times my feel threatened to work with volunteers as they see it as if your there to take their job such an instance meant I had to clearly state my objectives in my placement organisation and what I ought to gain as a result of working there this really has sharpened my conflict resolution skills as well has equipped me with more communication skills.

With all this knowledge am certain of what I want to do when I go back home and I cannot wait to see the results. ICS has really moulded me and given me a platform to feel that am a responsible youth and I have a role to play not only in my community but globally thus am now open to new opportunities and new travelling adventures.



Level five hospital incinerator at the level five hospital during the waste management survey.



Facilitating in an entrepreneurship to blink baking group

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

- Am now more aware of my abilities and those of the people around and how to work as a team
- I have learnt to be time conscious
- I have also learnt the value of having a simple work plan
- The program has taught me how to budget and spend money wisely
- Am now open minded to look for more opportunities outside my country and hoping to tour the UK
- The program has made me to be conversant with the current emerging issues in all aspects ,political, economic and social
- Am more patient, less judgemental and appreciative to the different cultures and diversity
- I have also learnt to appreciate nature and biodiversity
- Have improved my networking and resource mobilisation skills.

One memory from my experience that stands out...

It's not easy to narrow down to one particular moment I have two particular because I have two outstanding during our first class at Mwanja where me and my counterparts facilitate ICT and life skills one of the participant said "shila you're a good teacher and you know how and what exactly someone wants to say and your good motivator" these words really moved me to know that the little you do has an impact on someone even when you cannot notice it.

the second instance was during a training seminar for form four leaver in kibwezi organised by head of parish father paulmbatai was the first facilitator and i facilitated on life skills, entrepreneurship, leadership, drug and substance abuse. the first session on life skills and leadership was preceded by a session on goal setting that was done by a counterpart kengahjames we asked the participants to write 3 of their objectives as they were on a transition to college life which requires them to have a plan and strategies to be able to be successful. as I was collecting the notes I came across one that read ‘I want to challenges Sheila’s leadership skills’ this note made me think of what I had taught that day and deep down I was excited to know that someone saw me as their role model that they want to emulate and even be better than me, and this were youths right of school. so I passed the note to my fellow trainers and we had a small discussion about it and that were felt we had an impact on this young adults.

During our last night during the vote of thanking session the participants were asked to volunteer and Salome was her name stood up, this was a girl I had noticed during the start of the session where quite but as we progressed she would answer questions and actively take a lead in group work and this is what she had to say` Shila I want to thank you for what you have taught me I could not stand in front of people like this (85 participants) and talk but you have given me the courage to do so with the skills you have taught me and I promise that I will not disappoint you” I stood there in shock with tears rolling down my cheeks and more tears when the father said that he was in support of her words as he knew her personally and was amazed by the quick transformation.



Left1: facilitation at the youth dialogue session, and right: during the world Aids Day.

“Change is a choice but it’s the sacrifice to choose to change that makes it worthwhile”