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To truly do my experience even the most remote amount of justice, I would need much more than just ink and paper (or pixels for that matter). With this qualifier, I will do my best to provide a glimpse into just what it was that I did this summer. I spent nine weeks in Uganda this summer, where I served as an intern with the Foundation for International Medical Relief of Children in the parish of Bumwalukani, near the Kenyan border. I arrived on the scene amidst a storm with my scrubs and stethoscope packed away, anticipating plenty of clinical work and surgeries. Though my experience was far different than I could have anticipated, it was better than anything I could have imagined.

The setting was lush and mountainous, and the view from where I stayed was breathtaking. The guest house I lived at was just up the road from the trading center and was close enough to be fairly incorporated into village life. While the surroundings were fantastic, it was the people of Bumwalukani that made the place so special. Life in the village was peaceful and, I think, good for the soul. Living in the community and befriending so many people was what made the experience so powerful and beautiful. Experiencing love and giving it away were at the heart of my experience each day, and I am a better person for it.

To be honest, my first two weeks at the clinic were challenging. It was not culture shock; it was more that I struggled to find the place where I could be most effective. The clinic was much smaller and had a lesser capability than I had imagined based on my conversations with the FIMRC staff stateside. Part of my impression may have come from my imagination, but there was sometimes a disconnect between what the stateside

staff thought I would be doing and what life at the clinic was actually like. I spent much of those first days exploring the area, meeting people in the community, and taking patient records in the clinic. I was frustrated because I had expectations of being extremely productive and effective. The first two weeks were difficult, but they allowed me to finally assimilate and get my bearings. The critical turning point, though, in my search to find my place came through the words of David Gelvin, the project director. David had spent two years in the Peace Corps and had been around Bumwalukani for a while. He was ready when I came to him asking for advice. I expressed concern that I did not know how to find projects that would allow me to be most effective. The advice David gave me that afternoon came to shape my whole summer: “Figure out what it is that you can do for the people here better than they can do it themselves... that is how you will be most effective.”

While I continued to spend much of my afternoons at the clinic learning and assisting with the diagnostic process, I began to expand and interact with the community. Finally having a sense of purpose allowed me to begin the work that I would come to love. One of the first contacts I made was with a man named Namolya Robert, the chairman of the men’s community health group. David had told me to try to help them find direction, and after seeing the hope and ambition that radiated from Robert’s eyes, I realized that the group would become my central project. I knew that my basic knowledge of business and ability to plan and lead would be beneficial to the group. The men had gone around and assessed hundreds of homes and had identified those with the worst sanitation. Some did not have roofs or latrines and oftentimes it was only because the tenants were helpless. The men wanted to help their neighbors but they did not have

the means. They did not want to accept perpetual donations; instead, they wanted to own the project and to work on behalf of their community. I met with Robert most evenings and we developed a plan for an initiative that would allow them to first achieve their goals and ultimately pursue sustainable development.

I raised capital from back home to give them a principal with which to begin a business. They have since been purchasing agricultural goods and selling them to schools and businesses based on a few contracts I helped them to set up before I left. These activities will generate profits that they will use for reinvestment, growth, and funding for their various projects in the community. I also helped them to open a bank account in the nearest city and met with government officials for advice and networking. In the end, I left them with over 1,000 kgs of beans in their office, a plan, a motivational speech, and various support resources. The men will be able to continue educating their communities and helping those in need. Down the road they hope to have enough capital to begin a savings and loan in the village in the pursuit of the eradication of poverty and genuine sustainable development.

My other projects included helping with clinic administration: buying drugs, helping to oversee other volunteers, working on designs to improve the clinic's capability and efficiency, meeting with government to improve our anti-malarial drugs, and doing health outreach to a nursery school nearby. During my time we managed to acquire government support, which entailed a constant supply of the best available medication. In addition, I developed the model for a program that will allow the clinic staff to visit the infirm in their homes. The different opportunities at the site were amazing, and the fact that the clinic is associated with a school meant that I was also able to meet the students

and teach a class. Though much of what I did was not medically related, the versatility of the Bumwalukani internship was one of its greatest virtues.

There are not words that can properly express how much I appreciated my time in Uganda this summer. I am still exploring and discovering the number of ways that it has changed me. Though I have no doubt that I benefited more than anyone from the experience, I also feel as if I accomplished an immense amount this summer. By being there for FIMRC, I was able to focus on projects that the staff would otherwise have been too busy to address. My presence was indeed advantageous and was greatly appreciated by the staff at the clinic. I cannot articulate the number of ways I grew this summer, but experientially I benefited from time at the clinic, working on community health, and working on a development initiative. I also benefited from taking part in the diagnostic process and came to a deeper appreciation for the complexities of the problems facing global health. The most important thing that I learned will be invaluable in my quest to change the world: that authentic human development must be addressed not through ends and mere charity, but through means and solidarity.