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Global Mamas
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When I stepped off the overnight flight from JFK International Airport into the heat and soft, tan dirt of Accra, Ghana's bustling capital city, I have to admit that I had no idea what to expect from the summer ahead. After nine weeks interning in Marketing and Social Media surrounded by some of the most incredible people and sights around, however, I can say that both Ghana and Global Mamas exceeded all my expectations. I would hop on a tro-tro and return to visit Renae, Patience, and the rest of our cozy coastal office in a heartbeat.

This summer through the Kellogg Institute, I was fortunate enough to intern with Global Mamas, an NGO that was founded by former Peace Corps volunteers on the values of prosperity, fair trade, and financial sustainability. Although they have several office locations that we were able to visit throughout Ghana, my work from May to late July was concentrated in the southern city of Cape Coast. Global Mamas seeks to empower local community women by employing them to batik, sew, and create high quality Global Mamas clothing and accessory products in exchange for stable wages and a supportive workplace. Rather than calling themselves a charity or trying to "serve" these Ghanaian women, the organization recognizes the Mamas' potential as self-sufficient entrepreneurs and seeks to provide them with the resources to best realize their own prosperity. While I was there, this even included several health workshops including one on workplace safety equipment, entrepreneurial training, and small group time to encourage the Mamas to support each other.

We spent our first week living in Ghana's capital city of Accra, where we stayed at Global Mamas co-founder Renae's house and spent time getting to know her and her family. It

just so happened that, while we were there, a team of international Google employees was also working on a three-week project with Global Mamas to analyze their social media usage and develop a forward marketing strategy using Google tools. Although Global Mamas has been receiving Google Grant money to put towards search engine advertising, they lacked the complete knowledge about how AdWords works and therefore were not even using the full extent of their grant. Now, they will have the tools to analyze their online customers' behavior, target ads more effectively, and put out engaging content. Lucky for us new interns, Annie and I got a front row seat at the Google Ghana office as Global Mamas staff were trained in AdWords, Analytics, and other interesting Apps that will really make a difference for Global Mamas online marketing. We learned quite a bit that will also prove extremely relevant and helpful as I continue my own business studies and pursuit of a possible job in nonprofit marketing.

One of my favorite parts of the summer included aiding the annual Design Competition, where the Mamas submitted their own creative design ideas to vie for a spot in next year's 2017 line. It was incredible to see what creative batiks and styles the Mamas' innovative minds could come up with and how they merged traditional ways of sewing African fabrics with their interpretation of trends that one would see on the western runway. It especially never failed to amaze us when Mama Georgina would bound into the office during the competition, her hands overflowing with new creations to add to her pile of over fifteen submissions!

On the other hand, I also found it really interesting how some of the Mamas responded not so positively to our initial presentation about the event. After they saw the Powerpoint, they prodded us with a lot of questions about winning their due and getting compensated for their hard work. They talked about how much time, effort, and resources it took to come up with these design submissions that could have instead been put into producing more for Global Mamas, and

in turn gaining more income. Why would they waste the opportunity cost when they could be creating more prosperity for themselves and their families? If they are going to come up with a winning design, should there not be a bigger prize to make up for that?

Although there was an awkward tension hanging in the room, I was also inspired by how real these women were being. At the end of the day, they are not helpless females or charity cases smiling gratefully on the back of a Global Mamas brochure; they are strong female entrepreneurs who, ultimately, want to make an income and are not afraid to stand up for that basic right. Global Mamas completely embraces this, giving them a voice and an opportunity to speak up to openly discuss their work. Because of this I came to understand the real meaning of “fair trade.” With every new Mama who greeted me with “Akwaaba” and made me feel at home this summer, I could also see fair trade in action. Even if I never learned their name I still learned more from them than I ever anticipated I would – and in surprising ways at that.

Alongside my fellow Kellogg intern Annie, the rest of my work consisted mostly of revamping Global Mamas social media accounts and creating a database of content for them to be able to utilize throughout the coming year. We focused on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest and completed diverse tasks, from updating Pinterest boards and searching for potential partner blogs, to creating a video on our shea butter visit as well as a comprehensive look into our summer “intern experience” for future volunteers on YouTube. One of our first projects was even crafting a Cape Coast staff photo board, complete with a batik background, to replace their dilapidated old one. Even though it seemed like simple arts and crafts at first, it was gratifying to witness everyone in the office light up when they saw their shiny new pictures displayed on the wall.

That was one of many reminders of the overflowing joy and simple pleasures that seemed to accompany everyday life in Ghana, as well as a culture shift from the materialism and status-climbing that I am used to in American daily life. While it sometimes meant that tasks took longer to complete and schedules never ran exactly on time, it was nice to be forced to take a deep breath and slow down for nine weeks. Some of my favorite moments were spent hanging with the other interns on the shady balcony of our volunteer house – mugs of Nescafe in our hands, the rolling Cape Coast waves in our ears, and an interesting conversation never far from our lips. For the many Ghanaians I met, time was something to be enjoyed and shared rather than to be feared or stressed. Our office HR manager Patience often made me think of this when she would smile and say, “I’m coming” before she headed over to help us with something, which is a phrase that in Ghana could mean anywhere from “Give me one minute” to “I’ll be back...eventually.” We were not sure *when* she would arrive, but we had complete faith that she always would. Even Patience’s name itself was a constant reminder of the more relaxed Ghanaian lifestyle and virtue that we definitely possessed more of as our summer went on.

Ghana never failed to surprise me in the best way, from its three-hour long church services that seemed more like dance parties than Masses to the horde of tiny kids that would chant “Obruni!” (“foreigner”) and join in on my early morning jog. One of the most fulfilling surprises was how much I was able to travel around and take in the gorgeous sights, sounds, and snapshots hidden within Ghana’s wide borders. Fortunately for us, Global Mamas highly encourages its volunteers to not only enjoy their internship work, but also to balance work with play by travelling around and immersing ourselves in culture every chance we have.

In Cape Coast we created our own batiked fabric designs with the help of a sweet Mama named Mary, attended drumming and dancing classes, visited the historic slave castles, and tried

just about every Ghanaian dish you could imagine. Quite a few tro-tro and bus rides later, we travelled to Tamale in the north for a walking safari at Mole National Park and a glimpse at how Global Mamas shea butter is made. We took surfing lessons and caught some rays at Busua Beach in the west. In the Volta region, we handfed bananas to monkeys at Tafi Atome Sanctuary, hiked up Ghana's highest peak, and swam in the cool waters of Wli Waterfall. My summer was filled with incredible firsts and remarkable experiences on which, without my internship with Global Mamas, I could never have dreamed of embarking. As a marketing intern, the best part of it all was being able to capture it all in the form of photos, videos, and captions that Global Mamas can utilize for their social media posts – and that Annie and I can use to reminisce on our amazing nine weeks in Ghana!