

“Well, someone will have to jump in the pit. I volunteer Sanyu,” said the chair of the teachers’ group, as the rest of the teachers and I struggled to remove a few of the wooden logs covering a ten foot by ten foot water harvesting pit. Sanyu was my Lugandan name, signifying my place within the Royal Clan of the Buganda Kingdom, but more importantly, my place in the community. Climbing into the water-harvesting pit with the teachers was a highlight of the three trainings I held with their group, “Together We Can,” and of my time in Busense, Masaka District, Uganda. As an intern with the Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD), I spent nine weeks in Masaka, Uganda working within a local NGO, St. Jude’s Family Projects. In this final report, I hope to share the methods of development I learned from FSD, the work I accomplished at St. Jude’s Family Projects, the hardships and the successes of the internships, and how FSD, the local organization, and I benefited.

The Foundation for Sustainable Development acts as a larger umbrella organization that places student interns within local NGOs and supports a project for each intern, which consists of a community assessment, a work plan, budget, and final presentation. My first week in Uganda included an orientation with FSD and integration into Uganda, Masaka, and my host family. Over the second and third weeks in Masaka, I began working for St. Jude’s and visited some of their women’s groups and schools. As part of their outreach, St. Jude’s holds agricultural trainings for women, teachers, schools, and youth in communities all over Uganda in an effort to equip locals with the skills to generate income in a mostly agrarian society. To begin my internship, FSD taught me how to conduct a community assessment and asset mapping exercise with the communities I visited.

In talking with the community leaders--in this case the teachers--I found that Uganda was experiencing the heat of the dry season and water availability was scarce for both domestic use and irrigation of crops. Without a harvest, the schools are unable to provide any meals for the children during the school day, and most children cannot afford to bring food from home. With the help of my supervisor, (the founder of St. Jude's), and the chair of the teachers' group, I devised a work plan and budget for three trainings for the "Together We Can" teachers group. As St. Jude's is focused on teaching organic, sustainable agriculture, we decided on three topics of environmental protection, water conservation, and water harvesting. The purpose of these trainings was to empower the teachers group with information and practical experience they could implement at their schools to improve water availability and food security.

Each training consisted of two parts: discussion and demonstration. I researched and compiled a PowerPoint for each training to spur discussion and idea sharing. I communicated clearly with the teachers that I was not an expert, but a facilitator for the training to both share best practices and learn from the teachers' experience. Each training had a demonstration on one of the topics discussed, based on practices employed by St. Jude's. For the water conservation training, I taught the teachers how to assemble and use a bucket drip irrigation system, which consisted of a bucket, tubes, and a connector. In the weeks following the trainings, I visited each school for a day and implemented a bucket drip irrigation system. The kits irrigate 100 plants, and thus I brought 100 cabbage seedlings to accompany the kits for each school. For the environmental protection training, we built a compost structure that produced both natural liquid and solid fertilizer, as opposed to harmful pesticides that damage the water and soil quality. Finally, for the water harvesting training, we prepared and placed poly-thin into the water-harvesting pit. As the pit that we were using for the demonstration was quite large, a tailor had to

connect the poly-thin I bought in the hardware area of Masaka town. To ensure that no water escaped, the teachers and I treated the seams with tough-bond glue and then placed it in the pit. I would collect the items needed for the specific demonstration throughout the week in preparation for the trainings on Sundays. Weekly, I would head to town to check in with my supervisors at FSD and print handouts that the teachers could take home with them. Overall, the researching for the trainings, hosting the trainings, and working on the demonstrations was a priceless learning experience not only about the topics of the trainings, but also about another culture and the benefits and challenges a new culture brings.

The entire internship was an invaluable learning experience that challenged how I see the world, how I approach difficulties, and how I approach development work. Living day to day in another culture for over two months challenges you to accept a new normal. I learned to appreciate differences in culture and communities that made me uncomfortable. It taught me to be okay with being uncomfortable and to grow from it.

This internship gave me the opportunity to experience someone else's reality and truly work in partnership with a community. I have benefited immensely from the relationship-building I did while in Masaka. I talked for hours with the staff of St. Jude's about their families, friends, and interests. I played with my neighbors almost every night and learned about the Ugandan educational system and the cultural interactions between mother and daughter. I began to see the world from a different perspective, from that of Busense, Masaka District, Uganda.

The internship also challenged me. I have a type A personality and prefer schedules, planners, and being on time. However, that was not the order of business at my NGO. But if this kind of work were timely, pretty, and easy, everyone would be doing it. No, development is not easy. It entails waiting around for two hours for teachers to arrive for training because their child

is sick and the doctor is in another village. A woman working in public health told me five weeks into my internship that in development that there is a plan A, then plan B and you just having to keep trying until you find a solution. This hands on experience with development, with trying plans A through Z, was the most meaningful part of my experience, and taught me a lesson in patience and persistence. The frustration is part of it—as is the dancing and singing after each training.

Despite some initial hardship adjusting to Ugandan culture, I successfully worked with both the Foundation for Sustainable Development and St. Jude's Family Projects in that I worked with a local organization, but still received support and guidance from a larger NGO. I benefited from the independence that FSD and St. Jude's gave me to explore the communities and design the project. The internship taught me to take initiative and brainstorm with the individuals involved to find possible solutions. I overcame and learned from every hardship. Overall, I organized and hosted three trainings with fourteen teachers from six schools and then implemented seven bucket-drip irrigation kits with 700 cabbage seedlings. St. Jude's Family Projects and I created a sustainability plan for the project with the goal of training St. Jude's seven remaining teachers' groups.

The Foundation for Sustainable Development benefited through my feedback and experience regarding the unique nature of my home and work situation. My host mother was also my boss and I did not live in the home with her, but in the dorms of St. Jude's agricultural college. Through meeting with the Masaka Program Director, and Keiko from the FSD San Francisco office, FSD has benefited from my input on the importance of increased monitoring during the internship to ensure that FSD's expectations are being met. In addition, my experience reinforced a need for separation from home and work within the internship. St. Jude benefited

from my experience with the expansion of the topics of their trainings—now including water conservation, environmental protection, and water harvesting. I also improved their methods of communication with their communities, supporters, and past interns.

Overall, the unique nature of an FSD internship proved a beneficial combination. My experience was invaluable and will continue to benefit and shape my future work in international development as well as my everyday life. Masaka, Uganda has a special place in my heart and will stay with me. Masaka taught me to jump in a water-harvesting pit if that is what it takes, and to smile because the water is great!

Webale Nyo Masaka [Thank You, Masaka],

Sanyu