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“Ubuntu”: a person is a person only through other people. Throughout my summer spent with WorldTeach South Africa, I learned exactly what it means to live a life of the African traditional religious term, “Ubuntu”. It is only through helping others and empathizing with others that we feel fully connected to the world. My internship with WorldTeach and the experiences I had because of WorldTeach showed me just how important “Ubuntu” is for a community and all its members.

Because South Africa is in the southern hemisphere, June through August is in the middle of the South African winter. At the beginning of June, when the WorldTeach volunteers arrive, the South African learners are just starting their winter break. The South African school system is year-round, so the learners have a two-week break during the winter before they start back up with a new quarter in late June. Due to South Africa’s school schedule, WorldTeach is split into halves: the first half is spent either tutoring with IkamvaYouth or creating a winter camp at the Pink House and the second half is spent teaching in a school in either Masiphumelele or Ocean View.

During the first half of the trip, I worked with IkamvaYouth at the Winter Camp. IkamvaYouth is a year-long program across South Africa that prepares students for life beyond high school. At the moment, IkamvaYouth is working towards its Vision 2030 where it wants to see all children in South Africa graduate from high school. Students participating in IkamvaYouth go to tutoring sessions every day after school in order to better understand the subjects taught in school. If students go to 80% of these afternoon tutoring sessions, they receive

scholarships and other educational benefits. Along with the tutoring lessons during the school year, learners are also expected to participate in 80% of the IkamvaYouth holiday programs.

Four other WorldTeach volunteers and I worked with the Masiphumelele IkamvaYouth Winter Program. Although the learners were on break from school, the Winter Program made sure that they did not get a break from challenging schoolwork. Our daily schedule was split into two parts: tutoring in the morning and experiential learning workshops in the afternoon. There were two morning tutoring sessions, each an hour and a half long, which focused on a range of subjects from math to English. During these sessions, the learners would complete a section of a South African standardized test (all in English) and we would help them with questions they had or concepts they did not understand.

In order to understand how difficult life in Masiphumelele can be for learners, it is vital to have a good understanding of the history of South Africa. During apartheid, the government mandated thousands of forced removals. They forced coloured and black people out of towns and into townships. These townships were poorly made and lacked many basic resources. At the same time, these racial groups were denied many basic human rights and access to higher education. As a result, the black and coloured townships had high rates of poverty, unemployment, and poor health. Although apartheid is over, people in the historically black and coloured townships still lack basic resources, access to education, suffer high rates of unemployment, and have high rates of HIV/AIDS. Thirty-four percent of the population in Masiphumelele, the township I worked in, is HIV positive. Despite a few campaigns about safe sex made by the South African government, the lack of proper sexual education in the schools in Masi is a serious hindrance to lowering the HIV/AIDS rate.

The combination of poor quality of education and various social problems sometimes made it difficult to tutor at Ikamva. Although most of the Ikamva learners wanted to do well in school, some of them did not know the basic math and English skills they need to know in order to succeed. For example, I struggled to teach a ninth grader how to solve for “x” because he did not fully grasp the concept of multiplying fractions. In the English tutoring sessions I had to go over basic subject-verb agreement numerous times before the learners could start writing an essay. However, the joy of helping a learner understand a new concept or figure out a problem far outweighed the occasional difficulties of tutoring. I cannot even begin to explain how excited I was when a learner I had been working with for days finally figured out how to solve for “x” on his own!

The second half of the WorldTeach program is normally spent teaching. However, Peter, the site supervisor, knew I wanted to be a social worker, so he arranged for me to work with the Family and Community Motivators (FCMs) in Masiphumelele. The Family and Community Motivators are a fantastic community group that runs out of one of the local preschools. It started in 1999 with the hope of increasing awareness about early childhood education in the poorest families in Masi. Women from the community decided to target extremely poor families in Masi with children through age six in order to teach the parents about creating a better life for their children starting at a young age. In order to do so, the FCMs decided to visit each family about once a month and check on the child and family’s well-being.

Since then, the FCMs have grown in size and ideology. They recently partnered with an American NGO that focuses on spreading awareness about public health concerns. Now, the FCMs split each home visit between educating parents about early childhood education as well as talking about topics such as HIV/AIDS, the importance of immunizations, and child safety.

Two FCMs go to each home visit in order to maximize the short time of two hours. While one FCM talked to the parents about the daily topic, the other FCM and myself would bring puzzles and games to play with the children. During the games and puzzles, the FCMs usually speak in English in order to expose the children to the language of their national tests at a young age. After each visit, the FCMs and I would discuss the children's developmental levels as well as any social issues the parents were dealing with at the moment.

Every Thursday morning all of the FCMs would sit around a table and discuss the different issues their families had been dealing with during the week. These weekly meetings were extremely emotional for the FCMs and me because these families were dealing with so many problems on top of the fact that they were living in the wetlands. For example, every single family said that they were struggling to stay healthy because their houses get damp every time it rains. Children and adults alike said that they were catching a cold, dealing with the flu, or even struggling to cope with TB because of the poor conditions of their houses every time it rains. Additionally, many families were struggling with alcoholism, domestic abuse, and sometimes even rape.

After one of the Thursday morning discussions, I thought long and hard about the conditions in the wetlands, particularly the damp houses after the rain, and my time spent with the FCMs. One of the FCMs mentioned to me that many of the children in the wetlands run around barefoot because they do not have proper footwear to deal with the rain and puddles that fill the wetlands year round. This simple statement sparked a light in me: I was going to start a fundraiser for rain boots. I started a gofundme page to raise awareness about the Masi wetlands and to raise money to buy some of the children we were working with boots.

After an overwhelming outpouring of support and donations from friends and family, I had raised over \$1,000 in three days! Therefore, I bought out every single store in the surrounding Cape Town area of their rain boots for children through age six. In total, I bought 227 pairs of rain boots, one for each child we were working with, as well as new notebooks and pens for the FCMs to take field notes. On my last day working with the FCMs, I surprised them with an entire truckload of rain boots and new toys for the children. They were so joyous when we dropped off all of the boots! Although I was exhausted after the day of handing out rain boots, I have never felt so satisfied. It was incredible seeing the children in Masiphumelele wearing the rain boots I gave out, and I know they will get so much use. I am so glad I was able to give back to the place and program that gave me so much over the course of the summer.

Both the first and second halves of the program were extremely challenging and incredibly rewarding. There were days when I came back home absolutely exhausted and downtrodden, but there were so many more days when I came home feeling exhilarated and excited about my WorldTeach internship. The hard days helped me reflect on the difficult issues I encountered on a daily basis and the rewarding days made the difficult days completely worth it. I learned so much about the history, education system, and people of South Africa during my internship that I hope to return in the near future to conduct research and write my thesis. My internship with WorldTeach South Africa was a beautifully challenging experience, and I have a better perspective and future aspirations because of it.