

This summer I was given an amazing opportunity to volunteer in Tanzania with the Christian charity Tearfund. My team was made of 3 other girls of a similar age to me, none of us knew each other before this trip but thankfully we all got on really well! Initially, it was quite a large culture shock and it took me a few days to get over this. However, everybody in Tanzania was so welcoming towards us, so it didn't take long until we felt at home here.

One part of our volunteering was to see the projects Tearfund was working on within local villages. The projects were based around supporting Self- Help Groups in the local community to help them lift themselves out of Poverty. I didn't know much about the Self-help groups before and it was interesting to learn more about how they worked. Through these projects, people can trade the basic commodities of life and the profits reinvested into the local community. We saw only a few projects, but the types of projects were so diverse ranging from irrigation gardens to beekeeping, mat making, solar panels, and salt making. Speaking to the local people they revealed to me how these projects made them feel of



value and the ability to contribute to the community. I found all the Tearfund projects that we visited inspiring but especially the project where villagers were having solar panels installed on their houses. This family had never had electricity in their house before, which made certain everyday tasks difficult e.g. cooking. The family would cook in the dark by the small light of a torch. The family saved up enough money to buy a solar panel for their house from the self-help group. The cost to them of the solar panel was large, however, to us this cost seemed relatively small- equivalent to around £10. It was so inspiring to see the difference that one solar panel could make to the everyday life of this family, with relatively little cost to us.



Mainly we were volunteering in the Nursery and Secondary School nearby. The secondary school pupils have very long hours from 4 in the morning until 10 at night! Every day we would organise after school games once their lessons had finished at 4.30 to give the pupils some well-deserved relief from school! It was a great way of meeting all the pupils at the school and getting to know them a little better. The secondary school pupils were not that far in age from us, it was great to be able to talk and spend time with them and find out about their experiences and views on certain issues.

In the morning we would volunteer in the Nursery teaching children between the ages of 3-4. Mostly, we would teach English and Maths to the children, helping to support the teachers at the Nursery. It was sometimes quite a challenge to teach them for long periods as they didn't have a very long concentration span! For this reason, we opted to teach the children through various well-known songs e.g. Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, or learn through games.



Every Saturday we would hold a bible study for the pupils at the school, discussing certain topics together and on one occasion we took the service on Sunday for the pupils. Both experiences were new to me, and initially, I found this a very daunting prospect but, with the help of my team, I enjoyed being able to convey our thoughts and reflections to the pupils. The services that the pupils have at the school are very different from the services we might expect back in the UK. We were very keen to show the pupils an alternative way of worshipping.

It has made a big difference to me, that this has been a volunteering placement in the company of other young Christians. It was great to be able to talk about things we had seen, discuss our views on certain topics as well as the daily devotionals. Some of the people we met whilst on the projects, spoke different languages, were from different cultures, had different upbringings and yet the thing that unites us is our Christian faith.

This has been such an amazing experience, I have loved every minute of it. I think it has been a blessing to be able to experience another culture- it certainly gives you a different perspective on life and allows reflection on how privileged our lives are at home. I thank you for your support in allowing me to have this opportunity.



How will you live differently

This experience has made me a lot more grateful for all the things I have and take for granted. I hope to tell others about this experience so that they also may glimpse the way people live out in Tanzania and the ways we could help. Seeing those less fortunate than ourselves makes me want to help and support them in whatever way I can both locally and overseas. Readjusting back to the culture here makes us aware of the western trappings that we have e.g. sometimes too materialistic, focussed on money, etc. I will try to be aware of that in the future. I would also like to become less wasteful with water. I saw how some villagers would walk to get their water from the well. This makes me aware of the amount of water that we use and I am sure we would all be a lot more careful with our water usage if we had to collect water ourselves. I am so thankful for having clean, running water whenever I need it.