

## Uganda Trip

My trip to Uganda was the first time I'd been in Africa, so I didn't really know what to expect, but it was like nothing I'd ever seen before.

We arrived in Kampala after a long flight and stopover in Dubai, and were immediately presented with the bustle that was the largest city by far in Uganda. We had dinner at the local pork joint and the next day was spent white water rafting down the Nile. Watching the gorgeous African sun set on the Nile- it was the stuff Africa was in movies, but we were really itching to meet some Africans.

The next weeks were spent in Kagando, helping out in the rural and development centre that had grown out of what was originally a leprosy ward. Jobs included the rather dull data entry, play therapy with kids in the pediatric ward, teaching in two different schools to classes with up to 120 children, work with children infected or affected by Aids, help locating material and building a well, and visits to schools, the prison, the orphanage and microfinance programmes.

Work was challenging at times. Teaching was especially difficult because the school was nothing like what I was used to in Hong Kong or England. The teachers found it difficult to cope with such large classes and lack of teaching material. There was one textbook for the entire class, and often students were lacking in paper or pens. The teachers often left us for the morning with little warning. However, the students finally warmed to me after a few weeks, and we received very sweet letters from many of them, asking for our friendship. There was also much laughter in the classroom, and it was also interesting learning about the students' dreams for the future, and hearing their questions about the West, including 'Why do women have long hair' and hearing their shocked exclamations at the thought of women wearing shorts!

Also, at times working with children was heartbreaking, especially with the kids with AIDs, or the ones in the orphanage who had absolutely nothing and thus were entranced by my glasses. They were adorable, and yet longed for simple hugs and attention that they did not receive enough of.

What impressed me the most was the genuine hope that people had. The two ladies that took care of us were saving up to studying nursing, and it would take them about 10 years to raise enough money, yet they were very cheerful and said they loved their job. The entire centre was developing quickly, and there was talk of building an university soon. They wanted to build a covered walkway between wards, and because hiring an outside company was expensive, they decided to do it themselves. However, they didn't have any equipment, and used a pickaxe to dig at the concrete. They emailed us photos a few weeks later of their beautiful walkway!

When we left, as a team we sat down together and created a fund for different projects around the centre. We're also still discussing at the moment with 2 of the Dutch interns who were there at the same time about starting a fund for the nursing school. As one of the girls said, we all had Africa in our souls at that moment!

We were just visitors for 5 weeks in their gracious company, and yet they were truly thankful that we had gone to visit! One of their favorite phrases is 'You are welcome' and wasinga kitsabo, or thank you very much.



Africa



Braiding



Carrying things in African style



Kids



Teachers