

I Will Never Complain Again

By Sarah Lopeman

Sarah Lopeman was presented with a cheque for £500 from the Bursary Fund by Davyhulme Circle in Province 1. She undertook a two month project in Uganda and the following is an extract from her talk to the Circle on her return to the UK before continuing her second year of studies at Oxford University.

This summer I went to Uganda for two months and it was an incredible experience. I was living in a village with five other volunteers and as we were living amongst the community we were immediately thrown into the Ugandan way of life – their ways of sleeping, eating and their primitive sanitation and toilet arrangements.

Whilst there we were focusing on four different aspects of our project. The first was building a water tank near the school, so that the children would have access to water without having to miss school to go and collect it. The water tank collects and harvests rain water from the school roof, so that the children can use it to wash their hands and to drink if they purify it.

The second aspect was protecting a water source. Initially the water source was unclean as it came from a dirty pipe sticking out of overgrown grass. However, with the help of an engineer we transformed it so that it emitted clean water that was safe to drink. We cut down the overgrown grass, and used cement to make steps and a clear drainage channel for the water to flow away.



Creating the new water supply



Sarah with school children

Thirdly, we built lots of fuel efficient stoves for the community, which are easy to use and better for the environment. We taught the community how to make these stoves which were made from local materials and set up a committee to continue building them.

The first time I entered one of the huts to build a stove I was immediately overwhelmed by the smokiness already in the hut. The new stoves eliminated much of this problem.

Finally, we also taught basic sanitation such as hand washing and basic hygiene to the children in the local school.

I found the trip an amazing experience but also very challenging having to adapt to a completely different lifestyle for two months. The Ugandan people themselves made everything a bit easier as they were all just so friendly and welcoming. They made it clear they wanted us there and were constantly looking out for us as a group, which made us feel very safe.

Having gone out there and experienced first hand the poverty in which these people live reaffirmed to me why I was doing what I was doing.

The worst experience and one which really brought home to me why these people need our help was when we experienced a day where the only water was yellow and had bits in it. We did not feel able to drink it and

we were very concerned that the Ugandans were drinking it, especially as this was the main reason for their low life expectancy.

It also made me realise how lucky I am with my life in England, and so many little things that I previously took for granted such as a bed, as I slept on a thin piece of foam, a comfy seat as all their chairs were wooden and had no cushioning or upholstery, running water as at first we had to walk for 30 minutes to fetch water every day and a clean toilet instead of latrines which were riddled with cockroaches and insects I had never seen before.



Completed water tank