

## Climbing Kilimanjaro for Childreach International, Summer 2017

### Report: Emma Norris

Having always been lucky enough to have a fantastic education, I've always been passionate about wanting to help others have a similar experience. I believe it is a human right and is vital to allowing children reach their potential. As such, I was delighted to participate in the sponsored climb of Mount Kilimanjaro to raise money for Childreach International.

Childreach improve schools in Tanzania and encourage sustainable use of food for hot meals and water for hygiene. The most impressive addition to one of their schools was a 100% increase to the number of classrooms such that lessons would no longer need to be taught outside in the heat of the day. Existing classrooms had also been fitted with windows and better roofs that allowed teaching in all weather conditions. For me as a scientist, I was delighted to see that large water reservoirs had been installed to provide clean water for the children to wash their hands. Water borne diseases are rife in Africa, and encouraging children to get into the habit of washing hands at school would hopefully be transferred into their lives as parents and beyond. Childreach's involvement had a wonderful effect on this school; since they started work the school rose from a 151<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> in the area's rankings.

As well as seeing the tangible changes to the school, we also had the opportunity to speak to the children. It was tough to hear their experiences, but overall, it sounded as though things at the school were improving really quickly. Whilst my fundraising endeavour was only a small part of this, I was so glad I was in some way helping these children.

The trek itself was a real personal challenge: 3 pairs of socks per night. 9 litres of water a day. Lots of suncream. It was fantastic being with the group of 20 Cambridge Students – supporting each other, telling stories, sharing experiences – that is, until altitude sickness hit! The 3 days of illness and walking was one of the toughest mental challenges I have ever done. It was all about staying calm and taking each step at a time, skills I will subsequently aim to use in my coming years at Cambridge. The experience also taught me the importance of pushing oneself past my comfort zone – and to have confidence that I can do it.