

Hannah Short – Tanzania, Summer 2018

This summer I had the absolute pleasure of travelling to Tanzania with the Cambridge Development Initiative (CDI), as Deputy Director, to implement, design and evaluate four sustainable development projects. CDI is a student-led organisation that partners with Kite Dar es Salaam (Kite) in Tanzania, aiming to make a lasting impact to local communities through empowering students to fulfil their potential as leaders and catalyst for change. CDI is unique in the development world as it trusts students to not only participate in, but actively lead and shape projects in consultation with local communities. We draw upon the strengths that students offer, the creativity, passion and diversity, and push them to be their best. We give them an opportunity far beyond an office desk to really make an impact, push themselves and grow as individuals. I initially took the role of Deputy Director of CDI because I had a desire to not only make a difference to people's lives, but to gain practical experience in international development and really challenge myself as an individual. All three of these were achieved over the 8 weeks I spent in Dar es Salaam, but perhaps none more than the latter; I don't think I've ever learnt so much in two months before.

As one of the deputies for CDI, I worked closely with my counterpart on the Tanzanian side and the rest of the executive committee. I was able to gain an insight into all four projects, work closely on strategy, make financial decisions and engage with a number of different stakeholders. I also was responsible for a lot of trouble-shooting, the welfare of all the UK volunteers and the personal development of some committee members.

In particular I oversaw the Health and Entrepreneurship projects (although I also later on became more involved with the WaSH project due to their workload), working closely with the project directors on decisions that needed to be made centrally. The Health Project ran three streams, workshops on non-communicable diseases, a media campaign on non-communicable diseases and research into emotional wellbeing of adolescents. Some of the big (and exciting) decisions made included central reallocation of funds to cover TV-production and a partnership with a large research group, Aga Khan, into an underexplored area of mental health in adolescents in Tanzania. The Entrepreneurship Project ran a pilot seminar series called IntoBusiness that targeted a diverse range of individuals interested in running their own business; they taught skills ranging from CV writing to economics to business ideation. In addition, the entrepreneurship team also explored the potential for new programmes in future years. I helped coordinate with a development consultancy to receive professional input into these ideas. Although attendance was low to begin with, it was really exciting to see how changes in strategy and publicity led to seminars with over 70 attendees, a large proportion of whom were women. This year, the WaSH project focused on following up incomplete areas of and expanding their simplified sewerage network, prioritised community engagement in Vingunguti, decommissioned a flexigester and tackled the large decisions of whether to buy a biodigester through the development of a business plan. Weighing in on the latter decision was a highlight of mine this summer, allowing tricky financial but also project cycle questions to be discussed in collaboration with Kite, the WaSH team and the UK Committee.

It was a fantastic experience and I'm incredibly grateful to Pembroke College for their support of this wonderful student-led initiative.

