

# The Common Grounds Program: An International Experience Kimini, Kenya

Master of Public Health Field Placement  
The Medical College of Wisconsin  
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# Topics Discussed



- ◆ Why International?
- ◆ Choosing a Program
- ◆ Village Volunteers Organization
- ◆ Common Grounds Program
- ◆ Purpose/Project
- ◆ Application
- ◆ Public Health Significance
- ◆ Personal Reflection

# Why International?

- ◆ See health issues first hand
- ◆ Cultural influence on health
- ◆ Put yourself in the life of a local
- ◆ View health concerns not found in US
- ◆ Use your knowledge to provide a basic service



# Process of Choosing a Program

- ◆ There are multiple volunteer agencies that provide international experiences.
- ◆ How to Choose: Aspects to consider
  - **Cost:** Prices for programs vary. Pick a program where you know the funds are going back into the community
  - **Flexibility:** Let the program know what your expectations are (goals, time frame, etc) and make sure they are willing to accommodate to you within reason.
  - **Location:** Pick a location you feel comfortable traveling to. Do your research and understand the risks.
  - **Support:** MPH Program, International Program, Family, and Friend support will help make this a rewarding experience.

# My Program: Village Volunteers

- ◆ Based out of Seattle, WA
- ◆ Partner with rural non-governmental organizations
- ◆ Founded by Shana Greene in 2006
- ◆ [www.villagevolunteers.org](http://www.villagevolunteers.org)



# Village Volunteer Programs

- ◆ Village programs:
  - Belize, Ghana, Kenya, India, and Nepal
  - Time commitment: 2 to 12 weeks
- ◆ Areas of Interest:
  - Public health awareness, women empowerment, education, nutrition, clean water projects, Biointensive farming, environmental conservation, micro-credit, and many more...

# My Experience

## Common Grounds Program

- ◆ Director: Joshua Machinga
- ◆ Pathfinder Academy
  - Center of Program
  - 400 students enrolled
  - Private boarding school for grades 1-8
  - Most students are orphaned or considered vulnerable



# My Experience:

- ◆ Location: Common Grounds Program in Kimini, Kenya (NW Kenya)
- ◆ When: January 11<sup>th</sup>-January 25<sup>th</sup>
- ◆ Project: Collect baseline knowledge of HIV/AIDS of Pathfinder Academy students to create curriculum for volunteers and teachers to utilize in the future



# Common Grounds Program

## ◆ Life as a Volunteer

- Accommodations: Basic cement huts, western style bedding with mosquito nets, and basic flush toilets/showers
- Meals: fruit, beans, rice, potatoes, chicken, "meat" (aka beef)
- Beverages: bottled water, tea, coffee, fruit juice, Chai (milk, tea, and spice), and coca-cola



[http://villagevolunteers.org/common\\_ground/volunteer\\_accommodationS.php](http://villagevolunteers.org/common_ground/volunteer_accommodationS.php)

# Common Grounds Program

## ◆ Activities:

- Teach a topic to the students
- Work in the bio-intensive garden
- Help in the ceramic water filter factory
- Visit/volunteer at Sister Frieda's Clinic
- Work at the women's co-op store
- Help with conservation
- Construction and facility maintenance

# Implementation of Project

- ◆ HIV/AIDS Curriculum created will be added to the Village Volunteer's Sustainable Library
- ◆ Future volunteers can access this information to use during their visit
- ◆ Link to Sustainable Library:  
[http://villagevolunteers.org/trips/projects\\_library.php](http://villagevolunteers.org/trips/projects_library.php)

# Public Health Significance

- ◆ Potential to reduce future HIV/AIDS cases
- ◆ Reduce perceived myths in community about HIV/AIDS
- ◆ Reduce risky behavior in youth/young adults through education
- ◆ Educating youth will carry through into their adulthood and pass on to their family members



# Personal Experience

- ◆ Educated youth on HIV/AIDS
- ◆ Learned about Kenya culture/daily life
- ◆ Volunteered in Ceramic Water Filter Factory
- ◆ Visited Sister Frieda's Clinic
- ◆ Q & A session at women's group on public health concerns (translated)
- ◆ Visited Maasai Welfare Project
- ◆ Safari in Maasai Mara Reserve



Haba na haba hujaza kibaba

Swahili meaning:

“A journey of a thousand miles begins  
with a single step”

~ Village Volunteers ~

