

ON TANZANIA TIME

Celebrating 10 Years of Friendship, Engagement and Discovery in the Mara Region



Photo by Doug Levere

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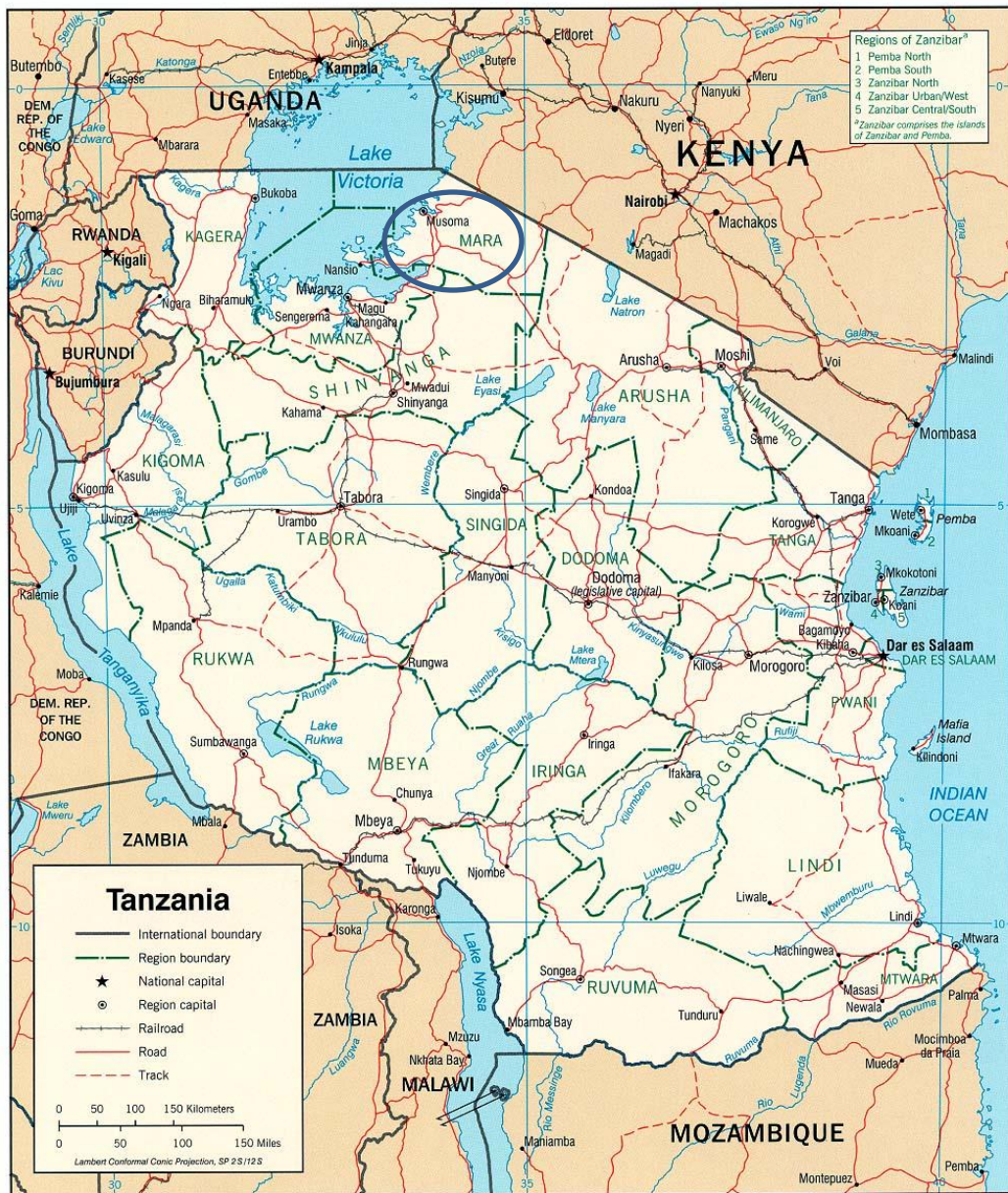
with

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and

Collaborators and Friends
Buffalo and Tanzania

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GRATITUDE



We dedicate this book to our friends and partners throughout Tanzania. You continue to enrich our lives while demonstrating all that is possible when we work together toward goals and visions that are bigger than our own. Readers should note that all proceeds from the sale of this book will support collaborative programming in the Mara Region of Tanzania. Visit <https://marabhuber.com/> for project updates, photos and additional opportunities to get involved. Asante Sana!

INTRODUCTION



As the world grows progressively smaller, no region is too remote to touch or be touched. And as interest in international travel continues to grow, so do the range and scope of experiences that travelers are seeking. Colleges and universities are complementing traditional offerings with innovative trips and courses that feature service, internships, and other forms of high-impact learning, promising adventure while at the same time supporting students' academic and professional goals. Meanwhile, tour companies are customizing once-in-a-lifetime itineraries that allow travelers to get close, make humanitarian contributions and personalize their experiences and impacts.

Regardless of the format, the appeal of these experiences is undeniable. Beyond complementing programs of specialization and study, they can support the development of cultural competencies, skills and knowledge that can be applied across professions, age groups, and backgrounds. But in their most powerful manifestations, international trips can offer benefits that far exceed our traditional notions of experiences. By transporting travelers to regions and cultures that are dramatically different from their own, and challenging them to connect with people and ideas in close and personal ways, we can set ourselves and one another on exciting paths of discovery and impact.

This notion of impact, both individual and collective, is a concept that is growing in interest. The idea that we all have a unique role to play in the world, and important

contributions to make within our respective spheres of influence, is resonating with people of all ages and backgrounds.

Since 2009, we have been testing this idea by cultivating relationships with partners and places in Tanzania- specifically, the Mara Region, on the shores of Lake Victoria. In 2019 we will be celebrating our 10 year anniversary- 10 years of friendship, engagement and discovery. To honor this milestone and all that has been achieved and learned, we will be hosting a community trip in July 2019 along with the release of this book, adapted from an initial version in 2015. We hope you will enjoy the stories, insights and reflections, and consider joining us on our journey to discover all that is possible *on Tanzania Time*.

PART 1: A COMPELLING VISION (2007 – 2009)

*“Where there is no vision the people perish.”
Prov. 29:18.*

What's in a Name?

(Mara)



I guess it all started with my name. Mara means many things. As a child I first learned of its Hebrew meaning, bitter. My mother claims that the local rabbi had tried to persuade her to choose a better name, something more befitting the promise of a Jewish baby. But my mother had been adamant and Mara I was. Over the years I have occasionally searched for other more nuanced meanings, hoping for something slightly more positive or inspiring. But somehow I always got stuck with the Biblical translation; that is, until I met the Sisters.

The moment I introduced myself things got weird. Hi, I'm Mara, I said. They looked at me with interest, asking me to spell my name- M-A-R-A. Tell them about your new job, my mother-in-law had prodded, and I overflowed with enthusiasm, describing my new position at the University at Buffalo, brokering partnerships with area schools, working to support the promise of education. Time stopped and the air grew fuzzy. Why were they staring at me? I could feel the weight of the coincidence before it was revealed. They were from the Mara Region of Tanzania, spelled and pronounced exactly the same way, and were seeking partners to help them build a school for girls.

Honestly, what were the odds? It was Christmas Day and the Sisters had been invited as last minute guests for dinner. They had been studying at nearby D'Youville College while working on plans for a school campus that in its full realization would serve 1,500

girls from surrounding villages. After the shock of coincidence subsided, they explained that in rural Tanzania where over 80% of the population lives, girls are traded into marriage at an early age, left to endure lives of suffering and hardship with little chance of upward mobility. There, like in our own country, education is the only clear pathway to prosperity. But because there is not enough money, girls are forced to marry as families look to their sons to invest their precious resources and hopes for the future. By the end of their visit the Sisters had asked for my help, or at least that's what I remember. As a mother of four young children, three of them girls, how could I say no, and how could I ignore the significance of the name?

The BTEP Model

(Mara)



As a comprehensive research university with a vast network of faculty, staff, students, alumni and partners, the University at Buffalo is well equipped to offer meaningful engagement. This compelling truth served as the foundation for BTEP- the Buffalo Tanzania Education Project- an informal initiative that served as the first phase of our engagement with the Mara Region. By bringing individuals and their respective engagement resources together toward a shared vision- namely, increasing opportunities for girls and women in Kitenga and the surrounding Mara Region- our impacts, both individual and collective, could be amplified.

Unlike traditional engagement models, BTEP would welcome all interested participants including students, faculty, staff and community members. Understanding the value of getting close, we designed the model to elevate the importance of trust, respect and mutual understanding as a core foundation and catalyst for growth. Accordingly, we would facilitate frequent trips, beginning with an initial visit in summer 2009 to lay the foundation for the model and establish interest among key UB departments and leaders. By formalizing four key areas of focus: education, health, economics and infrastructure, we hoped to cultivate synergistic initiatives that would offer community impacts while also supporting University goals and priorities.

Although simple in design, BTEP represented a bold departure from traditional engagement approaches that focused on clearly defined projects and outcomes. Instead, we created a model that was inherently generative, expanding the space for engagement while ensuring continued alignment with foundational goals and vision. In this way, BTEP would function like a prism, focusing and amplifying individual beams of engagement toward a more vibrant and holistic effect.

While the design of BTEP was compelling, in the beginning it was only an idea. To bring it to life, we needed individuals with relevant resources and a commitment to activating our model's potential.

A Purity of Response

(Mara)



I remember the apprehension I felt as I first shared the idea with the (past) UB President, who happened to be my direct supervisor. As I articulated the possibility of traveling to a remote region of Tanzania in search of engagement opportunities, I rambled on about the promise of study abroad, applied research, and other forms of pedagogical innovation. I asserted that BTEP represented an exciting opportunity to test our collaboration model within an international context, that it all made perfect sense in relation to our priorities and goals. And while I stammered on, I braced myself for the cease and desist order that was sure to come, expecting cautionary words about mission drift or the inappropriateness of a public research university engaging with Catholic nuns in rural Africa. But the President's response caught me completely by surprise. He said, Mara, this is exactly the kind of thing we should be doing. You have my full support as long as you can get interest from the deans and faculty.

And then I locked myself in my car and cried. I was neither sad nor elated. I was simply overwhelmed by the purity of his response.

PART 2: FROM MARA TO MARA (2009)

*“It is because Humanity has never known where it was going that it has been able to find
its way.”*
Oscar Wilde

Profoundly Unprepared

(Mara)



I was dropped off at the airport by taxi, not wanting to disturb my family in the wee hours of the morning. We had delivered our oldest children (then 8 and 7) for a week of summer camp the day before, had scheduled a full calendar of baby sitters and play dates for the youngest (4 and 2). I'd prepared a freezer full of meals with detailed heating instructions and had laundered and organized every article of clothing in the house. I had even tucked surprise gifts in the children's camping bags and beds (stuffed African animals no less), a love note for my husband and a message for my children in case my plane never returned and they were left to be raised without me. And miraculously, I somehow found time to pack the necessary gear and gifts for our 12 day adventure.

And so when I found myself standing in line at the Buffalo Airport at four am with our assorted group en route to rural Tanzania, the whole thing felt strangely surreal. Each time we boarded a flight, all three of them, I tried to reflect on the journey ahead but instead succumbed completely to the selfish pleasures of solitary travel. There I was with over 20 hours ahead of me alone with no children, no chores or household duties. My travel companions were nowhere in sight. I had a new book that I had carefully selected, a TV screen on the seat in front of me, and a fuzzy pillow and blanket set that I had bought especially for the trip. It was a fantasy come true and I remember thinking that even if the trip ended with one of those plane rides, it would have been a glowing success in my eyes.

But we eventually landed in Dar es Salaam. And as I deplaned feeling well rested and relaxed, I knew that I was completely unprepared for what lay ahead. In retrospect, the magnitude of my lack of preparedness was extraordinary. I had never been a scholar of African history or culture, and despite my best intentions had found little time to work through the Swahili Rosetta Stone DVD, study the guidebook, or ponder my goals for the trip. My efforts had focused almost entirely on getting my house and family in order, getting to the airport, and getting to Tanzania. But on the flip side, one could reframe my unpreparedness as a complete openness to the experiences ahead.

I chose to see this as a good omen. The Sisters had invited us to come, to learn about their plans for the school in Kitenga and to embrace the beauty and hospitality of their country. They had promised that once I visited Mara, my namesake, our partnership would evolve and their vision for the women and girls would be realized. For me this was enough, but I was not alone. With me came six important people who had all found the time and resources to join me on my journey.

So much to gain, so much at stake, I thought to myself, feeling the weight of my luggage and my own uncertainty. I searched for my colleagues in the sea of tired faces and together we moved toward Customs to declare our intentions.

The Weight of Hope

(Mara)



We were enveloped. It was pitch black. We were numb from hours of bumpy roads and endless landscape. Our bodies were cramped and achy, squeezed together for mile after mile against jutting metal and limbs.

Too long, too much, not enough.

We finally began to doze, slipping into the unconscious when gates suddenly parted and we screeched to a halt. Doors flung open and we were ushered from the Land Rover into the dark unknown. Music was everywhere.

My eyes tried to adjust as I was assaulted by bodies pulling me towards them, clutching and hugging while collective voices trilled and sang, loud and passionate against drums and darkness.

My senses were overstimulated, completely frozen, trying unsuccessfully to either process or shut down.

I started to cry, but not deliberately or with reason. My eyes simply released. This was our welcome and I felt its heaviness: expectations, hope, and investment. Or perhaps I was only projecting into the blackness of the night

One at a Time

(Mara)



They ushered us inside. The contrast was startling. Outside was black and jarring but inside was warm and familiar. The hall was bright and cozy with tables covered with cloths all set for dinner. We were led to wash our hands and find our places. In the middle of each table lay an assortment of beverages including bottles of wine and beer. Why was I so surprised by this, and why did it bring me such a sense of warmth and reassurance?

There were singing, happy, joyous voices. There was delicious home cooked food- chicken and cabbage and potatoes. There were messages of welcome and thanks. And there was more wine and beer. Although I had never been a fan of beer, my first bottle tasted like heaven. It was a Tusker and the big elephant on the label made me feel like I was really in Africa, here with the Sisters sharing a meal and their hospitality.

Sister Rita, the Mother Superior at that time, was at my table and her huge smile reassured me that we were right to have come. She put her hand over mine and squeezed it hard, How about another drink Mara? I said no thank you, that one was my limit.

Sister Rita looked at me with a big smile and replied, Yes Mara, only one. One at a time.

Maybe Tomorrow

(Mara)



Driving into Butiama was like entering another world. The air around the shade trees appeared somehow cooler and softer. The landscaping was carefully placed and tended.

The homes were strangely familiar- rounded, dome-like structures of cobbled stones, seemingly ancient yet lovingly preserved. The town felt quiet and reflective as we walked toward the museum, eager to learn more about Nyerere and the history of Tanzania.

After parking the Land Rover we started for the museum, walking up a short flight of stairs toward the smiling face of Nyerere, the father of the nation. We were ushered into a waiting room and sat quietly for a seemingly long period of time. A small square TV set sat on a cart with an interview of Nyerere playing on loop in Swahili with no subtitles. There was a hushed reverent silence. Then a gentleman came in to collect the ticket price which seemed to be unclear, with negotiations ensuing like a deal being struck. A heavy guest book was passed around and we were instructed to sign before entering.

We were taken on a tour of the small structure filled with artifacts. Usually museums don't do much for me, I'm too impatient to take my time and possess too little knowledge to take it all in. Although I shot off quickly, I could feel this man and the reverence for him, all his gifts, so meaningful, reflecting the people who gave them to him, with their hopes and dreams still attached. Right there, not behind glass, it all seemed so recent and

new- the stools and animal hides, symbols of relationships and accomplishments, the newness of the history and the vision of its father.

Imagine our surprise when we were introduced to his own son, Nyerere's actual progeny. He sat with us and made idle conversation about the growth of the region, the struggles and potential, as if we were equals, or even cherished guests. So comfortable, he showed us around, pointing out details and sharing stories, eventually taking us inside his family home. He mostly spoke of his father's humility, how he hated the big pretentious house and would often escape to be among the people. He spoke about the sense of responsibility that he had felt for his country. He spoke about the struggles of the people and the land.

We walked around the grounds and admired the natural beauty that was everywhere. Huge boulders so grand and majestic were allowed to be exactly where they were with structures built around them. Big whicker holding containers sat ready for grain. And a cement pergola awaited leisurely games and conversations. What a gift, this intimate glimpse into the birth of the country, a man, a humble leader who yearned to be with his people. Could it get any better?

The experience culminated with a visit into Nyerere's personal library. The door to the library was beautiful, grand and ornately adorned, but was no comparison to what lay inside. Before us was an extensive collection of books, rows and rows in a country where books were still scarce. We all dispersed and browsed, skimming titles and appreciating

the diversity of genres and languages. But then many of us began to touch the books, his books. We flipped through pages and read the words written in the margins, his notes, his writing, his thoughts about the content and thinkers of his time.

It was truly remarkable and we all pondered its specialness as we paused to appreciate the vista before heading back to Musoma. Rolling green hills lay for miles before us, and a gentle breeze further softened our view. This was the same view that Nyerere once reflected upon and I was moved by the strength of his presence. When I sensed Sister Rita standing next to me, I asked her if there were other leaders like Nyerere out there, leaders who were so humble and committed to their people. Without looking at me Sister Rita answered quietly, “Not today Mara, but maybe tomorrow.”

Beautiful People

(Mara)



As we drove through the dusty roads leading to and from Kitenga, the lush surroundings of Lake Victoria and the impossible rock formations around Musoma, I tried desperately to take it all in. Beauty was everywhere, from splashes of color on flowers and cloths to free-hand murals painted on the sides of businesses, there was so much to see and absorb. The beauty of the people, especially the children and the smiles and sounds of hospitality made us feel so welcomed and cherished.

There were the mute children who sang to us in sign language and gave us each nicknames based on our unique facial characteristics, not all flattering. There were the disabled children who lined up to receive our gifts of suckers and stick pens, crowding around us to hug and touch, so happy that we had come.

At Kowak School for Girls they performed a dance and sang for us, beautiful in their maroon and navy uniforms and neatly trimmed hair. We even got to interview a few of the girls. They were shy and timid but so sure of themselves and their futures. They spoke of their love for the school, the importance of education for all girls, especially those in the villages. They spoke of their plans to be a surgeon, an attorney, champions of girls' rights and futures. They whispered of secret practices and of dangers for girls and women, of inequities and threats. They were on their way and eager to make a difference.

A-Rod Sucks

(Mara)



I was prepared for the circular mud huts, the boys with sticks driving cattle, the film of red dust that settled over everything. These were the familiar images that promised the African experience I did not receive.

As we drove away from Kitenga to our base in Musoma we held onto the walls for stability, our Land Rover pitching over ruts and rocks. Our visit had been jarring with too many contrasts and not enough distance between. We had seen gleaming billboards with white Americans gulping sports drinks against sun leached earth. And my annoying ringtone, which had come preset on my Chinese manufactured cell, had emanated from the pocket of a village elder as he delivered solemn words under the meeting tree. Again and again I tried to take it all in, but was unable to process the juxtaposition of images and sounds, unable to find and maintain perspective without sufficient comfort or context.

Then out of nowhere he appeared, a teenage boy standing firmly in the middle of the road, staring at our approaching vehicle, staring at me. His royal blue T-shirt emblazoned with large white letters read A-Rod Sucks. As we passed he turned to watch us, forcing me to continue my gaze, burning his message onto my throbbing retinas. A-Rod sucks, I said to myself, trying to remember who A-Rod was, my mind telescoping away from the dusty village back to my own small world in Buffalo, New York, to the fleeting context

of pop culture and social commentary. I tried to imagine the intended wearer of the shirt as I struggled to understand the comment, seemingly irrelevant and out of place.

Yet what statement would be appropriate in this complex landscape? How to capture the contrasts, the mosaic of old and new that meanders through the dusty roads. My mind went blank as A-Rod Sucks pulsated through my consciousness. I yearned for context as we continued our long journey towards home.

The Disconnect

(Mara)



When we drove to Kitenga there was still no school. There was a cement foundation and some sun baked bricks, and miles and miles of dry brush.

We were welcomed by the villagers with music and dance and then ushered to take our seats near the meeting tree. The women were the last to join the circle, sitting along the edges with their children cradled in their arms.

The women wore brightly colored dresses, many of which had been hand made on donated sewing machines, special for our arrival. These beautiful and vibrant young women would be the students if there was a school. But without they would be married in months- some already with babies strapped to their backs. They allowed us to take pictures, they danced to welcome us and to send us away. They were full of hope and promise. They were the future.

It was time to leave and it felt uncertain. We had seen a great deal and were so impressed with the Sisters and their work. We needed to go home to get some distance and discuss. But first we had to say goodbye. As we sat in the living room writing in our journals and readying to leave, Sister Rita and the others came in to sit with us. It was clear that they had something to say. Sister Rita rose and reviewed what we had seen and done over the past several days. And then she posed the question- So what is our future? Her words

and their implications hung heavy in the air, we were silent. She went further, would we support their efforts? The promise of Kitenga was in our hands and they were anxious to hear our decision.

Struggling for Clarity

(Mara)



The months following our initial trip were heavy, I mean really heavy. It was the closest thing to depression I had ever experienced. First, there was the challenge of making sense of all that I had seen. My friends and family had been eager to hear about the trip, but they were expecting quick and familiar descriptors, “the trip was life changing” or “Tanzania was beautiful,” generalizations that rang empty and hollow in my head. And then there were the accolades, people telling me how amazing I was for all that we had done, all that we were doing to support the school. But the Sisters were the ones who deserved the praise. We had seen their work up close, the schools, clinics, and vocational programs. It was clear that they were committed to the people and the challenge of making a difference in such a complex and daunting landscape.

But we were a university community, and our ability to contribute was inherently limited. When we first envisioned a partnership, we focused on research, collaboration and study abroad, ways that students, faculty, and staff could engage and learn about Tanzania, eventually resulting in some sort of meaningful impacts. Perhaps I had been unclear about our intentions, or maybe the misunderstanding was rooted in cultural differences or values. But regardless of the source of disconnect, we wanted to engage, to support, and learn, but the path forward felt unclear and shaky. What had we started and where would it lead?

A New Friend, a New Phase

(Mara)



Unbeknownst to me, not long after our return from Tanzania, Dan Nyaronga, a psychology professor who hailed from Mara, in fact the very same town where the Sisters were headquartered, was getting ready to move from California to Buffalo, bringing his family in search of a new academic home. In time I would meet Dan and our paths would become inexorably linked through what would come to be known informally as BTEP (the Buffalo Tanzania Education Project).

Clearly, many great initiatives begin with careful planning and thoughtful deliberation. But sometimes things happen differently. Sometimes partners and projects find you, tapping you on the shoulder and hand-delivering your mission at your mother-in-law's door. And sometimes, perhaps rarer still, a member of that same faraway community joins your own community and project, providing insights and context, and reminding you of the stakes when things get difficult and you find yourself tempted to pull away.

PART 3: THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE (2010 – 2011)

*“Understanding is much deeper than knowledge. There are many people who know us,
but very few who understand us.”*
unknown

(Re)Connecting with Mara

(Dan)



Once I had established my family in Buffalo I began looking for engagement opportunities. I was hoping for something involving community development, perhaps with immigrant populations, or even better a project focusing on Africa. Unsure how to begin my search in Buffalo, I googled various project descriptions and topics hoping that I would stumble upon something remotely interesting. I was surprised when I found a news article on the Buffalo Tanzania Education Project (BTEP), and amazed when I learned of its focus on the Mara Region, my hometown and birthplace. My final shock came when I searched for a contact name and discovered Mara Huber. Honestly, what were the odds?

Mara's office happened to be just eight miles from mine. I wasted no time sending an email and asking to know more about the project and the possibility of an in-person meeting. The response came quickly and within days I was in Mara's office, discussing the history of her efforts, the recent trip to Tanzania and future plans for engagement. The discussion brought much to light, especially the group's perceptions of traveling to Tanzania for the first time and partnering with the Immaculate Heart Sisters of Africa. I was eager to help them make sense of their experiences, to provide context about Tanzania and the Mara Region, their culture and history, in hopes that they would continue to deepen their engagement.

An Introduction to Tanzania

(Dan)



Tanzania, officially known as the United Republic of Tanzania, is a country in East Africa. It is bordered by Kenya and Uganda to the north; Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west; Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique to the south; and the Indian Ocean to the east. Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain and Lake Victoria, Africa's great lake and source of the river Nile, are both in northeastern Tanzania.

Tanzania's population of 44.9 million is highly diverse, composed of numerous ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups. Tanzania is a presidential constitutional republic, and its official capital is Dodoma. Dar es Salaam, the former capital is the country's largest city, principal port, and leading commercial center.

European colonialism began in mainland Tanzania during the late 19th century when Germany formed German East Africa, which gave way to British rule following World War I. The mainland was governed as Tanganyika, with the Zanzibar Archipelago remaining a separate colonial jurisdiction. Following their respective independence in 1961 and 1963, the two entities merged in April 1964 to form the United Republic of Tanzania.

Tanzania was created and led under its first President, Julius Nyerere, who sought to build a strong national identity. In 1967 Nyerere delivered a famous speech known as the

Arusha Declaration in which he laid out his vision for Tanzania as a state in which people, not money, should have prominence. The emphasis of his policy was a mass resettling of rural households into collective villages known as Ujamaa villages wherein individual tribal interests were discouraged. Instead, the emphasis was on the adoption of a common language, Kiswahili (Swahili), that could be used for both governance and commerce and the identification of national level values and goals that would inform both policy and infrastructure development.

These early efforts were considered successful with regard to improving adult literacy and access to health care. However, they fell far short in improving the economic well-being of the country. When Nyerere resigned his post in 1985, Tanzania was deep in foreign debt. Through reform efforts and pressure exerted by donor nations through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the socialist economic policies of Nyerere shifted to a more capitalist approach under second president of Tanzania, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, who stabilized inflation and provided a foundation for economic growth in 1985. In 1995, Tanzania held its first multi-party elections that were won by the ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) under the new leadership of President Benjamin William Mkapa. Building on an increase in GDP and successful macro-economic policies under president Mwinyi, he was able to gain significant foreign debt relief.

Tanzania is a democratic country with presidential, parliamentary, and other local elections held every five years. The president can only serve two terms. Today Tanzania is considered one of the most stable, peaceful, and safe countries in Africa. However,

poverty continues to pose substantial barriers to the well-being of the country (CIA, 2012).

Life in the Village

(Dan)



Kitenga is a remote village situated between the districts of Tarime and Rorya in the Mara region of Tanzania. It is characterized by dirt roads, distant markets, lack of running water and electricity, limited healthcare services, high rates of malnutrition and mortality, few educational opportunities, female genital cutting (FGM), and arranged marriages. Bunganjo village, my earliest home, is only a couple of miles from Kitenga where the Buffalo group had been focusing. During my early childhood through my teenage years, my world revolved around the little village with a population of less than 1,000 people. It was, and still is, a beautiful place with everyone knowing one another. This is common throughout rural Tanzania due to an organized system of governance where every ten households have their “Mijikumi” (ten households in *Kiswahili*) or a representative to the village council, with no one hosting a long-term guest without first reporting to the *Mijikumi*.

Growing up it was very quiet. In the mornings, birds could be heard throughout the village and during the day the laughter of playing children was the predominant sound. At night, barking dogs would serenade the stars while the village musician would entertain young boys and girls who were brave enough to defy darkness and the chilly night to dance to music from a battery driven turntable. As in other villages throughout Tanzania, the entertainment in Bunganjo came in the form of storytelling and conversation. With no streetlights to show the way, the nighttime was quite difficult to

navigate. The paths were narrow and unrecognizable in the dark. And although it was difficult to visually recognize anyone while passing, villagers were able to differentiate their neighbors by their voices. When passing someone in the dark, we would always ask in Swahili “Usiku?” (night), and the other person would respond, “Mchana” (daytime).

Scary Moments

(Dan)



Back in those days there were a few scary encounters with neighboring villages and towns, especially after the end of the Tanzanian war with Uganda in 1979 when Tanzanian soldiers removed the Ugandan dictator, Iddi Amin Dada. Many soldiers came home, crossing the border from Uganda with illegal guns and grenades hidden in empty wooden coffins. The weapons, including AK47's were sold feely into the black market. With high jobless rates in the community, theft and robberies sky rocketed. Robbers walked into the villages at night taking cattle with virtually no resistance. They would shoot over a hundred bullets in the air to silence the entire village.

Not only were these encounters scary, but they were also devastating to the villagers' livelihoods. The danger raised speculation, suspicion, and strained already delicate relationships between the Kuria and Luo communities that for many years lived peacefully side by side near the border with Kenya. Folks in Bunganjo and nearby villages including Kitenga depended (and still depend) on cattle for farming and milk, and without them, had no food. Yet no one came out to stop robbers from taking cattle. Phones were not available in the village and the closest police station was five miles away in Tarime town. By the time the incident was reported, the robbers had crossed into neighboring Kenya. It was speculated that the police were working with the robbers. There were times when the police refused to follow them, claiming that their weapons couldn't match the AK47's, or that they didn't have enough manpower or gasoline in

their cars. Usually, to get the police to investigate a crime, they needed to be bribed. But despite this frightening time, life in rural Tanzania was mostly peaceful and idyllic.

My Local School

(Dan)



I attended Kotwo Primary School in Rorya district, in Mara. It was a couple of miles away from my Mom and Dad's house. Like most kids, we ran to school in the morning at 6 am, back home for lunch at noon, and then walked back to school ready for the afternoon sessions at 2 pm. Students were ordered to bring fire wood for teachers, grass for renovating their houses, and brooms for cleaning the school compound. There was no time for breakfast in the morning and the schools did not provide any. On arrival at 6 am, students would gather at the school assembly and get counted by prefects and teachers on duty. We would then get on the road for morning exercises, mostly jogging for a couple of miles. We would then clean the school compound and gather at the assembly at 8 am.

All schools in the district observed a strict dress code. Boys wore brown pants or trousers and white shirts and girls wore green skirts and white shirts. During assembly, we would be inspected for cleanliness, making sure that we didn't have stains on our clothes, that our fingernails were short, and our hair well-combed. Those who never made it to school at 6 am or were found to be untidy would be punished in front of the entire school assembly by receiving a number of cane strikes. Boys were caned on the buttocks and girls on the hands. The schools had (and still have) very few supplies and kids relied entirely on teachers for all the information which was relayed via chalk boards.

The Tanzania Education System

(Dan)



The Tanzania education system consists of a four tier structure that starts with a two-year pre-primary education, vertically connecting to a seven-year primary schooling and a secondary four-year sequence of “ordinary level” education. While most students finish with secondary school, few successfully pursue additional years of ‘advanced level’ education (high school). The advanced ‘A’ level education feeds into higher education and training (associate degree or bachelor degree), conducted through a number of tertiary and higher education and training institutions.

Primary education is mandatory, universal and free, and the medium of instruction is Kiswahili. Children generally enroll in standard 1 at the official age of 7, but in fact there are no strict rules with many starting later. The average age of first enrollment for girls is about 9 years and nearly 10 for boys. Late enrollments are often due to overcrowding in the classrooms. Also, in the poor rural communities, like in the village of Buganjo or Kitenga, parents often kept their children home as long as possible to help with family chores. The school system at elementary level (primary in Tanzania), middle school level (secondary school) and high school level enforce a national diagnostic examination. The exams at primary level are still given at the end of standard 4, which is mid-way through elementary/ or primary school, to determine whether a child is ready to advance to standard 5. The majority of students are allowed to continue, a few repeat standard 4, and very few drop out of school. Because of the late starts and repetition, kids may be quite

old when they complete primary school. Dropout rates are very high before kids reach standard 7. Even for those able to go all the way to standard 7, access to secondary schools is very restricted, and admission is governed by the results of the national primary school examination.

Students first sit for school certificate examination at the end of the primary cycle, around 14 years of age, and later at ordinary level secondary school, at around 18 years, and advanced level (high school), at around 20 years. Only those meeting specially designed criteria are selected to go on to college or university. Criteria include joining JKT or military training. Until the late 1980s students couldn't join any college or university in the country without going through JKT or mandated military training (e.g., National Youth Service Training) for a year. In view of this structural arrangement, the transition rates along the ladder are generally very low.

Exams at Gun Point

(Dan)



When I was a student the preparation for standard 7 examinations took several months, and involved reading all past exam papers and any reading materials students could lay their hands on. I still remember taking my exams, looking through the window at the police officer with his gun who was pacing back and forth. He was guarding the classroom, the exams, and waiting for the cheats. I dared not to look sideways or even through the window because with a single mistake, I would be escorted out at gun point. Exams were brought in and the seal was broken in front of us to confirm that they had been protected all the way, hundreds of miles, from the national examination center in Dar es Salaam to this rural school in the village. The classroom was gravely quiet as we anxiously waited for the invigilator to read the instructions. Even with all the preparations and security details, there was no guarantee that any of us would earn a spot at one of the few government controlled secondary schools.

Admission into government schools on a 'quota' system was supposedly aimed at ensuring equality. Even after making the short list by competing against other standard 7's in the district and the entire country, the final decision to join the few available government secondary schools was made by politicians and educational officials at the district level. We suspected that officials favored their own families and friends, or perhaps those who paid bribes to have their kids shortlisted. Out of the hundred students that took exams, only 4 or 5 were invited to join secondary schools, being viewed as

lucky and their schools as the best. Exam results came back with ranking at the district level and nationally. That is, schools were ranked and students were also ranked. The results were announced on the radio, in the newspapers, and at the local school's notice board. It was a big deal and quite embarrassing for a student to appear at the bottom of the list or for a school not to have any student invited to join a secondary school.

Today, government schools are fully owned and funded by the government. Admission into government schools is on a 'quota' system, allocated to each district so that children from all over the country can enroll. Selection is by a cut-off point, which may differ from district to district and year to year. Community schools on the other hand are owned by the community and partly financed by the government, especially paying teacher salaries and provision of teaching and learning materials. The schools are managed by a school board, which includes the Ministry's appointed principle (e.g., headmaster/headmistress) and committee of parents and stakeholders.

Nyerere's Educational Philosophy

(Dan)



The education system in Tanzania was based on the philosophy of Nyerere's Education for Self Reliance (Nyerere, 1967). This had a strong pro-poor focus, with a curriculum intended to equip kids with the skills needed for self-reliance, rural livelihoods rather than for further academic education. This explains why post-primary education was to be limited in quantity to ensure the production of enough graduates to supply the predicted manpower requirements of the formal sector. However, the expansion of education also led to increased enrollment, which caused a high demand for teachers, to the extent that there were not enough secondary graduates to supply the demand. Thus, out of necessity primary teachers were drawn from populations who had not attended secondary school (kids who reached standard 7 and failed to join secondary schools) and trained at local teachers' training college for approximately one year. This push was a major cause of the deterioration in quality at all levels of education in Tanzania. The teachers' lack of formal post-primary qualifications reduced their level of authority and the status of the teaching profession in Tanzania as a whole. For example, schools lacked sufficient classrooms, furniture, and textbooks. Less than half of the teachers met the Ministry's minimum qualification requirements. Classrooms were overcrowded, teaching methodology was authoritarian and harassment of students was common.

Girls' Education and Health Concerns

(Dan)



Women face considerable challenges in the Mara Region with few educational opportunities due to lack of schools, female circumcision or genital mutilation (FMG), early arranged or forced marriages to older men, and poor nutritional health care for mothers and their babies. According to a 2007 national demographic and health survey conducted by the Tanzania Gender Networking Program (TGNP) and Macro International, 17% of women between 15 and 49 years of age had no education in the Mara Region. In her review of research on differences between rural and urban women, Wedgewood (2007) notes that the education of girls appears to be associated with an increase in crop production and a decrease in fertility for both rural and urban women. Those with no formal education have the highest fertility rates with 6.5 births compared to those with a secondary education that have 4.2 births. Unfortunately, only 7% of girls who complete primary school attend secondary school nationwide (TGNP, 2007).

Nour (2007) argues that reduction poverty is a powerful incentive for families to force young girls into marriage. In Tanzania, the potential husband pays the father a dowry, usually in cows, in exchange for his daughter. This economic exchange can bring with it both social status and new alliances for the girl's family. These young girls often enter polygamous arrangements and become nothing more than domestic workers to older wives. Unfortunately, this early marriage can also bring health concerns as young girls are likely to have more pregnancies during their life-times, and an increased risk of

contracting STDs and HIV. Nour (2006) finds that girls between 15 and 19 years of age are two to eight times more likely than boys to contract HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa and also likely to be infected by their own husbands. The complexity of issues facing young girls is demonstrated in the fact that early marriage and subsequent early pregnancy also increases the risk of experiencing obstructed labor leading to fistulas because the girl's pelvic bones are not fully developed.

Likewise these young wives are at higher rates of contracting Malaria because of the suppression of a woman's immune system that naturally occurs during pregnancy (Nour, 2007). It is estimated that 60% of all women and their children face barriers to accessing needed health care nation-wide; access is more difficult in rural areas like Kitenga that lack graded or paved roads (TGNP et al 2007). As a consequence, Tanzania has the 12th highest maternal mortality rate out of 222 countries with a rate of 790 per 100,000 births in 2008. This lack of access to health care also impacts children. Tanzania ranks 22nd in its infant mortality rate of 65.7 per 1,000 births compared to its closest neighbor, Kenya, which ranks 53rd with a rate of 43.6 per 1,000 (CIA, 2012).

While the status of women in urban areas has improved as demonstrated by an increase in women's participation in governance and enrollment in secondary education (Ellis, et al. 2007), their status in rural areas continues to be difficult. For example, despite legislation that banned female genital cutting in 1998, the Mara Region has the fifth highest rate of female genital cutting in the country with 38% (TGNP et al. 2007)

Education and Economic Policy Limitations

(Dan)



Despite recent policy improvements in Tanzania, economic development is still fragile and vulnerable at best. The infrastructure remains underdeveloped with approximately 58 percent of the rural population still living in abject poverty. Features of rural ward economy determine the household style where the majority of daily life is fuzzy and unpredictable. In such situations, studies have shown that parents' awareness of the need for education is generally low. In addition, more often than not, the cost of schooling is too high for most households. Children of poor households have a low level of participation at all levels of formal education. This is more marked in secondary education where children of high income per capital are five times more likely to access opportunities than low income parents.

The disparity is in part due to both the direct cost of secondary schooling and to the indirect cost of foregoing the labor of a teenaged child. In addition, while some poor families may be willing to pay for the education of their children, willingness may not equate with actual ability to pay. Furthermore, in the rural areas, a distance from home to school can prohibit access, especially for those with some form of disability. Other limiting factors include shortage of teachers and underdeveloped early childhood school programs.

So far, there has been an impressive increase in enrollment during implementation of primary Education Program (PEDP). However national enrollment data rely solely on student registration without examining actual attendance during the school year. Also, considering a national population of over 40 million, Tanzania has one of the lowest transfer ratios, with only 15.9 percent of primary school leavers getting placed into other public secondary schools. Despite a threefold enrolment growth since mid1980, comparatively few secondary schools exist. The net enrolment is only 6 percent of the population (and Gross Enrolment is 10.3 percent) which is one of the lowest compared to neighboring countries (Sub-Saharan Africa average is 17 percent). The low rate has been the result of earlier post-independence policies restricting expansion of secondary education. Also, the gender gap in education remains more pronounced at secondary than primary education level.

In rural Tanzania girls have been subjected to early marriages for economic gain. The low value granted to girls' education discourages families from investing accordingly. Families prefer to invest in boys' education, reasoning that in the predominantly patrilineal communities, boys guarantee and continuation of lineage, while girls, once they are married continue lineage of their husbands in another community all together. This has necessitated and promoted payment of bride-prices. This age long practice has been viewed by some as marriage bondage of enslaving women by exchanging them for cows or cash. Poverty is also a major factor because it forces girls to enter into early marriages or prostitution in order to alleviate the burden from the family.

Girls' Boarding Schools and their Implications

(Dan)



The planned school for girls in Kitenga can be viewed as a complement to government effort in the ongoing Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) expansion. Because of high construction costs, the government is not able to build the adequate number of schools to meet the ever growing demand for secondary education. Instead, the government has instituted a policy liberalizing provision of education by encouraging communities, NGOs and individuals to build and manage schools. In essence the policy is to accommodate demand through loosely regulated private providers alongside enabling community mobilization. Due to change in policy, the massive expansion at primary school level has had a direct bearing on secondary education sub-sector. The number of students completing primary education inevitably results in massive school leavers seeking access to secondary schools. As primary schooling becomes universalized, it loses its sense of terminality and associated importance. It is now the participation at secondary school level that becomes a major determinant of life chances in the competitive labor market.

Retention of girls through the primary grades is affected by many factors, including early marriages, sexual harassment and early pregnancies. The few who qualify to join secondary schools have extensive need for boarding school, especially in villages so as to ensure that they are secure and focused on studies and not household chores at home. Boarding schools are also important because they will have unlimited access to safe

water and sanitation; the situation that is of a great concern for girls in rural regions, especially during menstruation which can negatively affect both attendance and retention in school. The girls will feel secure, ensure their personal hygiene, concentrate on studies and compete with boys on an equal footing.

One way of escaping the cultural predicament of early marriages is to provide education for girls to reach at least the secondary level. Provision of secondary education can help girls and women fully participate in the socio-economic life of the country. A higher level of education gives an income which decreases women's dependence on men and also affords a certain social status which in turn supports the strength to participate in the decision-making of fertility. Women who have finished secondary education marry later, have their first sexual intercourse later, desire fewer children and have only half the fertility of uneducated women (Tanzania Bureau of statistics, 1996). Education can promote transformational development in the households and community at large, empower girls and women to know their right and fully participate in the community and economic activities, provide humanitarian relief through health care services to reduce and prevent the growing HIV/AIDS infections, support the community surrounding the school site area by creating labor conditions and opportunities to improve women and children's living standards. While the government is still by far the main provider of primary level of education, the Education and Training Policy (ETP) encourages private participation in the provision of secondary education.

PART 4: IN SEARCH OF PERSPECTIVE (2011)

“There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.”

Nelson Mandela

Return to Mara

(Mara)



In the months following our initial trip I immersed myself in reading and talking with Dan, working to gain an understanding of cultural and historical context. I felt an intense need to frame my experiences and observations in some productive and meaningful way. Meanwhile, we were busy engaging with the Sisters, building interest among area faculty, students, and community members toward supporting the evolving school campus in Kitenga. While the interest was undeniable, and individual projects were yielding impressive results, it was soon time to return to Tanzania. We were eager to observe the impacts of our efforts and ensure a strong partnership on which we could continue to build. Although we remained connected with the Sisters, communication had grown difficult and many BTEP members were calling for closer engagement with the women and community members whom we were trying to support. This time, armed with some perspective and Dan as a cultural consultant, we could hopefully solidify our efforts and move our partnership to a more impactful level.

In this way, my second trip to Tanzania in summer 2011 represented an opportunity to go deeper. I was joined by a social work professor who had been a member of our initial travel team and was returning to lay the foundation for future field work placements, bringing two graduate students interested in community development. This notion of connecting UB students through course work and service represented an important area of promise for university engagement and the BTEP model. We were also joined by a

community member who was interested in deepening her own engagement, eager to raise funds and support the construction of the school. Together, along with Dan, we represented diverse opportunities to move our project further. But even armed with additional context and perspective, we were quickly reminded that the forces at play were much bigger and more uncertain than we could fully control or predict.

The Perils of Travel

(Dan)



I was to begin my three weeks in Tanzania with a brief visit with my family before meeting up with Mara and her team to visit the school project in Kitenga. But I was quickly reminded of another aspect of Tanzania that hadn't changed- transportation. As I left for the airport in Dar es Salaam, heading to the lakeside town of Musoma, I was both excited and eager to see my mother who I hadn't seen in over three years, since she traveled to the United States for my wedding. The plan was to fly into Musoma, have a quick lunch with Mom, and then meet up with Mara and her team to plan the next day's activities. Little did I know that it would be another 36 hours before I would finally see my mother.

Excited about the prospect of finally seeing her son, the poor woman had invited all of her friends from church to accompany her to the airport. Meanwhile, my brother Moses, who is a choir member at the same church, also invited all the members of the choir to join them at the 1-room airport in Musoma to await my arrival.

As my impressive entourage waited, they had no idea that I was at the same time becoming reacquainted with the tribulations of Tanzanian travel. In theory the fact that I was taking an airplane at all could be viewed as progress, allowing me to make the 717 mile trip from Dar to Musoma in only 2 hours instead of the regular 16 that it takes by bus. But like the bus rides that I had taken so many times in my youth, that journey was

to be controlled by many unanticipated forces and interruptions. It began with a 3-hour delay for unknown mechanical reasons followed by another 9 hours of consecutive delays. Finally, at 6 pm we were told that we would be on the last flight out of Dar. While this could be construed as good news, the fact that Musoma airport doesn't have lights and doesn't operate at night, forced us to be rerouted to Mwanza, a city 200 miles from Musoma. We would spend the night in Mwanza and then I would travel by road to Musoma the next day, hopefully arriving before Mara and her team left for Kitenga.

It seemed that whether by plane or bus, transportation in Tanzania remains very challenging. I remember hearing a true story of an incident that happened when I was still in high school, in which passengers sighted a supposedly broken-down car in the middle of the road. The bus was fully packed with many standing passengers heading to Musoma from Mwanza, the same route as mine. Instead of the bus going around the car, the driver stopped to offer help. Suddenly, strange men jumped out of the surrounding bush, taunting the passengers with guns and ordering everybody out. The passengers were then directed to strip naked and lie face down. The men took everything out of the bus and ordered the passengers back in, completely naked, to continue their journey to Musoma. My friends thought it was hilarious but I felt particularly sorry for the group of naked passengers standing sandwiched between one another and probably unsure whether to hold on to the handlebar or use their hands to try to cover their naked bodies.

I guess I shouldn't be so critical of the transportation system in Tanzania. My ordeal getting from Dar to Musoma reminded me of a trip I once took from Indianapolis to

Columbus, Ohio via Detroit, Michigan. My flight was cancelled when I got to Detroit and I was asked to spend the night, leaving for Columbus early the next day and subsequently missing my conference presentation. I guess the lesson is the same whether in the United States or Tanzania- give yourself plenty of time to travel and assume that nothing will go as planned.

Really Bad Timing

(Mara)



Dan wasn't kidding when he said nothing went as planned. Although we made it to Dar without incident, our real journey began with a flight to Mwanza. While we were met by the Sisters and their characteristic warmth and hospitality, they announced that they were taking us to the hospital. One of their young Sisters had fallen ill and they wanted us to pay our respects, and also to see the facility.

We were a little uncomfortable having just stepped off a plane into the intense heat. And clearly we had no idea what to expect. Walking through the hospital made me sick to my stomach. The physical state of the place- exposed pipes and crumbling walls and floors. But even worse, there were people including children walking around with huge protruding lumps and growths, clearly in pain. As we walked by the patient rooms we saw dozens of people lying on mats with family members sitting beside them tending to their needs. The Sisters described the health care system and the need for family members to supplement its insufficiencies to meet the needs of the patients. As I contemplated the state of the conditions, especially the cancer ward which we visited, I couldn't help referencing the resources available back in our own hospitals and clinics.

After touring the hospital we were eventually led to the room of the sick Sister who was obviously in dire condition. She lay curled up on a cot, unresponsive yet writhing in pain.

We were instructed to say hello and introduce ourselves, which we did quietly and with great awkwardness.

Poor Man's Safari

(Mara)



We left the heaviness of Mwanza to make a stop at the Serengeti. We had not taken the opportunity to visit during our first trip, although the famous game park lies directly en route from Mwanza to Musoma. This time we were determined to experience the wildlife and would make a quick stop at a lodge along the way, having secured a car and driver for the next day. When we arrived at the Stop Over Lodge we found that while they had record of our room reservations, there were no plans for a guided safari. Although they assured us that they would secure a driver, we were left to hope somewhat nervously that it would all work out.

The next morning a driver was indeed waiting, but our car was much less than we had hoped for. The other safari vehicles were clean and new looking with viewing areas in the middle that allowed for standing while taking pictures from the comfort of air conditioned interiors. Ours was quite different. It was literally on its last leg with no air conditioning and apparently no shock absorbers. And in order to get a clear view we would have to leave the windows rolled down for the entire journey. Because of the fine red dust that continuously flowed into the car and all over us, and the constant jarring as the vehicle negotiated endless rocks and ruts, we were treated to eight hours of being bumped and choked through the famous Serengeti.

Each of us was literally covered in red dust with aching backs and bottoms, but we were in the Serengeti. Since we hadn't been on a safari before, we convinced ourselves that the experience was amazing. Only when we stopped at the main rest area for lunch did we recognize how bad it really was. The other travelers around us emerged from their luxury vehicles, dressed in pristine safari outfits with endless pockets and closures, clean and untouched by the elements. As they stared at our starkly different state of appearance, we all giggled as we wiped the dust from our faces and shared stories of our adventure.

Logistic Complexities

(Mara)



By the time we made it to Musoma to be hosted by the Sisters for the next several days, the young nun whom we had seen in the hospital had since passed away and the various masses, activities, and observances had already commenced. We felt terrible having seen her just a few days before, but from a logistics standpoint her passing presented obvious complexities. The main part of our trip, our very reason for coming, was to spend time with the Sisters, shoring up our partnership while visiting and discussing the Kitenga school project.

Musoma, where we were staying, was a decent sized town. But the last time we had visited, the Sisters had taken us everywhere. This time we were staying in a hostel and would now be largely on our own until we connected with Dan in the coming days. We tried to occupy our time as best we could. But the conditions of our rooms were less than comfortable and there wasn't much to do in town. And from the sound of it, Dan was having a hard time getting to us, uncertain if he would make it in time. The Sisters seemed to understand the importance of our visit and promised to take us to Kitenga, but insisted that we leave as early as possible the next morning. They explained that they needed to get back for a mass later that day, so time was of the essence.

While during our first trip we had speculated about the burden that our travel group had placed on the Sisters with regard to their attention and resources, this time it was

undeniable that we were squarely in the way. But we absolutely needed to get to Kitenga to see the school project. That was the very point of our journey and the Sisters were determined to get us there and back in as little time as possible. Unfortunately, the trip was not a short one, and they wanted us to stop to visit with government officials along the way.

So as we all stood in front of the Bishop's House (a hostel for visitors on church business) waiting by our bus, with Sister Clare glancing repeatedly at her watch, I was tense with anxiety as we waited for Dan's arrival. I heard Sister Clare say something in Swahili to Sister Lucy and then mutter "we've got to go" as she shook her head unhappily. And then, as if at the last possible moment, a car pulled up with Dan waving and smiling from the passenger seat. As an almost perfect foil to my own feelings of guilt about our burden on the Sisters, Dan emerged from the car with a brazen boldness that took my breath away.

His arms were outstretched as he hugged me with a warm and forceful embrace. He introduced us to his cousin and his driver, who both lingered behind him, obviously following his lead and direction. There in that parking lot in his city and country he seemed so much different- bigger, bolder, more masculine- I felt somehow uncomfortable with the contrast, once again jarred and unable to find my footing.

And to my horror, despite the Sisters' continued urgency and prodding about needing to leave, Dan declared that he was hungry and in need of something to eat. As Sister Clare

stared at her watch, shaking her head unhappily, Dan ushered his cousin and driver into the Bishop's House to sit down for a quick but leisurely breakfast. And we had no choice but to follow.

Rush Rush to Kitenga

(Dan)



I don't mean to sound callous or inconsiderate of the Sisters' situation, but I still don't understand the rush, or the concerns about waiting for just an hour for me to join the team before heading to Kitenga. We had gotten to Mwanza very late the previous night and all restaurants were already closed. We ended up leaving Mwanza at 5 in the morning, without breakfast, to make it to Musoma by 8. But that wasn't the issue. Collectively, members of BTEP had traveled countless hours from the US, spent a fortune on tickets, and got flights delayed multiple times. In my very humble opinion, it made no sense to spend just an hour in the village of Kitenga before heading back to Musoma. Yes, it was unfortunate that the young Sister passed away, but the need to leave so early made no sense to me, especially in light of the unplanned 2 hour detours to Tarime for a photo-op with the District Commissioner (DC) who apparently had no idea about BTEP's mission or our projects in Tanzania.

I took a seat on the bus next to Mara and tried to enjoy the long and nostalgic drive. As we left Musoma heading to Tarime to meet the DC we crossed River Mara. The Mara province got its name from the river. The river flows from Kenya all the way to Tanzania, eventually emptying into Lake Victoria which is the main reservoir of the Nile River and the largest lake in Africa. The Mara River is a historic place, especially for those of us growing up in the region, bordering Kenya to the North and the Serengeti Game Park to the South and East. As a child I remember crossing the river from Tarime to visit my Dad

in Musoma, where he worked. At that time there was only a ferry because the bridge was not built until the 1980's. The ferry would stop operating around 6:00 in the evening. If one didn't make that last ferry he/she would have to spend the night on either side of the river, either in Tarime or Musoma and wait until the next morning. The nights were dark and scary, thus people planned ahead to make sure they were not stuck on either side.

Now there is a road and in many ways travel is faster and more direct. But as we all know or have experienced, progress is not without its dangers. Roads and bridges along with rivers mean access, and access must be protected and defended. This explained the refusal of the military men guarding the Mara River bridge at Kirumi to allow pictures to be taken, citing security reasons. While I am sure that it made little sense to the BTEP members, it reflects a balance that in some ways Tanzania is still trying to negotiate.

As Tanzania welcomes resources and investments, as well as partnerships like the one Mara and her group is seeking, they put up security stops and roadblocks to protect their interests. These can be viewed as mixed messages, but I believe that they are not impassable. People eventually get to cross the Mara River, either by ferry or by bridge, either in the evening or the next day. Although the time frame or smoothness of travel is not always predictable, there is a certain satisfaction in eventually getting to one's destination. This is the Mara region I knew, and the one to which we have both returned.

As we continued with our journey, we passed by several villages including Bugarjo, in which I grew up as a boy. I shouted to the bus driver to slow down and pointed to a dusty

road leading to my former elementary school, Kotwo Primary. I'm sure that my travel companions didn't know what to make of me, the context seen through the dusty bus window so different from our lives back in the US. But this was my beginning, a couple of miles from Kitenga where Mara and the BTEP team had been focusing. Bunganjo was my earliest home. The beauty of the land and the people, the smiles, warm greetings, and hospitality would make anyone feel cherished and welcome. This is the Tanzania that I'm still proud to call my home.

Jarring

(Mara)



If I had to describe my initial visits to Tanzania I would use the word “jarring”. It’s not the word I wanted to use. I wanted to say that my trips were amazing, inspiring, even life changing. I was thoroughly prepared to be transformed, to come back to the US moved to proselytize, rallying the masses with my heart wrenching stories and teary eyes. But the truth is that I didn’t see much suffering, or at least not the kind I expected. No distended bellies or vacant malarial stares, no wailing mothers or children dying slow and painful deaths.

I did however see glimpses of the Africa I had expected- circular mud huts, boys with sticks driving cattle, the film of fine red dust that settled over everything. Pre-school aged girls had carried infants on their hips and women balanced great buckets of water on their heads as they walked gracefully across the roads. But there was nothing inherently disturbing about these images. The people looked busy, focused and productive. Even the mute children we visited appeared happy and content, singing to us in sign language and crowding around our cameras to giggle at their images. The Sisters had shared the back stories- the children had been collected from their homes throughout the village where they were withering without stimulation or hope, hidden away in solitude because of their deficiencies. Yes, the stories were sad but the children’s gratitude is what I felt most, along with a tremendous admiration for the Sisters.

Clearly they, the Immaculate Heart Sisters of Africa (IHSA), were worthy partners, but their mission and work were their own. Suddenly I understood that engaging with the Sisters, or the people of the Mara Region more broadly, was an honor that we had earned the hard way. Although I had clearly underestimated the complexity of forging an international partnership, I had learned a great deal in return. And rather than regret the efforts that I had so innocently begun, I was awed by the miles that we had traveled and the endless possibilities that lay ahead.

PART 5: STUDENTS ARE THE ANSWER (2014 – 2018)

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world,
indeed it is the only thing that ever has”
Margaret Mead*

Dr. Bakuza and the Power of Education

(Mara, 2014)



Just yesterday my friend Fortidas Bakuza became Dr. Bakuza, and Tanzania will never be the same.

When I first met Fortidas back in 2009 we visited his office in Dar es Salaam. A professor from our university had made the connection through a mutual colleague, and despite being strangers we were warmly received. He passionately shared the many challenges facing the Tanzanian education system and his hopes to strengthen and prioritize early childhood education. When we said our goodbyes we spoke of future opportunities to connect and promised to be in touch.

Flash forward five years to our celebratory dinner congratulating Fortidas on his monumental achievements. Not only did he complete his Doctorate and Master's degrees in record time, he did so with a dedication, insistence on quality, and a gentle thoughtfulness that impressed his professors, colleagues, and all with whom he'd interacted while in Buffalo.

As I reflect on the excitement and pride that I feel for Fortidas and his family, I can't help contrasting it with my own PhD and my graduation that I never bothered attending. It's not that I didn't value my education, on the contrary, it is the core of who I am and what I offer. But unlike Fortidas, mine didn't require direct sacrifice or hardship. Learning was

what I loved to do, and my degree felt highly personal and not requiring any public celebration or ceremony.

But Fortidas's education is something much different. He left his wife and young children, and his home, for three long years, working tirelessly to complete his degrees. His dissertation was not simply an exercise, but instead an offering to his country and its education system to help inform change, progress, and a path forward toward actualizing and leveraging the talent of their youth.

I know there are many other international students who make their way to Western colleges and universities, seeking knowledge, degrees, and better lives for themselves and their families. But as costs become even more prohibitive and obstacles for scholarships and support more daunting, these opportunities and their beneficiaries will continue to dwindle.

If we are serious about supporting community development and progress throughout the world- which I hope desperately that we are- we must continue to bring the benefits of education to those who seek to maximize its reach. And while intensive on-site programs, such as Fortidas's course of study, offer extensive advantages and opportunities for students from developing regions, they are neither sustainable nor scalable in the largest sense.

Luckily, the burgeoning world of technology and distance education offer unending possibilities for students and communities to learn, share, and innovate while at the same time addressing the specific contextual challenges and opportunities that frame our

realities. As Western university communities that enjoy bountiful resources, expertise, and capacity, we stand to partner and offer support in new and important ways. But as we have learned through BTEP, these opportunities are based largely on our willingness to connect and form meaningful relationships built on mutual respect and understanding.

And as my friend Fortidas prepares to return home to his family and the new opportunities that await him, I can't help feeling as though his departure is actually just the beginning of the next stage of our collaboration and friendship. And I feel blessed to be part of something so much bigger than any one of us.

UB Study Abroad (2014 – 2018)

(Dan)



Since the initial BTEP trip to Tanzania in the summer of 2009, Mara's engagement had focused almost exclusively on the evolving school project in the village of Kitenga. As a SUNY faculty member, I was personally more interested in student experiences, providing a unique adventure to a country where the social, political, and cultural systems are tremendously different than that of the United States. Equipped with terrain and landscape knowledge in addition to my educational background and affinity for this beautiful land, I knew that students would have an amazing educational experience and opportunities to engage through service learning or innovation to address the various problems they were sure to observe.

To that end, in 2014, 5 years after the inception of BTEP, University at Buffalo sent its first official study abroad course to the Mara Region. With a request from Mara, I took a lead on this program bringing the first group of students to Tanzania, together with Katie Biggie, Mara's colleague and co-founder of BTEP. While prior to 2014 a number of UB students traveled informally to Tanzania, this represented the first official experience coordinated through the Study Abroad office, and an opportunity to connect BTEP with UB's deep commitment to international travel and engagement. Katie travelled with me both in 2014 and 2015 before Mara came on board starting in 2016.

The UB study abroad course to Tanzania was designed to be multidisciplinary, engaging students in the interconnecting facets of community development including health,

education, economics, and infrastructure. The course also aligned with UB's re-envisioned general education program (the UB Curriculum), which emphasized the notion of integration and significant global experiences. When framed within these aspects of curricular innovation and high-impact pedagogies, the Tanzania Study Abroad program offered a new phase for BTEP (or what has simply become known as our Tanzania Project) and exciting opportunities for students to explore and discover.

Our two week trips always begin in the city of Dar es Salaam (Dar), the commercial capital and Tanzania's central port. The trip connects students with diverse partners including hospitals, nonprofits, faith-based groups and other community-focused organizations, and our higher education partners including universities and community development institutes. In addition to community development, we also take in the history of Tanzania, often visiting the birth place of its founding president, the late Mwalimu Nyerere. And we of course experience the wonderment of the Serengeti Game Preserve and Ngorongoro Crater, learning about the cultural groups that have inhabited the land while taking in the spectacular beauty through a 2 day safari.

Many students return from Tanzania in some ways transformed. And as a result of their travel they view the world differently, connecting with people in new ways and experiencing an intense longing to make a difference. These feelings can be jarring, especially when students return to their lives expected to be the same person they were prior to their travel. They may find themselves questioning their majors, career plans, or other areas of identity, coming into conflict with parental expectations or plans for the future.

As I consider the impacts of these trips and the broader BTEP initiative, I am reminded of the student reflections that are shared upon their return. I believe these reflections speak to the power of experiential learning and this particular course in shaping the future leaders and humanitarians we so desperately need.

Reflections: Won Woong (Tyler) Choi

(2014 & 2015)



Studying abroad in Tanzania was by far the most amazing experience I have ever had, but it was not the different culture and people that had me chanting, “Tanzania was life changing.” It was the personal connection I made with a Tanzanian named Peter Chacha that truly changed my life for the better.

Peter was our driver while we were in Tarime. His English was very minimal so the communication that we shared was initially limited to phrases like “good morning Peter,” and “thank you Peter.” There was not much to expect from our relationship in the beginning. However, that all changed one day when we were having dinner at a local restaurant. The restaurant owners were not allowing Peter to sit with us, due to the fact that he was a Tanzanian native and we were from the United States. I was astonished by this situation and found it to be completely unacceptable. So I got up from our table and went to sit with Peter, explaining that I wanted to have dinner with him. He was shocked that somebody from the US would actually reach out to him and that single gesture changed everything. From that point forward I wanted to connect with Peter as much as possible. So every night we stayed up for hours trying to share details from our lives back home. Since we couldn’t communicate with words, we had to act out our stories through gestures. It was a unique way to bond despite the significant language barrier, but I think that is what made it all the more special.

One night, in the midst of our normal conversation, Peter decided to tell me about this life, using Dan, my professor, as his translator. This is when my own life entered a new chapter of inspiration. You see, Peter was thirty-two years old and despite the marriage age of his tribe being eighteen, he had not been able to marry because his customs required that the groom purchase a cow as a dowry for the bride. Peter hadn't purchased a cow yet because all of the money he had been making as a driver had been spent to support his four younger siblings' secondary school (high school) education. Since he hadn't gone to secondary school himself, he was committed to making sure his siblings would receive the education he never had.

I was speechless. Peter had given up his potential future for his family yet he insisted that he was thankful for even having a job. And the fact that he could use his resources to support his loved ones was more important than anything in his life. Peter made me realize that happiness isn't about what you have, but what you have to share with others. I was inspired and touched by his life story and knew, at that moment, that I wanted to do something for him. I could feel a newborn passion building inside of me. With the amount of resources and connections I had back home, I knew I could do something to help my new rafiki (friend in Swahili).

Upon returning to the United States, I shared Peter's story as often as I could. As I thought more about Peter and his future, I dreamed that one day I could return to Tanzania and tell him, "Hey Peter, I'm going to help you finish school." this vision fueled my motivation and led to the founding of *Hugs for Tanzania*. In addition to empowering those less fortunate in Tanzania, *Hugs for Tanzania* seeks to help people in

our own community realize the blessings they have, and acknowledge their potential for making a positive difference in the lives of others. Throughout 2014, I reached out to friends, peers, and faculty from Bellevue, Washington (my hometown) and the University at Buffalo, sharing my story and asking them to join me on this journey that I had embarked upon. Together we raised over two thousand school supplies and thirteen hundred dollars in donations; all of which I personally delivered to the children and community of Kotwo Primary School in January of 2015.

Successfully launching *Hugs for Tanzania* was one of my greatest accomplishments. But even more than its triumph, I am thankful for having been able to see Peter again during my second trip. Peter had promised me in 2014 that he would improve his English skills so we could have more fluent conversations when we next reunited, and he also declared that he would try his best to get married. In 2015 when we sat in the same spot as the year before, Peter told me that he was in a relationship with a high school English teacher. His English had improved immensely and I was thrilled that he now had a significant other to share his wonderful life with. The best moment, however, was when I explained to Peter why and how I had returned to Tanzania. I told him that almost all of my friends in the United States knew of him and how important a friend he had become to me, and that it was because of his friendship that I was able to return. When I saw his eyes smile and his teeth stretch from cheek to cheek, I experienced the most genuine feeling of happiness I ever have felt.

Upon concluding the first *Hugs for Tanzania* trip, I realized that my experience and time in Tanzania gave my life profound and tangible meaning. It gave me something worth

fighting for with the conviction that armed with a good dose of motivation and passion, dreams can become a reality for anyone.

PS: Peter called me on July 25th, 2015 at 10:25 a.m. and said these exact words, “My friend, I have a wife now.” Congratulations Peter Chacha!

More Gifts from Tanzania

(Mara, 2015)



As I snuggle under a blanket on a cold grey January morning, still reeling from jetlag and the discombobulation of our recent return, the tastes and memories of Tanzania linger tantalizingly within reach. Yet I know that if I try to capture them directly, they will scurry away like little geckos, disappearing through the spidery cracks in walls. So instead, I will attempt to offer their manifestations- experiences, moments, and interactions- individually powerful, yet collectively profound.

Those who need you most will find you

Her name was Christina, and over the course of two days, she had lost both of her parents to horrific circumstances. Suddenly an orphan, she found herself alone in the world, without hope or comfort. Yet when the Sisters learned of her situation, they brought her to Baraki on the same day as our visit. A teacher agreed to take her in, and schooling would be provided assuming they could raise funds for her tuition and fees. A partial uniform had already been issued in hopes of helping Christina feel more at home. Upon meeting her and hearing her story, the students were called to action. Amanda and Julia, who had raised money in advance of the trip, pledged to sponsor Christina's education for one year. They had come to Tanzania hoping that worthy projects would reveal themselves. Little did they know that Christina would be waiting for them, and they would know instantly, without hesitation, that she was theirs to help.

We don't know what we're capable of until we're tested

When we asked Sister Janepha to put our students to work, we meant it figuratively. But to our surprise, we found Allison, Tory, and Ali immersed in the work of the clinic, assessing incoming patients and offering recommendations for care. While the students admitted to feeling overwhelmed and underqualified, their sense of purpose and exhilaration were undeniable. In that moment, in that faraway place, their talents and resources were called upon, and they rose to the challenge with a sense of humility and courage that made us all proud.

Lead with what you value most

In the end there was playing and laughter, the simple joys of spending time together and discovering connections. This came as a welcome relief after the initial discomfort of raised expectations. Past study abroad groups had visited the school, bringing lavish gifts and offerings. The disappointment on both sides had been palpable, hanging heavy in the air, making it difficult to breathe. If only we had started with the laughter, the intimacy, the joy- these were the gifts that we had come to deliver and eventually received.

Love is the magic ingredient

We had never seen anyone enjoy chocolate cake as much as Yasin. And as he helped himself to a 4th or 5th piece (we quickly lost count), it was clear that he had fallen under the spell of the Sisters (the Immaculate Heart Sisters of Africa). He was not alone, and as I glanced around the dining room, I saw students laughing, exchanging stories, and glowing in the haze of warmth and joy that seems to cloak the Sisters and all they

touch. And as I sat enjoying the home-cooked meal and hospitality, I felt so blessed, honored, and happy that we had come.

Revel in the unexpected

Flat tires, overcrowded safari vehicles, and impromptu theatrical numbers were just a few of the countless unplanned moments that made our trip so amazing. There is something powerful about embracing the unexpected, giving up illusions of control and preparation, opening oneself to the richness of moments and opportunities they bring. Our students seemed to understand this secret from the very beginning. They dove into the moments, the imperfections, and snags- they reveled in the unexpected, embracing each gift with such authentic joy and respect that it often took my breath away. We had planned for the trip to be fascinating, but it was the students who made it so special. How did they become so wise at such a young age?

Friendship is everything

There is something magical about hugging an old friend across so many miles and years. Visiting them in their element, seeing their work, meeting their friends, and discovering new ways to connect and build. As I reflect on the 2016 trip and my broader relationship with Tanzania, it is clear that friendships serve as the very foundation, the bedrock of everything important. Reconnecting with dear friends like Sister Janepha, Fortidas Bakuza, and Godfrey Telli, and forging new friendships and collaborations- these are the riches that continue to beckon me back to Tanzania, and I always leave wanting more. Asante Sana Tanzania!

Reflections: Matthew Falcone

(2015 & 2018)



Since before I started college, I knew that I wanted to be involved in the water and sanitation sector of global development. I decided to earn a BS in Environmental Engineering and Civil Engineering from University at Buffalo to develop a broad base of knowledge in water treatment and infrastructure design to prepare me for a career in this field. Soon after starting research during my second year, I realized that I had no context of water-stressed environments, and thought that travelling would give me the background I needed. That year marked my first trip to Tanzania on a guided study abroad course that focused on community development through the lenses of education, healthcare, economics and infrastructure. My goal was to identify some of the technical challenges regarding water and sanitation in sub-Saharan Africa. However, my experience taught me that it is impossible to decouple the link between people and their environment when working on complex global challenges, such as the water crisis. Although I didn't have enough time or exposure in the country to dig deeper into these topics during our brief two-week trip, this early experience helped guide my research and educational path over my remaining time as an undergraduate student at UB.

Another unintentional outcome of that trip was my introduction to Rotary International. As I was growing a more humanitarian mindset abroad, I also saw the impact of Rotary in some of the life-changing projects we visited. When I shared with Mara my desire to get involved in global volunteer service and give other students the opportunity to do the

same, she encouraged me to look into Rotary. After discussing plans with my friend Tyler Choi, we decided to charter the Rotaract Club at University at Buffalo. My role as President has since been passed on to two other young leaders, and the club continues to make impactful work locally and globally. I feel like I have “found my tribe” in Rotary, where like-minded people around the world are working towards the same humanitarian goals. In the past year, I’ve learned about the Water and Sanitation Rotary Action Group (WASRAG), which consists of technical advisors who work voluntarily to increase the impact of projects around the world. As I learn about the global water crisis and begin to take on projects, I look to Rotary as a supporting resource and someday aspire to be a WASRAG technical advisor myself.

After graduating in December of 2017, Mara reached out to me with an opportunity to return to Tanzania. The purpose of this trip would be to continue developing relationships with our partners and to search out collaborative opportunities for student and community engagement. My task would be to act as the specialist in water and sanitation, and other environmental challenges. Funded by Rotary clubs who believed in my potential, I returned with Mara and our group, hoping to add value in some meaningful way. The first part of the trip felt similar to my other study abroad experience. We met with our partners, learned about their work and recent updates, gained perspective on their challenges and cultivated rapport. This time, however, I worked to finalize plans for when the group would leave me behind, and I would remain on my own for two additional weeks. This is when things started to get interesting. I spent the next two weeks retracing my steps to return to several of our partners with the goal of engaging

more deeply. We were able to visit neighboring communities and explore water-related projects and challenges, and I had a chance to interact with members of communities that I wouldn't have had access to without a local connection. These relationships defined the remainder of my trip.

A clear example of the power of strong local relationships was my experience working with Roselyne Mossama, who worked with our partner Dr. Mwita Akiri, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Musoma. Prior to my trip, Roselyne and I had been discussing my plans and what I wanted to learn. Upon meeting in person, we were able to finalize an itinerary for the two days I would be staying at the Mogabiri Farm Extension Centre. With a clearer understanding of my background, goals and skillset, she arranged for my visitation to several villages in the highlands and lowlands of the Tarime area to observe vastly different water challenges in a watershed contaminated by metal mining. Although their water resources are known to be contaminated with toxic chemicals leaching from the mining industry, the communities are powerless to change their situation. The highlands have sufficient groundwater resources, but villages struggle with issues of infrastructure management and transporting water over steep changes in elevation. In both areas, I was able to speak to members of the communities to hear their perspectives on their water resources, and learn about their priorities for development and methods they use to improve the quality of life. This would not have been possible without a network of relationships within the area I was visiting.

One of the most powerful learning experiences on this trip was a visit to a remote village called Kitembe. This situation was brought to my attention by Monica Pius, a schoolteacher from Musoma, with whom I had previously partnered on a school supplies project with the Rotaract Club of University at Buffalo. Monica organized transportation to Kitembe, which would have been impossible for me without a close, trusted relationship.

At Kitembe, I met with the village water committee and elders, who shared with me their story regarding the well. About four years ago, a small organization donated the preparation and construction costs of a borehole well. Unfortunately, the hand pump broke a few years ago, leaving this community once again without access to clean water. Feeling stranded without sufficient money or technical support to fix it, this community is hoping for another donation to restore their access. As the story of failed water infrastructure is told time and time again throughout the world, investments on the order of tens of thousands of dollars lie ineffective for the cost of what may be tens of dollars of repairs. Although this information was not new to me, this intimate experience has been crucial to addressing the issue of sustainability and resilience of water and sanitation infrastructure in low-income settings. This topic is central to my research goals as I begin my graduate studies in Environmental Engineering for Developing Communities at the University of Colorado Boulder.

When I look back on my goals for my recent return trip, I would say that I simply wanted to learn. At this point in my career as a developing water and sanitation engineering

researcher, the most important thing to do is learn. In order to produce practical work with direct impacts, it is critical to learn context and develop relationships. Statistics, facts, and figures from textbooks and reports are crucial to providing background, but human interaction is critical to understanding the true nature of issues within development. Listening to the needs of community members clarifies these challenges and highlights the critical factors necessary for successful progress. I cannot imagine what my life would look like now without the opportunities for impactful travel during my undergraduate career at University at Buffalo. They have shaped my identity as a student, as a researcher, and as a person, and for that, I am truly grateful.

Through my travels, I have seen that investments in water and sanitation infrastructure made by well-meaning government agencies, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, and private donors have fallen into disrepair in different parts of the world. As members of the development community, it is our responsibility to act as ethical stewards of the resources at our disposal. This responsibility includes stakeholder feedback, equitable and inclusive design, financial and environmental sustainability, and following up to ensure that projects have gone as planned.

Reflections: Lyndsey Cifra

(2017 & 2018)



I graduated from UB in May 2018 with a biology degree and an interest in community health and development. During my junior year I decided that I really wanted to go on a study abroad trip, but didn't know which one. At that time, I was thinking about going to medical school and was mainly looking at programs focused on medicine. But then I stumbled upon the Tanzania trip. Rather than medical issues, it was geared towards learning more about what people are doing to improve their communities through leadership and social innovation. I liked the idea of learning from the people of Tanzania and meeting with the women's empowerment groups and training programs mentioned in the course description.

I was able to go on the trip in July 2017, and it was honestly life changing. I felt like a completely different person when I returned and it helped me really figure out who I am. The partners that we met with the first trip were so compelling that I wanted to go back and learn more on a deeper level. I also wanted to explore the topics of female genital mutilation and gender based violence and what the community was doing to combat these practices. These interests sparked the idea of going back a second time, and after fundraising with two other students and Mara, we were able to return in July 2018.

Before I went on the first trip, I knew I enjoyed helping people, but I never gave myself the opportunity to really think about how I wanted to do it. I grew up with a very big,

close, loving family that pushed me to be a doctor because of my good grades and work ethic. Because of this, I thought that the only way for me to help people was by being a doctor and treating sicknesses. I went into college thinking that I wanted to go to medical school, but I was always wishy washy about the idea. I tried loving it and volunteered in hospitals, but never truly enjoyed it or got excited when people brought it up in conversations. After the first trip I realized that my way of helping people wasn't diagnosing and treating people's illnesses, but rather bringing people together and lifting their spirits and energy in ways that helped their particular situations. I realized that I thrive in group settings, and would love to work in an area that allows me to be immersed within the community. After the second trip, I realized that I have a serious love for women and children's groups. They are in need all over the world, and empowering women and children to be their very best is vital for happy and healthy communities.

Although I learned a lot about Tanzania while on the trip, I also learned a lot about myself. The trip helped me realize who is important, and what is important in my life. Before, I was spending a lot of time on the wrong things, and now am feeling that I am on the correct path moving forward. I have always wanted to move to California, and through help and encouragement from Mara, I have finally made the move. I now work for a marketing company that shines light on organizations that are doing good for the community, helping them grow and be successful. I want to go back to school and get my masters in community development, and plan on getting more involved with my community by joining the Rotaract club out here in San Diego.

Through the Tanzania trips I have learned to be open to new experiences, and always keep learning and growing from others. Getting out of one's comfort zone is extremely important because that is where growth occurs, and staying comfortable is where people plateau. I feel that it's important to keep your mind and eyes open to all that is around you, because there is so much to see, do, and learn. I also learned not to assume you know what is best for the people in your lives. Listening and taking the time to understand the context and situation at hand is vital for problem solving, as each scenario is different and unique. Being grateful for the things that you have, and for the people that are in your life becomes extremely apparent during these trips. It made me realize that I had so much more than I needed, and that living shouldn't be about possessing objects, but instead about immersing myself in experiences and sharing love, happiness, gratitude, and compassion with others. Surrounding yourself with people from different backgrounds, mindsets, beliefs and experiences is a really great way to learn about each other's differences, but it made me realize that we are much more similar than we are different. Having people from all different backgrounds working together towards a common goal can spark a movement much faster than if only one type of person is involved. The more mindsets there are, the more creativity is accessible and the options become limitless.

In conclusion, this partnership is breathtaking and has exponential room for growth. If more experiences like this were available to a bigger group of people, even at a younger age than college students, I think a movement towards a more innovative and globally conscious mindset could be formed. Study abroad programs should be pushed harder in

universities, and more universities all around the world should work together so that everyone can experience something like this. College is about so much more than just the topics you learn about in the classroom, and more experiential learning is needed to make sure students are prepared to enter the real world.

Reflections: Danielle Nerber

(2017 & 2018)



I recently received a degree in Anthropology from UB in 2018, and am currently applying to medical school. I want to be a global physician that gets to travel the world and work with people from all walks of life through public health. Having studied Anthropology, I know how crucial it is to get the community's perspective, and to not impose your own thoughts and ideas until you have witnessed it yourself and have been able to learn from them, and I think having these skills added to my experience in Tanzania.

I was looking to do another study abroad, having been on the University at Buffalo's SLIDE program twice, and Tanzania had caught my eye. I had always wanted to go since I was a little girl, getting the National Geographic Student Expeditions magazines in the mail, Tanzania being the one I'd always ask my mom if I could go on. Turned out that one of my close friends, Amanda Vega, had gone on the trip in January 2016, and convinced me that I needed to go. She told me it would exceed my expectations, and change me forever, and she was right. As a part of my final project for the study abroad, I chose to tackle the issues of menstrual health and its effects on girl's education. I first contacted one of our amazing partners and friends, Monica Pius, and found more about the struggles girls face, such as lack of materials, infections, and self-esteem issues, which all leads to them dropping out of school. Since this class was about social innovation and sustainability, I wanted to find a solution other than raising money to buy

a bunch of pads for the girls. I had remembered hearing something about reusable pads in Africa, so I began researching and I immediately found an organization based out of Arusha, called Dare Women's Foundation that focuses on everything from women empowerment through education, nutrition, entrepreneurship, and menstrual health.

I quickly found a template of their reusable pad model, with instructions on how to sew it. I contacted them to see if they had any outreach in the Mara Region and learned that they did not. I explored whether there was room for collaboration, and to my surprise, there was. Maggie Simbeye, the founder, stated that although they could not expand to the Mara Region, she would help me do it. From there I contacted Stephen Chacha, from Nyamete women's organization, current manager at Hope Revival. I proposed this idea to him, and asked if this was something we could incorporate into the sewing project at Hope, and Stephen jumped right in. He got in contact with Maggie, and they decided that Stephen would travel to Arusha to get trained on how to make the pads, bring back training materials, and teach the women there. So I started a GoFundMe account, raising the necessary \$1,500, and he was on his way.

Tanzania has become a second home to me, and I want nothing more than to keep coming back here throughout my career and life, and continue building relationships and projects. Now, having had the opportunity to return to Tanzania in July 2018, the menstrual health project has gone even further. I was able to return to Hope Revival, bring the materials for the reusable pads, and participate in a training myself. It was incredible, Stephen invited influential women leaders from the community to participate

as well, and he actually had a women from DARE lead the training. That same day they made well over 100 pads, and only went through a tiny piece of the materials we brought. They will now continue to sew the pads and give them to girls in the community, and sell to people who can afford them. What was even more amazing is that every stop we made, every organization we met with, and every person we talked to were very interested in the idea of sanitary pads, and the affect they could have on girls' education. We had so many amazing discussions with all kinds of people, heads of universities, religious leaders, teachers, organizations, and I was truly able to see what kind of impact this project could potentially have.

I hope to see the pad project actually begin to make a difference in women and girls' lives, especially the school girls who need the knowledge and protection to achieve their goals. I hope that women can start making a profit, and I hope that we can expand to other sewing projects around the country, and beyond. There is so much more that can come out of these menstrual health projects, and I look forward to being a part of it in the future.

As I reflect on my trips to Tanzania one of my biggest lessons has been that we should not assume. The people of Tanzania are so hardworking, responsive, intelligent, diligent, and motivated, they truly make the most amazing partners. Global collaboration is a skill that everyone needs, and is the key to making the world a safer and more equal place. Learning from each other humbles and motivates us, and pushes us to be the best we can

be. I learn so much about myself while I am there as well, and I truly believe that visiting Tanzania has made me a better person.

PART 6: PARTNERS AND FRIENDS

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”
Helen Keller

Reflections: Monica Achieng Pius

(2018)



My partnership with UB and Mara is a long story that could easily fill many pages. But I would be grateful to share at least a few memories. When Mara came in 2009 with the first group to visit Mara Region, I had never known anyone and no one had thought of meeting someone like me. But because our school was one of the group's destinations for saying hello to the nuns (Immaculate Heart Sisters of Africa), I chipped in and had time for just a short introduction. I never knew that Mara was the director but I was impressed by her attitude of love. Really she was the smallest of all in weight but I realized that she had great and broad minded thoughts to share with the Mara Region.

Mara never gave me more time to talk to her but gave out her email address to me. I can't forget Kevin Crosby who was her photographer during the trip. Kevin also gave me an email and there were many others. Because of my profession of IT, I was able to connect with members of the group. Anyway, I love communication a lot. And I know that in this world, not exposing what is in one's mind is like having gold and hiding it for fear of thieves or abnormal worries. I think the courage I had in reaching out was the same courage Mara had in facing the leaders to allow her to work in Mara.

I can't forget Musoma Sisters (IHSA) and even more so the Mother Superior at that time, Sister Matiku, who was happy to see how I was welcoming the group in our school office, and not forgetting Sister Imelda who gave me the chance to welcome the guests

and talk to them. These connections were all made without our knowledge. But together they made a broad chain and ever since, Mara has been organizing more groups every year to bring to Mara, like her name. I feel the link growing so tight but only because of my field which I respect so much, the IT sector. Mara has done a lot for the community of St. John Bosco through the distribution of text books and iPads which make learning easier. She is also planning and organizing more visits in the future.

But what fun. The connections and channels must continue to grow. I decided to make another branch by organizing Girls in Action Empowerment group. I think no one can consider only one side of a coin without looking at the other. The school is now in collaboration with UB so why not others? Maybe Mara will think of leading larger visits in the future. Where there are many, many should come.

I have learned many lessons as the collaboration has made me meet with many students from different departments at UB. This makes me feel like I live in another country, not Tanzania, as we can talk and chat as if we are all in one room. Surely this exposure to other groups is what Mara brings and I have nicknamed it the Mara in Mara connections Group (MnMCG). These connections have made me have courage in life and find a way where there seems to be none. Many people, especially girls, are with me holding hands in walking towards the Mara success. A woman is as determined as the world and I am proud to be the light where there is darkness.

I, Monica Pius, salute and dedicate the work of Mara in Mara Region and request that every one of us in collaboration commits to the communities we are supporting as family. To me my family is already friends with UB. Charity starts from home. Without thinking of community as family then we will never collaborate with communities of outsiders. Mara herself has demonstrated such an example in her home community. Her daughters Claire and Natalie have raised funds for our new Girls in Action Musoma group. This is the challenge. She started it at home.

Reflections: Stephen Marwa (2018)

Women's Empowerment



(Mara)

It's hard to imagine a more committed partner than Stephen Marwa, Executive Director of Hope Revival Children's Organization. A dedicated advocate for women's empowerment and community development, Stephen is a stand-out when it comes to technology, communication and international engagement. His past projects have focused on social entrepreneurship, agriculture, and education all in an effort to improve the lives and opportunities of women and girls in this underdeveloped region of northern Tanzania.

In an effort to further strengthen our collaboration, we gave Stephen a new computer tablet courtesy of Bak USA during our study abroad trip in July 2017. Through his effortless mastery of this new technology, he has shared countless videos, social media posts and communications detailing his progress and seeking opportunities to do more for his community, and for our students. When Danielle became interested in the relationship between girls' menstruation and educational achievement, Stephen immediately committed his full support and volunteered to travel to Arusha for a full week of training hosted by Dare Women's Foundation, a non-profit engaged in a reusable pad sewing project. Since the visit, he has mobilized women and community leaders in Musoma, convening trainings and conducting preliminary research in collaboration with our partners at Buhare Community Development Training Institute (CDTI), readying the

community for the new initiative. Stephen is also a champion for clean water, working with Friendly Water for the World out of Olympia Washington to bring water filtration to the Musoma community.

I should mention that I first met Stephen through email communications and was immediately struck by his sense of dedication and commitment. As I've watched his status as a community innovator and leader evolve, I remain in awe of his integrity, sense of seriousness and potential to improve the lives of women and their families in the Mara Region of Tanzania and beyond.

(Stephen Marwa)

I am greatly enthused by this work and strive to ensure its further development throughout the country as Tanzania itself develops as a strong and productive partner in the East African economic community of the twenty-first century. As a community leader, I have a strong record of delivering on targets and am a conscientious report writer, realizing the importance of accountability to external funding partners and having responsibility in providing results and other useful feedback in a timely manner. I am an innovative and creative thinker who seeks and meets challenges head on and is a determined believer in the role I wish to play in the future health and well-being of village communities throughout Tanzania. I am custodian of resources and commit myself wholeheartedly to the swift development in Tanzania and beyond.

The collaboration with UB enhanced our work by linking HRCO (Hope Revival Children's Organization) with students from UB and by conducting research in Tanzania together with Buhare Community Development Training Institute (CDTI). It has also made HRCO well known to the potential donors who are willing to support community projects. A lot has been accomplished since the start of the partnership especially with the help of UB students. Looking forward we hope to expand through relationships all over the world. Through our partnership we have learned that the most important things are commitment, hard work, transparency and accountability for the goals of empowering the community. I think we can build a better world on our partnership through these commitments and a love and care for one another.

Buhare Community Development Training Institute



My name is Gerald Noah. I am a Law Tutor at Buhare Community Development Training Institute, a public academic institution offering community development courses. I teach law and human rights due to the fact that our graduates are expected to work as administrators in local government authorities and therefore need the basic knowledge of law which will help them in performing their duties. Other graduates work with non-governmental organizations and become good advocates for human rights.

The collaborations with the University at Buffalo have added value and expanded the scope of our engagement in community development projects. Engagement with UB partners has opened up a door for collaborations with other local community development partners like NGOs, CBOs and FBOs in Mara Region. This has brought more connections and networks, sharing of expertise, conducting joint research, organizing trainings, and workshops and conferences among partners. Collaboration with UB has been very interesting as it is evolving from students' engagement with joint projects, joint research, conferences and workshops and also exchange programs, connections and networking. This collaboration not only benefits our institution but also is beneficial to the community of Mara Region Tanzania where most of the collaborations are taking place.

Working with UB partners has expanded my role from a mere tutor to becoming an active participant in community development projects. Through collaboration with UB I

have participated in SUNY COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) course development and managed to join the COIL network which is a potential academic platform to meet with professors from various disciplines and countries. Our Institute and UB are going to develop a joint online course with assistance from SUNY COIL technology which is one of our goals, a new course to be taught by faculty from both institutions and involving students from both. Our faculty members are also participating in projects by giving advice to area organizations and sometimes acting as a liaison between the organizations and UB. From this partnership I have also developed other important connections with local government agencies that are now using my service as a lawyer through the municipal council to lead child rights awareness campaigns every June when we commemorate the African Child Day. This is very important to me as it reduces incidences of child abuse which is of high rate in our community.

In October I will be traveling to UB to join the inaugural Global Partner Studio (GPS) Institute and look forward to the opportunity to learn and share with participants, creating new opportunities for engagement in Mara Region. I hope to expand my network and connections in the fields of community development and law. I hope I will meet and thank partners who have been participating in fundraising to support projects in Mara Region and also meet those who are supporting our projects by donating material like Bak USA who donated tablet computers for our projects. I also hope that from GPS Institute we will develop or plan for bigger community projects in the near future

Reflections: Bishop Mwita Akiri (2018)
Anglican Diocese of Tarime

Girls' Education in Tarime



(Mara)

Dr. Mwita Akiri is founding Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Tarime, one of the smallest and quickly growing in Tanzania. Prior to this post, Bishop Akiri served as the National General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Tanzania for almost 10 years. He holds a PhD from Edinburgh University in Scotland and is also a Research Professor of African Church History and Missiology at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto.

To say that Bishop Akiri is charismatic would be a huge understatement. When he speaks with our students, he captivates them (us) with his passion, sense of humor, and an eagerness to challenge their thinking through provocative questions and fascinating conversations and insights.

But even more captivating than his personality is his commitment to improving the lives of the young women and their families who live in the villages of Tarime. Through his visionary leadership, Bishop Akiri is bringing bold ideas and programs to this underdeveloped region where girls marry early and life is difficult and unrelenting. Through a burgeoning sewing project, he asks girls and their families to give him one year before entering into marriage, in order to learn valuable sewing skills and develop a means for self-sufficiency. When we visit Tarime, our students engage in conversations

with the girls, even visiting their homes and learning about life in the villages, and the many complexities and surprises surrounding the practice of early marriage.

Although the Bishop is committed to expanding the sewing project to provide graduates with opportunities to earn their own sewing machines, he recognizes that education must go much farther in order to impact lasting change. One of the highlights of our trip is visiting the Pre-Primary School sponsored by the Anglican Diocese, where local children come to learn under the direction of a very dedicated volunteer teacher. Although the school lacks many of the items- such as desks and books- that we consider essential to learning, students are eager to learn and represent the bright promise of the region.

But perhaps most inspiring of all is Bishop Akiri's plans for a secondary school for girls in Tarime. Although education for girls is a priority across Tanzania, there are simply too few schools and resources, especially in rural areas like Tarime. But as the father of two girls of his own, who are both currently in college, Bishop Akiri knows the importance of educational opportunities and is committed to making his vision a reality.

(Bishop Akiri- Strategic Planning Document)

We believe that the best way to help girls and women achieve equality and self-emancipation from the tyranny of male domination in Africa is through quality education and employment. Youth in Tanzania and Africa are vulnerable to crime, drug abuse, prostitution & HIV Aids among other ills. Lack of education and unemployment contribute to many of these problems. However, girls face even tougher challenges at family and community levels, and in society. Most uneducated African parents would

regard their daughter as inferior to the son. Less developed communities in Tarime go even further. For them, a daughter is a commodity to be sold (married off) and to fetch income (bride price or dowry in the form of cows or cash). This perception encourages under-age marriage which is in turn accelerated by Female Genital Deformation (FGD). FGD is a rite of passage by which a child makes a transition to adulthood. For girls, early adulthood means early motherhood, sometimes at an age of 14.

Early motherhood comes with two challenges (among others). First, women and girls carry the burden of domestic duties. They provide labor by cultivating the family land, but have no say in how the proceeds are spent. They fetch firewood (the chief source of energy for cooking). They spend a lot of time travelling to fetch water from streams and wells as far away as 5 kilometers. They do so while carrying a baby on the back especially in rural areas.

Second, women and girls lack social and economic independence. Male domination is the order of the day in many homes and communities in Tanzania. The situation is more acute in the homes where family members have little or no school education beyond seven years. Kuria community is no exception. A young uneducated married woman with no means of income remains a ‘child’ before her husband, seeking permission to go to places of choice to socialize and begging for money to buy personal items. This is unacceptable.

My view and firm conviction is that quality holistic education that leads to employment or self-employment is one of the most effective ways to bring about gender equality and

hope to girls and women in Africa. We envision a school whose graduates are empowered to become champions of change and equality in families, communities and the nation. We want our school to have strong holistic programs that help students to grow in character with integrity, competence and confidence while also excelling in academic performance.

The school will help students to develop character that regards integrity as an important value in one's life. Such integrity should earn the girls recognition as agents for change within their families, local communities, society, and the nation in their post-school years.

We want our graduates to be among the best-qualified individuals who are able to pursue their future vocations and professions with competence. The school will create and foster a sense of maximum confidence that unleashes girl power so that the girls become agents of change toward gender equality.

PART 7: ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS

“Ends and beginnings- there are no such things. There are only middles.”
Robert Frost

July 11, 2018

Dear Mayor Gumbo,

Please accept this letter as a symbolic step towards formalizing our cities' relationship in the spirit of collaboration and friendship, as embodied by the Sister City program.

I have been traveling to Musoma since 2009 when I was first invited by members of the Immaculate Heart Sisters of Africa (Janepha Mabonyesho and Agnes Bhoke) to explore engagement around their planned school for girls in Kitenga. Since that time I have returned to Tanzania and Musoma on numerous occasions, bringing students, faculty and leaders from the University at Buffalo (UB) and the surrounding Buffalo community to engage in community development projects, learn from partners and enjoy the hospitality and beauty of your city, region and country.

I have been blessed to partner with my friend and colleague Dr. Dan Nyaronga who has been an unwavering ambassador and friend of Musoma. Together we have led short-term study abroad classes through UB, immersing students in the social innovation that is taking place related to education, health, economics and infrastructure. I am hopeful that we can continue to build on these efforts, working to leverage our engagement to further strengthen your community and support your goals. Toward this vision, I would like to recognize the outstanding leadership and collaboration that we have received from Buhare Community Development Training Institute (Paschal Mahinyila, Principal and Gerald Noah, liaison), Hope Revival Children's Foundation (Stephen Marwa, Executive Director), St. John Bosco School (Monica Achieng, liaison), Baraki Sisters Farm (Sr. Janepha Mabonyesho, liaison), and MFEC (Bishop Mwita Akiri, partner). It is through

the vision and commitment of these community leaders that we have been able to build a strong partnership and foundation on which we can continue to grow. I am very pleased to notify you that for the first time, we will be inviting a member of your team (Gerald Noah from Buhare) to travel to the University at Buffalo this October to take part in our inaugural Global Partner Studio Institute. This event will build further capacity for engagement through sharing, cultivating new ideas, and building connections. Gerald will join partners from Ghana, Zimbabwe and Jamaica as we explore experiential learning with a focus on health, social innovation and STEM education.

Based on the strength of our relationship and a shared commitment to its growth, I would like to begin the process of working toward a formalized Sister City relationship between Buffalo, NY and Musoma, Mara Region. I have begun discussions with the office of our own Mayor, the Honorable Byron Brown and have received a positive response. With your consent I will happily move forward with the process on my end, in hopes that we can formalize the relationship in the months and year to come. I should mention that next year (2019) will mark my 10 year anniversary of engaging with Mara and I hope to lead, along with Dan, a celebratory community trip. This would be a wonderful time to formalize a relationship that will surely result in great impacts for our communities and serve as a model for other partnerships throughout Tanzania and around the world.

I look forward to discussing our engagement further when we meet next week in Musoma. Thank you for being open to this relationship and the promise of global collaboration.

Best-

Mara Huber

An Alternate Beginning

(Mara, 2015)



My self-absorbed version of our Tanzania Project (or BTEP) featured me as the lead player and bearer of the Sisters' expectations and vision. Growing up we had a standing joke in our family about a dance studio just down the street which I briefly attended. My father would playfully tease that the shows were choreographed by Sally J. Crino, produced by Sally J. Crino, and starring Sally J. Crino. If I am to resist such an egocentric account of the genesis of our partnership I should humbly offer another beginning, which is really not a beginning at all, but simply a moment in an unending series of threads, lives, and stories.

Interestingly, my very first connection with the Immaculate Heart Sisters of Africa and the Mara Region of Tanzania, came at Terry's funeral. Terry was my mother-in-law's soul mate and also the brother of Timothy Allan. When I was pregnant with my second child, Terry was diagnosed with stomach cancer and became very ill, subsequently dying some 6 months later. Throughout his sickness and during his funeral Terry was surrounded by his "angels" who happened to be members of the IHSA then studying at D'Youville College. These Sisters were not the ones with whom I first connected (Sister Janepha and Sister Agnes), but instead their predecessors who had managed to secure the

first scholarships with the help of Tim and Babbidean (my mother-in-law). Terry's Sisters- Sister Therezina and Sister Annunciata, were his loyal companions, praying with him and singing, bringing him great comfort and joy. During his funeral I was touched by the haunting beauty of their voices, but most importantly by how they had embraced Terry during his final months.

Just today, in an effort to finish this book, I asked my mother-in-law about Terry's relationship with the Sisters, in hopes of confirming my memories. She indicated that Sister Therezina and Annunicata were indeed Terry's angels, always singing beside his bed and comforting him through this long and difficult illness. But what I hadn't known was that before they cared for Terry, they had tended to his (and Tim's) mother, spending long hours rubbing her hands, singing to her, and bringing her comfort during their countless visits and bedside vigils. Clearly, the Sisters' connections and history with Terry and his family, and in turn with my own family, ran much deeper than I had even known.

Sisters Therezina and Annunciata

(Timothy Allan, 2015)



I recall very clearly my first meetings with Sisters Therezina and Annunciata. I think it had to have been around the academic year 1998-1999. I walked into one of my classes at Trocaire College, a Sociology class. Although I'm a historian, at Trocaire I taught all the humanities and social studies courses.

That day, I saw huddled together in the back row two dark-skinned women dressed in "traditional" religious habits and veils. To me they looked very anxious and frightened. I walked back and introduced myself to them. And that was how I met Sisters Therezina and Annunciata. And, with that, the great adventure had begun!

I remember that since the class was required for all the Health Programs (the big enrollment programs at Trocaire) it was packed! And, the semester was already a week or so old. I recall, that after class was finished, I sat with them for a while in the empty classroom trying to learn a bit more about who they were and how they had come to be at Trocaire. One of the magical things about that first meeting – and the many, many others that followed – was that I was able to follow their heavily accented English quite easily.

What was very clear to me was that they had just arrived in the US, and that they themselves had had very little in the way of preparation for the world they were entering. Indeed, insofar as I could discern, they weren't even sure why they were at Trocaire, which was then an exclusively two-year institution. It became quite clear to me that the most basic things about studying in the US were unknown to them – and, more critically, about them. For example, the College had no transcripts from their Tanzanian educations. Other, even more basic issues had yet to be addressed. Some of these posed formidable challenges to them and those of us trying to assist the Sisters.

Room and Board questions had not been resolved. The Sisters had shown up in Buffalo after a flight from Africa through Detroit. They had only the sketchiest contact information regarding the Sisters of Mercy. Somehow they made contact and were brought to the RSM motherhouse on Abbott Road – but within a day or so, they found themselves in the classroom I described above.

I learned afterwards that their religious superiors had sent inquiries to a number of Catholic colleges in the US pleading for help in educating some of their Sisters. Trocaire responded – but beyond that encouraging response, almost nothing in the way of information about the Sisters or about the College had been developed – not even the most basic of application materials had been exchanged.

So, on the wings of hope and prayer the Immaculate Heart Sisters of Africa sent them on with not much more than plane tickets and courage to accompany them. The residential

questions offered the most serious immediate challenge. Eventually, the good-hearted and generous Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph in Hamburg, New York opened their doors and hearts to Therezina and Annunciata. There, they both lived for several years. A great debt of gratitude is owed to those wonderful Franciscan women. By the way, this was a fortuitous development – because the FSSJ house was near to my home – which had additional beneficial effects since it allowed my wife Pat and me to develop a deeper friendship with both women, and then with them to the wider community of our friends and relatives.

Meanwhile, back at Trocaire, Annunciata, Therezina, and I initiated the process of trying to develop a reliable academic record for the Sisters. In discussions with the Sisters it became clear to me that they both had already earned degrees in what would be the equivalent in this country of two-year community colleges. The more important thing, however, was that we now began to collect the beginnings of a documentary process that could be used to explore further possibilities in higher education.

The Sisters remained in my class at Trocaire and took another two or three with me over the next eighteen months or so – mainly as a means of acculturating themselves to American society and improving their spoken English and writing skills. The main objective though became and remained trying to obtain admission to four-year bachelor's degree programs for them both.

As you can imagine, this was an extremely frustrating exercise. After all, what we needed was, essentially, free educations for both women. Babbidean Huber played a huge part in the eventual success of this campaign by contacting the presidents of both Daemen and D'Youville College for us. However, despite the energetic assistance of friends like Babbidean, progress was lacking. Then, on a Holy Thursday morning, the miracles began. The phone rang at my home. It was the Sisters calling from the FSSJ convent. It was Easter Break – and with more time on their hands they had begun to despair and were now in tears – ready to go home in failure.

Hoping to comfort and distract them, I said I would pick them up for breakfast. We went to a nearby restaurant – The Pegasus. As we ate, I concluded that action was the only antidote to their situation. So I told them that we were going out to visit campuses at that very moment.

Remember – this was entirely spontaneous, without anything other than a directional plan, i.e., to start in the North-towns at UB and work our way south. We had no appointments and the campuses were, for all practical purposes, closed for the Break.

None-the-less, off we went – heading for UB where it was my intention to make a “cold call” on the campus president and ask for two full scholarships. It was a clear, sunny day – and as we drove onto the UB Amherst campus, its great size and imposing buildings stunned the Sisters. They were no doubt, awed, even intimidated by the sight – and absolutely refused even to get out of the car to walk around.

Moving on, we headed for the next nearest campus – Daemen. There, on the empty campus, we somehow found the office of Dr. Martin Anisman. We walked in and were greeted by his secretary – with her lovely Scottish accent. She, of course, pleasantly explained how busy Anisman was and that without an appointment he “could not see us today.” Persisting (my time in big corporate sales helped here), and playing off the fact that my father was born in Scotland, and especially, using Babbidean’s name, I persuaded the secretary to allow us just to “introduce ourselves to Dr. Anisman.”

The secretary went into Anisman’s office and a moment later out he came, cheerfully greeting us. Therezina and Annunciata must have been as amazed as I was when he said he had ten minutes to give us. We went into his office, he gestured to seats and asked us what he could do for us. Well, with that I gave him my pitch: “We need two college educations, Dr. Anisman. And more than that, if a college education at Daemen College costs \$100.00, we need \$99.00 of it from you. My wife and I will help with the \$1.00.”

With that, he asked if we would like a soft drink or coffee. The Sisters asked for tea! He went to his little office kitchenette and boiled tea! He wanted to learn more about the Sisters and their hopes. After forty-five minutes or so, he picked up his phone, called the admissions director and said: I’m sending two applicants to your office, please see to it that they fill out the necessary paperwork for admissions. The admission fees will be waived for both of them, as will tuitions if they are acceptable.” Needless to say – the admissions folks greeted us warmly.

I'm not sure that I can describe my feelings as we made our way back to the car – they had to be something on the order of what people feel when they have been blessed by something miraculous. I actually think the Sisters, believing as they did in the power of prayer, expected something good to happen.

My immediate reaction was to head back to Hamburg before Anisman changed his mind. But, I asked the Sisters if they still wanted to visit D'Youville. They said yes – and so, we repeated our now polished act. We marched into Sister Denise Roche's office. As it happened, I'd met her (my wife Pat is an alumnus) and so I recognized her. But – she was leaving the office. She greeted us, I introduced myself, mentioned Babbidean's name, and asked for a few minutes of her time. She said she had a commitment, but asked what we needed – and so, standing there in her outer office, I said my by now practiced lines: "We need two college educations for these two African sisters. If they cost \$100.00 we need \$99.00, etc."

With that, Sr. Denise Roche said, "Let's take a walk and see a little of the campus." And so, we got a guided tour of much of the campus from the College president – including the chapel, where all three nuns knelt to pray. As we walked down the stairs of the main building, Sister Denise directed us to the Director of Admissions (a retired Navy man), and asked him to launch the admissions process – again saying that the Sisters were not to be charged fees or tuition. With that – Sister Denise was off.

This is a summary of how Sisters Therezina and Annunciata came to America and began their academic careers. It needs to be said that through the generosity of Christ The King Parish in Snyder, Annunciata was offered room and board in the parish convent – thus affording her convenient lodging across the street from Daemen. At D’Youville, Therezina was given a dorm room – and later, through the boundless generosity of Father Jim Irving and others at Holy Angels Parish (next door to the College), residential space was created for Sister Therezina and, since then, many other African and Asian sisters.

Both Annunciata and Therezina finished bachelor’s and masters’ degrees at Daemen and D’Youville respectively. But – how they came to be going to two different schools is a fascinating story in itself.

It all evolved on that Holy Thursday as we drove home to Hamburg after the day’s miracles. As I drove, the two nuns sat in the back seat speaking to each other in Swahili. I knew that when they did that they were usually discussing serious matters. I usually asked them to speak in English – but to change the subject, I asked them which of the two schools they were going to attend, assuming that they would both go to the same school. To my surprise – indeed, my amazement – they said that one would go to D’Youville and the other to Daemen. I had never imagined that they would split up and so I expressed my astonishment. Then, they explained their decision: They did not want to risk offending either College in case other nuns from Africa might wish and hope to attend. Talk about wisdom!

Concluding Thoughts

(Mara and Dan)



They say in Tanzania that time is elastic. Rather than forcing things to happen based on one's schedule and needs, people instead allow life to unfold at its own pace and rhythm. Tanzanians inherently understand that there is a time for action, but that often we must simply wait for as long as is required, reserving our energies until they are finally called upon.

When we reflect on our partnership journey it is clear that there have been many starts and stops, moments of palpable energy and others of trepidation and calm. Yet despite these alternating rhythms- or perhaps instead because of them- we know our engagement with the Mara Region, or perhaps Tanzania more broadly, will continue to move forward *pole-pole (slowly by slowly)* evolving and developing as it will. It has often struck us that our relationship with Tanzania, or perhaps its relationship with us, is like a tapestry that weaves itself both forward and back, revealing new patterns, people, and possibilities that emerge only through the benefits and rhythms of Tanzania Time.

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