

Maggie S.
Uganda 2006
Senior Project

Last year, when I signed on for a trip to Uganda with Ms. Laura Hendrix, I was not completely sure what to expect, but I imagined a vacation filled with safaris and beautiful wild animals. While these things were impressive, the aspect that was most compelling to me was the gentle people and their need. My time spent in Uganda ended up being the most amazing and enlightening experience of my life, and I cannot wait to return. The trip to Uganda has helped me clarify that I want to make a difference in the world through community service and organizations like The Peace Corps. Going back to Uganda at the end of this year would be a perfect opportunity for me to begin working on a project that I could continue for years to come.

The more exposure I had to Uganda, the more deeply in love I fell with the country and its people. Ms. Hendrix took the group to visit schools, which were full of children who were ecstatic about learning and believed that education is a privilege. In the United States, kids feel that an education is imposed on them, and they dread the entire experience. I was also inspired by the joy the Ugandans seemed to feel in the absence of material (and some seemingly essential) goods. I was moved by their intimate relationship with their environment. They showed obvious pride and respect for the wildlife and a clear appreciation of their dependence on the land for their subsistence.

I also noticed however, that Uganda and its people suffer from poverty and AIDS. I saw many orphans who lost their parents due to complications of AIDS. A lot of kids, I observed, also had physical abnormalities, such as a swollen abdomen caused by protein deficiency. Housing situations were often primitive, consisting of dilapidated, single-single- roomed shelters with no running water.

Through my discussions with Ms. Hendrix about the United States' foreign policies in Africa, I became aware of how little my country has done to help these people. My country's negligence fuels my desire to do something that will make a difference.

I understand that there are currently Peace Corps groups working with AIDS and Habitat for Humanity. I have enthusiasm and experience in both of these areas. I am currently volunteering for Triad Health Project; a local organization that promotes AIDS awareness and provides aid to infected people in my community. I have both attended and taught classes on AIDS prevention and delivered food to AIDS patients' homes. As a Habitat for Humanity volunteer, I am one of the leaders of my school's club. My duties this year will be to organize fundraisers for a house that will be sponsored and built by our school.

I would be honored and excited to participate in either the AIDS or the Habitat for Humanity project conducted by the Peace Corps. Regardless of the project I am assigned, I will be able to use the knowledge I gain from this project in the future, for I plan to spend much more time in Uganda after college. Returning to Uganda this spring would be a dream come true and the foundation of my future in volunteer work.