

Evaluation of the conference

What to expect from a conference set in a new continent? My expectations of Africa and Uganda had previously been only from media hype, with certain points being emphasised that did not promote a peaceful country. I knew nothing about the people other than they were hard working and looking for a strong future. My assumption of the land was of dried clay with only small farms, what I came to find confirmed and contradicted by opinions both inspiring and exciting me in this exploration, for me of a new country and continent.

Whilst travelling to the conference in Jinja, what hit me first was the realisation of how much of a developing country Uganda is in stark contrast with England. The second thing I noticed was the happiness on practically every face I saw. It is a different way of life, with the same fundamental values, but ones which promote togetherness, family and care in society.

What did I then expect from the conference and the people?

From the Ugandans nothing less than friendship and I am so glad that they fulfilled my expectations for they then created a fantastic, friendly atmosphere in which the conference could then be held. As for the conference? My worry was that my research might not be up to scratch; what I should have been worrying about was my lack, or seemingly lack of debating practice in comparison to our Ugandan counterparts! They knew how to clearly articulate their points (with a lot of examples in mind) and kept thinking of new ideas, questions, statements that kept the debate flowing.

What have I learnt from this experience?

Foremost, from observing the Ugandan delegates, their utmost dedication and passion for achievement in education, to gain the qualifications to take a firm foothold in life and make a name for themselves. I truly admire them for that, certainly, for the time they put in to it. I have also learnt from the students that Uganda can still be a dangerous country, but so many people are thoroughly Christian and strive to solve conflict through peace. I have learnt that Uganda is a very green country in the context of their countryside, and that they enjoy a good game of volleyball. From the conference topics I have learnt too much to write down. I feel enlightened in different views now, however, as much as I tried to look at certain things with an open mind, some things I did have to disagree with! I hope that I did not just learn though but that I also taught, anything, in fact chess to some of the Ugandan students.

What will I take away from the conference?

New friendships; friendships I hope that will last. Opinions and views from a Ugandan perspective, really raising issues within both cultures and getting to see the similarities and the differences in both cultures. My third key thing to take away is the work ethic that is encompassed not only in students, but by the families and workers in an effort to develop themselves and their country. I have gratitude to the Ugandan delegates, Uganda and Africa for making this trip and conference so worthwhile and insightful. So thank you

My final word for now is * webale

* 'thank you' in Ugandan

Jacob Mitchell, year 13