

Reflections

I have really enjoyed the week I have spent in Uganda. The trip has been an eye opening experience which has widened my knowledge of different cultures, global issues, different people and myself.

Before the trip I was slightly apprehensive about what to expect. I had researched my topic and was eager to know who would be in my group and what work they would have done. When the Ugandan students arrived at the Discovery Centre which is much more beautiful and green than I had anticipated I was taken aback by how friendly and warm they were to all of the U.K students. The greetings all went well and everybody was already conversing over differences when we were called to our topic groups. My group was Lizzy, Christine, Faridah and myself; Lesley chaired our group and helped us form a coherent and well rounded structure. We deliberated over our topic and shared our research, the girls from Ugandan schools informed Lizzy, Lesley and myself of the terrible issues happening in North Uganda with Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army. This was extremely emotive and made me feel lucky for where I live in the world. We soon developed a good structure to our talk and decided who was going to say what. This surprised me as I did not believe we would all get on so well and come up with good points to make so quickly. My group was lucky as we were last to speak in the conference: this meant we were able to hear others speak and were able to debate on major topic issues. The topics I found most interesting were global citizenship, social justice and conflict resolution. My expectations were truly met when it was clear that not everyone agreed on the different issues. However, what I did not expect were big debates between Ugandan students. In many of the conference topics a lot of debating took place, it was good to hear different people's views and understand that different cultures can have the same opinions as well as opposing ones. I enjoyed standing up and giving our conference talk about restorative justice as I believe I shared the same passion as the girls in my group on how important the topic is. There were conflicting opinions in the group, especially concerning Joseph Kony which was expected but we all shared a common interest for our particular topic area. The last night that the Ugandan students stayed at the Discovery Centre we had an amazing camp fire set on the basketball court. This was a fantastic experience, everyone was enjoying themselves as different songs and instruments as well as poems were being performed. I wrote a poem with Charlie, Ellice and Ellis about our trip to Uganda and we performed it round the camp fire. Many of the Ugandan students sang beautiful songs and many of the UK students failed to hit the right notes in the songs – which was most certainly expected!

I believe my experience in Uganda has made me more aware of different cultures and the way they live. It has also made me think about my own life in the UK and how I take so much for granted and rely on others too much. It has also taught me that I share a lot with Ugandan students; be it my personality, the music I like or the opinions I have. The conference allowed me to develop my understanding of major issues that affect my country as well as Uganda. I have built my own opinions on these topics and also learnt from other people's opinions. The experience has allowed me to become more sociable not just with Ugandan students but with students from other schools in the U.K. Maybe sharing a bedroom and a bathroom has allowed this to happen.

The trip to Jinja in Uganda has been an amazing experience and I will take many memories back to the UK with me to keep forever. I have been made aware of the global issues that impact everyone – not just in Uganda and the UK but the whole world. I will take away the new friendships I have made and I hope to stay in touch

with all the contacts I have made. I also hope to take a different perspective of different cultures and religions and be more open to making bonds with people even if they do not share the same opinion as me.

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