

Final Lumos Report: *A Glimpse of Life and Healthcare in a Developing Country, Tanzania-*
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I have officially been back in the States for a little over a month now. The transition from being in a developing country to being back in America has been very difficult at times. I never would have thought my love for Africa would have become so strong just by being there for 10 weeks. There have definitely been moments where I just get overwhelmed with emotion since I have been back. For instance, my first day heading to my new job in the States I turned on music I had heard in Africa that I came to love and just started crying as I began driving to work. I was so sad to not be going to work in Africa. This moment made me realize how special my time in Africa was.

Working as a nurse in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania has had an influence on my career that I never imagined was possible. Observing the culture and the way people lived in Africa was truly like seeing a different world. I worked at both Muhimbili National Hospital, a major referral and government ran hospital in Dar, as well as Kidodi Rural Healthcare Clinic in a remote village. Being able to have both a city and a rural healthcare experience really allowed me to see the similarities and differences between healthcare in a developing country, versus that of the United States.

The reality versus my expectations for the project was something I never could have dreamed of. The reality far exceeded my expectations. I was able to gain such valuable insight of healthcare in a developing country by working in both a hospital and a village clinic. Moreover, I was able to make long lasting friendships with so many people I encountered. Through those friendships I was able to have very authentic experiences and see how people truly live on a day to day basis in Tanzania. Living in Tanzania was unlike anything I had ever experienced before. For instance, there was no A/C in any of the buildings. Power outages happened quite often. I had to hand wash all of my clothes because there were no washers or dryers. The number of mosquitoes that were constantly around was quite different. When I spent a week in the village all of the food that I ate was fresh from that day. There were no refrigerators, so you were unable to store food. I saw people bathing and washing their clothes in the waterfall in the village. In the city I even saw people washing their clothes in the ocean because they did not have access to clean water to rinse their clothes with, so they used the ocean.

My main goals were to have a better understanding of healthcare in a developing country and to experience what the culture was like in Tanzania. Both of my objectives were met. I gained insight on both urban and rural healthcare. Tanzania is broken up into thirty-one regions. During my time there I spent nine weeks in Dar es Salaam which makes up one of the regions and is the biggest city in East Africa. I also got the chance to spend one week in the Kidodi Village which is in the Morogoro region. This is important information because 75% of the population in Tanzania live in rural areas vs urban areas. The healthcare you see in rural areas is quite different compared to an urban area. Some factors that are important to look at are the differences of resources, access to hospitals and clinics, and education in rural areas compared to urban areas. The hospital that I worked at in Dar was one of the largest regional referral hospitals. Therefore, people from all over Tanzania would be referred here. Muhimbili had a significant amount of more resources compared to the various health facilities throughout the rural areas. The main mode of transportation to get to Dar from the various regions is by bus because it is the cheapest way of travel. I took this type of transportation when I traveled to the

village. It took over eight hours. Traveling for this length of time put into perspective how hard it must be to travel this long of distance when you are in critical need of medical care. The region I went to was one of the closer regions. Some of the other regions that the people travel from can be 16 to 18 hours away from Muhimbili. I could not even imagine traveling that far when being in need of medical attention. Therefore, by the time people get to Muhimbili from the other regions they are critically ill.

It is very interesting to compare the culture in the city versus in rural areas. I learned that it is more common for starvation and malnutrition to occur in urban areas compared to rural areas because in rural areas the community is very close and if you do not have food you simply go to your neighbor's home; whereas in a city setting you do not know your neighbors and therefore do not have as many people to rely on like you would in a village in a rural area. Moreover, another important factor to look at is the top five causes of death in a developing country. I was able to see in developed countries (as in the United States) the main reasons of death are due to chronic diseases. In contrast, in developing countries the most common causes of death are from infectious diseases. I would like to show you that comparison. United States top five causes of death: 1.) Heart disease 2.) Cancer 3.) Chronic lower respiratory diseases 4.) Accidents (unintentional injuries) and 5.) Stroke (cerebrovascular diseases). Tanzania top five causes of death: 1.) HIV 2.) Lower Respiratory Infections 3.) Malaria 4.) Diarrheal Diseases and 5.) Tuberculosis. The statistics speak for themselves. Furthermore, the number one indicator of a country's overall health is by looking at the infant mortality rate. The under-five mortality rate for Tanzania is 48/1000 live births. So, for every 1000 live births, 48 of those children infants will die by the age of five. Whereas in the United States, the under-five mortality rate is 6/1000 live births. Just by seeing this statistic you can infer that the US has better overall health compared to that of Tanzania.

I was exposed to a lot in the hospital setting in Dar es Salaam. I was able to spend two weeks in Obstetrics and Gynecology, two weeks in Mental Health, two weeks in the Emergency Department, and three weeks in Pediatrics. During my time in the hospital I also got to observe in the Operating Room, Surgical Intensive Care Unit, and the Medical Intensive Care Unit. Lastly, I spent one week in the village to see rural healthcare. I have attached photos from each of my clinical placements below:

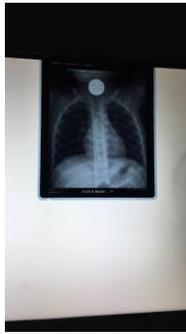
These are photos from my time in OB/GYN



Mental Health Ward



Emergency Department



Pediatrics



Village



Some of the relevant social issues I explored were access to healthcare, lack of resources, deficiency in education and public health awareness, polygamy, female genital mutilation, poverty, and proper clean versus sterile technique. I was able to be immersed in the culture as well. From the organization I went with I was able to have Swahili lessons every Monday and Wednesday and get a better understanding of the language. Please meet Mkufunzi (teacher) Sir Jacob pictured below:



I was introduced to all of the amazing types of foods that are popular in Tanzania.



I made everlasting friendships with both the people at the Work the World house and the people that lived in Africa that I worked with at the hospital. During the evenings and weekends when I was not working at the hospital I was able to explore and travel around the area. Some of the places I went to were Zanzibar, National Mikumi Park on a safari, Bongoyo Island, Kipepeo, and so much more. However, my favorite part were all the people I met and friendships that were made. My favorite part of the culture was how close everyone was with one another. People viewed everyone as family. For instance, people would refer to me as sister because they respected me as if I were their own sister. The love the people had for one another was breathtaking and truly uplifting. They are probably the sweetest most sincere people I have ever encountered, and I hope to be like them in my everyday life.



I feel like people are most scared of the unknown. A lot of people fear going to Africa because of all the things they hear. However, Africa has been one of the most beautiful places I have ever been to. The people, rich culture, and love that is there is abounding and something I will always cherish and think back on fondly. I accomplished everything I wanted to in Tanzania and even more. The people in Africa taught me more than I could have ever hoped to have taught them. The impact the people from Tanzania had on me is so hard to put into words. They taught me how to be humble and to simply make do with the resources you have and the situations you are placed in. I never really realized how true the saying, "Ignorance is bliss" was until I went to Africa. Going to Africa was like going to a different world. There were so many things I saw that I never could have imagined. When you don't know certain things going on in the world it truly can be bliss. It's different hearing and seeing things on the news or in books compared to actually seeing things in real life with your own eyes. This is something I have also struggled with since I have been back. No matter what I say or how many pictures I show people I cannot accurately show someone what it was like to be there. You simply have to live it. I can't even put into words how this experience has truly changed me. I see things so differently. A simple thing of getting a cup of water that is not bottled stands out to me or simply having toilet paper in a public restroom and being able to actually sit on a toilet rather than use the bathroom in a hole in the ground. We are so blessed with all the resources that we have in a developed country. Our infrastructure is stable, and we are able to have funding to put towards roads, healthcare, purifying water, and so on. One of the biggest concerns I have had since being home is what am I supposed to do with this experience? I want to be an advocate for health care globally and work with organizations to spread awareness and help with funding.

This experience has helped open my eyes to what some of my true passions are and what I would like to pursue in graduate school. This experience and my experience from studying abroad sparked my interest in Public Health. I would love to get my Masters in Public Health with an emphasis in Global Health once I work as a Registered Nurse in America for a year or two. My main advice I would like to share with future Lumos Travelers is to really get to know the people from the place you go to. It was nice being able to be with fellow Work the World interns; however, I was able to truly indulge in the culture when I got to know the people who actually lived in Tanzania. Never so "no" to an opportunity and make the most of everyday while you're working abroad, no matter what. I would just like to say asante sana (thank you very much in Swahili) to The Lumos Foundation, Work the World, and everyone I encountered while abroad. I cannot thank you enough for the amazing experience I was able to have. I cannot wait for many more.

- Mzungu Maji