



# Community Health Work in Zambia



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Location  
Lukomba, Zambia

## Background



Zambia is centrally located in Sub-Saharan Africa and holds a rich cultural and ethnic fabric that influences the country. The official language is English, however citizens often speak more than one of the 70+ different languages found across the 10 provinces.

## Project

As a volunteer in Peace Corps Zambia, I worked with the Community Health Infrastructure Project. The main project goals were to provide resources and support regarding:

- Maternal and child health
- HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment
- Malaria prevention and treatment.

Our work utilized existing rural health clinics, clinic staff, and volunteers to help community members determine their own health goals and build capacity within the community to solve issues they face.

## Outcomes

In Lukomba I had the privilege of working with a diverse group of counterparts/host country nationals. I quickly learned that the efficacy of a program or intervention started with community research and identifying a community member who was invested in changing the problem their community faced. While my support did not end there, the project became theirs. None of the primary projects below would have existed without such people and their vision.

**Child Health and Nutrition (Under-5's):** Under 5's were an existing program of weighing children and providing vaccinations. I worked in tandem with these volunteer groups to provide nutrition counseling, cooking demonstrations, and general health information to caregivers.

**HIV Support Groups / Beekeeping business:** Provided a safe space for individuals who are HIV positive to access information, education, resources, and psychosocial support. Beekeeping workshops were integrated to provide extra income.



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**Church Health Groups:** Health education and resources were brought to churches in the Lukomba area, with a focus on HIV information, prevention, treatment, and support. Stigma and discrimination were a focus as well.

**Peer Educator Youth Group:** A local youth group affiliated with the Lukomba clinic was created with a nurse at the clinic. The aim was to empower local youth leaders to learn and teach about HIV and sexuality, and train them to be resources and positive role models for their peers in the community. The youth group included lessons from the Grass Roots Soccer program, a way to teach HIV prevention and treatment through soccer games and activities.

**SW 648 :** Allowed me to prepare by reflecting on what to expect and what identities I was bringing to Zambia.

## Notes

Things I'd like to tell myself and Americans:

Peace Corps facilitates an opportunity that can illuminate a vital path toward deconstructing nationalistic narratives that impede global equity. Personal engagement and embracing the sometimes messy products of cultural exchange is a meaningful way to engage in humanistic interaction in a world that is getting smaller. The further removed we are and the more constructed the relationships, the blurrier and more manipulated the cyclical influence of western culture's power dynamics in the world become.

Being a Peace Corps volunteer doesn't equate to doing something of value. Doing something of value means doing something of value. To do so in the context of development work, everyone must learn what's valued from the people most affected by any external presence. Any job, any role, any single moment holds the ability to help and hurt others, as well as your self.

The way I looked at myself as a US citizen upon arriving in Zambia was not how people looked at me. Some conjecture: I believe this rings true with most Americans in most other countries outside America. I may have nuance in some areas, but they most likely see things that I do not. They're not always right, but they're often not wrong.

As Americans, really belonging in this world most likely means relinquishing a sense of power and psychological comfort to open the door to opportunity and equity. Doing so is liberating as well as just. As I believe this is true for positions of privilege I hold back in America, I believe it's true for all Americans to live thoughtfully in the world.