



The Esther School

Rebecca Little

University of Michigan School of Social Work

Country /City

My global study took place in Chongwe, Zambia in the Village of Nyangwena.



Facts

- Population of Zambia: 15 Million
- 59.1% of the population live in rural areas
- 64% of the population live on less than 1\$ a day
- 88% of the people in the village rely on growing maize for food and income
- Common problems include; alcohol abuse, HIV/AIDS, clean water, and government corruption
- The educational system has a difficult time meeting students needs
- Average ratio of pupil to teacher is 48:1
- 47% of those enrolled in school do not complete the primary cycle

Language

- The primary language in Nyangwena is Nyanja
- Below are some common phrases in Nyanja

Good morning - Mwauka bwanji.
 Good afternoon - Mwachoma bwanji.
 How are you? - Muli bwanji.
 I am fine - Nili Bwino.
 Thank you - Zikomo.

Placement/Project Information

-My global independent study was at The Esther School in Nyangwena, Zambia. The mission of The Esther School is to equip the orphaned and under resourced children in Nyangwena. I spent most of my time in the 1st grade classroom.

-While in Zambia I studied trauma in schools. I researched cross cultural effects of trauma in educational settings. My study included informant interviews, studied literature, classroom observations, a blog, and final assignment displaying outcomes.

Agency/Community Partner

-Since 2012 The Esther School continues to add one new grade each year.

-The school facilitates co-teaching. Each classroom has one North American teacher and one Zambian teacher.

-Children at the Esther school have access to clean water, they eat breakfast and lunch, brush their teeth, are given a uniform, and are taught the English language. Students parents are required to work a specific amount of hours at the school and they are paid to do so. The Esther School is focused on sustainability within the community.

Advice

- Prepare as much as possible before traveling abroad! Research, read, and talk to others.
- Keep a journal or a blog of your experiences because these are things you won't want to forget!
- Step outside of your comfort zone & push yourself to your learning edge.

Skills Utilized/Developed

During my global independent study I utilized/developed the following skills:

- Adaptability in situations that may be uncomfortable
- Engagement in culture much different than my own
- Critical thinking to understand systemic issues
- Networking for resources

Outcomes

- Understanding of the effects of trauma in Zambian schools specifically due to grief and loss.
- Understanding the differences of how trauma is experienced across cultures along with the effects and how it is treated.
- Understanding of the importance of trauma informed practices in schools.
- Understanding of how trauma can effect all aspects of life. With over half of the population living under the poverty line and living in rural areas in Zambia, many people experience extreme obstacles to receiving an education, finding work, accessing healthcare.

Lessons Learned

- I gained a better understanding social justice both domestically and internationally including culture, oppression, and the effects of marginalization and disenfranchisement.
- I realized the importance of social services in educational settings, especially for students who have experienced trauma.
- Understood the importance of experiencing new cultures and stepping outside of my comfort zone in order to continually learn and grow.



Career Connections

In the future I hope to work as a school social worker. My time in Zambia allowed me to critically think about how to effectively work with underserved populations and students who have experienced trauma. I now have a greater understanding of the effects of trauma in educational settings and the importance of trauma informed interventions in schools.

Classroom Connections

SW504: This course helped me to understand the effects of privilege and oppression across cultures.

SW625: This course made me aware of how to help kids succeed in educational settings despite experienced trauma. This course inspired me to learn more about trauma in other countries.

SW629: Part of this course included a training in trauma interventions. I was able to compare how trauma interventions in the United States may or may not be as effective in other countries.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Office of Global Activities and the Alumni Board of Governor's Association for financially supporting my Global Independent Study in Zambia. Without your financial gift this trip would not have been possible. I also want to thank Mary Ruffolo for supporting me as my instructor and pushing me to my learning edge.

