

ESWATINI / SWAZILAND



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Eswatini / Swaziland

My placement was located in the mid-veld region of Manzini, in the Chiefdom of Mlindazwe and in the community of Mgotjane, Eswatini.

It was during 2018 that Swaziland celebrated their 50 year anniversary of independence and it was during this celebration that the King Mswati III announced that the country of Swaziland would rename the nation in their native language of SiSwati. It was at this time that Swaziland became Eswatini.

Geographic Location: Southeastern Africa

Size: approximately the size of Connecticut

Population: 1.2 Million

Capitol: Mbabane

Regions: HhoHho, Manzini, Shiselweni, Lobombo



Placement/Project Information

Peace Corps: I was a Youth Development Agent. YD volunteers focused primarily on building capacity in youth on topics such as; HIV/AIDS awareness, health and hygiene, employability skills and financial literacy.

Agency/Community Partner

Community Partner(s): I worked mostly with a woman teacher/pastor in my community. She had endless insight, a huge heart for the children and youth and an energy that never quit. In addition, I worked with government officials and teachers.

Population Focus: Mostly youth girls ages 14-24. This population is considered the most vulnerable population in Eswatini.

Outcomes

PROJECTS

- Employability Skills:** College/Career Fair (x2)
- English Language Education:** Preschool Renovation and ESL Curriculum Design
- HIV/AIDS Awareness:** March, mural painting, education, testing, song and dance.
- Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) + Creative Skills Building and Entrepreneurship:** She Power Conference and Creatives Club - Building Powerful Minds, Powerful Bodies and Powerful Futures.

Skills Utilized/Developed

- Cultural Humility - every day was humbling, educating and renewing my way of moving within a different culture.
- Community Organizing - learned how to mobilize a community from the reality that the community lacked motivation, desire and hope for change.
- Intentional Relationship Building (IRB) - without first starting here - there will be little to no progress forward.

Classroom Connections

I would have to say that the Community Organization and Management course in year one was the most beneficial from an academic standpoint. However, courses which discussed identity and cultural awareness were equally as beneficial.

Lessons Learned

- Intentional Relationship Building should always be the most important part of my work as a social worker.
- Do not start an effort/project until you find a local powerhouse counterpart to spearhead the project with. Without their insight; a social worker will always miss the target in some capacity.
- Work with all people from a place of love first, everything else second.

Career Connections

My focus at the University of Michigan is at the micro level however, the Peace Corps experience is highly macro. Learning how to mobilize a community from ground zero will have the most substantial impact in my future as a social worker.

Advice

The Master's International - Peace Corps program is life changing. It will challenge you in unimaginable ways. It will break you down in order to build you back up with a new strength, confidence and perspective on life as a whole. You will leave as one version of yourself and come back another. If you are only looking to build your resume, there are easier ways to accomplish that. This experience is for those of you who really want a practical experience that works to stretch you way beyond the bullet points on a resume and make change not only in your community, but within yourself.



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