

Rolling Grant: Uganda

GREG FELTER, from Hughes Hall, was a recipient of a CUES Rolling Grant, which he used to see and research the problems of supplying water in Uganda, one of the world's poorest countries. He details his trip below...

The receipt of a generous grant from the Cambridge University Engineering Society helped to offset a portion of the expenses incurred during a trip to Kampala, Uganda. This trip was undertaken to provide insight into the social sustainability issues of achieving universal water access for the citizens of Kampala. The trip added a dimension to my dissertation, written to satisfy one of the requirements of the MPhil in Engineering for Sustainable Development program, which would have been unattainable without travelling to Uganda.

My dissertation, entitled "Water Supply Challenges as a Result of Urbanization", focused on the slew of issues facing Uganda's National Water and Sewerage Corporation in achieving universal water access, with an emphasis on water supplies for the urban poor in informal settlements. Issues such as educational outreach, increasing pollution of source water, and inadequate treatment capacity are just a few

examples of the issues facing the Government of Uganda in their quest for universal water access.

The funding provided by the Cambridge University Engineering Society helped to offset the cost of activities in Uganda. Primarily, the money was used to fund accommodation and transportation within Kampala thus enabling practical aspects of the trip. Specific activities undertaken were the interviews of industry experts and urban slum residents.

Over fifty slum residents were interviewed with the assistance of local contacts in Kampala, illuminating issues which could not have been established through the review of academic literature alone. Moreover, many industry experts were interviewed including the former director of the National Water and Sewerage Corporation, the director of WaterAid Uganda, and private sector employees familiar with the issue of water and sanitation services in urban slums and informal settlements.



*Interviewing locals
Photograph: Larna Pantrey-Mayer*

Travelling to Kampala provided me with the experience of how working in developing countries differs from more developed countries. This experience allowed me to see what a career in international development may

entail and how it differs from the traditional engineering firms with which I have previously worked; most notably, how doing business in Africa is much different than the west and the fluid nature of how plans and activities can change drastically throughout the day.

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Travelling to Uganda was an eye-opening experience ”

On a more personal level, it allowed me to view first-hand the living conditions of the world's poorest citizens and better understand the vast amounts of work which remains to be done. Travelling to Uganda was an eye-opening experience which illustrated the daunting task of providing

universal water and sanitation services and the significant amount of work which remains due to numerous hurdles still facing developing countries. From a professional standpoint, I was able to make contacts with different non-Governmental organizations, Governmental agencies and private entities, which all play a role in performing water and sanitation projects in developing countries.

Going to Kampala provided me with a much more complex and inclusive dissertation for my MPhil program. Personally, being in Kampala with only a handful of second-hand contacts challenged me to work to my greatest potential and reach to make connections with useful people in industry. Pushing myself out of my comfort zone allowed me to discover what a career in international development might involve, before pursuing such a career. The generous grant from the Cambridge University Engineering Society allowed me



Despite contamination, spring water usage is still commonplace

to grow academically, personally and professionally and for this opportunity I am extremely grateful.



*Greg interviewed residents to find out about the water supply situation
Photograph: Larna Pantrey-Mayer*