

## The Land of a Thousand Hills

I fell in love this summer; not with one particular person, but with a kind-hearted and welcoming nation. Not with one specific town, but a beautiful country of magnificent greenery, long, dusty roads and a thousand rolling hills. And I was inspired.



*Rwandan Wedding*

In 1994, just twenty-one years ago, Rwanda experienced one of the worst genocides in modern history. Almost 800,000 people were killed in just 100 days, yet, what I saw was a united, peaceful and hopeful society looking towards the future and moving on from the past.

Rwanda is a country that wants to learn and prosper, and the teaching we did there exemplifies this. I worked with six students from my university and a team of Rwandan medical students, to devise and teach a sexual health education programme in schools and youth clubs in the capital city, Kigali. We aimed to provide pupils with a deeper understanding of their own sexual health and raise an awareness of HIV/AIDS and unplanned pregnancies, and how they can be prevented. Sexual health had never been implemented in the school curriculums; so we extended our project to train teachers on the issues, leaving schools with the material and knowledge to continue the programme after we left. We also organised football tournaments between schools and youth clubs to encourage pupils to attend lessons and reach an even wider audience. It was uplifting to see how whole villages and schools turned out to support their teams and they insisted we played by 'international football rules' showing just how serious they took the games!



*Football with a view*



*Teaching lesson outside*

Leaving Rwanda, I thought if I had touched one pupil in the way ten people did to me every day, I would be happy. My favourite memory is from a visit to Lake Kivu, in the Northern Province. When lost on a hunt for hot rocks, we met a small community who showed us their home. They took us round an island in the middle of the lake on their small, wooden boats explaining the volcanic history of the land, pointed out a variety of coffee and fruit trees and showed us their extremely small homes. We all complain about being poor students at home, but here I realised how much of what we have is luxury and felt a true appreciation for everything.

Africa really is a world apart from home. From the 50p moped rides to classes outside on the grass, children running and hugging you in the street to a bus of people lovingly laughing at your attempt to speak their language. Every day brought something new. I returned home with a desire to experience more of this amazing culture. I want to teach more and learn more and be humbled and surprised again and again. I was blessed to be able to experience the beauty of Rwanda and the people there, and it will always have a special place in my heart!

Thank you Go Abroad Fund and everyone who donated to our project for making this possible!



*Final day of teaching at Masaka 2 Secondary School*

*Day out at a United Nations press conference  
for World Population Day*

Anna Deery

