

TRIP REPORT EXAMPLE

Following is an actual trip report prepared by Trinity Church, Boston. They reflect on their experience from a variety of perspectives and demonstrate a strong understanding of the elements of successful and effective mission relationships:

Kenya Partnership Trip – August 2013

- **Describe any major changes in the project activity or timetable**

There were no major changes to the project activity or time table. Though there were small moments of the trip that were unplanned and required some flexibility on everyone's part (This is Kenya), the overall timeline and focus of the project stayed the same.

- **Describe any significant lessons learned from your work**

The task we set before ourselves was to change the way we see and do mission at Trinity Church, starting with the Youth. We committed to conversation, open-mindedness, and mutual sharing with our partners in Rongai, Kenya and at Tatua-Kenya. Our partners have less money, don't have working toilets, and have different priorities than we have in America. We learned that they are just as, if not more, wealthy than we could have ever thought. This realization happened almost immediately for some of us. Other members of our group still struggle with the urge to pay for and fix "problems" we see. We also learned that just as we fight preconceptions of the culture in Kenya, those in Kenya fight preconceptions of us. As we gathered in conversation and began to share our stories, we saw in our new friends the same openness we strived for, and the same struggle we fought. In everything we hoped to achieve, we were not alone. Talking about this and recommitting to our relationship every time we gathered, strengthened our bond and made it easier (though the work may be hard at times) to let go of those preconceptions.

- **Describe specific areas in the relationship that foster empowerment, mutuality, interdependence, and shared leadership. Provide examples of relationship building.**

The day we met the boys at Nyumba Ya Tumaini, we gathered in a circle, did introductions and listened to the stories of how this boys' home came to be and how the specific boys came to live there. One boy, Gibson, shared his story of being on the street, the moment he realized he had to leave and how we found Tumaini. The stories we heard were real, and raw, and empowering. To tell their stories gave the boys power and showed their strength and made them our leaders.

As we began our service projects together, our group shared strengths and skills that lifted up each person in group. We relied on the boys to show us what was important to them, how they paint, how they build, what they prioritized, where they went around town and how they got there. In every step, the boys led us. This helped to foster a sense of mutuality and understanding between the two groups. In every moment of our work together we shared in the challenges and the victories. We shared in the relationship building and care for one another.

One of the other large factors that contributed to our mutuality, shared leadership and relationship building was playing. We taught them the wonderful game of ultimate Frisbee while they dominated us

in our soccer matches. In all of the hard work we did together, we played just as hard and it was in those moments of play and fun that all barriers we had thought existed between the two groups just fell away.

- **Outline your plans for the sustaining this relationship and any related projects.**

While in Kenya we spent a lot of time both just in our Trinity group and with the boys of Tumaini discussing how we were going to come back the US and talk to people about our trip. Many of the youth described feeling as though people back home would not possibly be able to understand what the trip meant to all of us involved and what we experienced there. We spent a lot of intentional time practicing and talking about how to tell our stories to others. On our last day with the boys the staff at Tatua led us in a personal narrative training to help both the group from Trinity and the boys from Tumaini gain skills and insight into how we can talk about our experiences with others. This was extremely helpful to all of us mostly because one of the key steps we knew we wanted to talk to sustain our partnership was to come home, tell others about our experience, and hopefully welcome more and more people from our community into this amazing relationship with Tumaini.

For this coming year, our plan for sustaining our partnership is to continue the work we started last year by staying connected to the boys through videos, letters, and photos that we send one another. Many in our group already have been communicating and keeping connections with the boys through Facebook and other outlets. The friendships created are being sustained through one-on-one relationships and connections as well as group efforts. We also plan on traveling back to Kenya in the summer of 2014 to have the chance to come back to the community and visit the boys again. This time, we want to expand our connection. Tatua will be starting a community organizing fellowship through their organization which will help young people who want to be a part of the fellowship get training and experience working in community organizing. One of the boys from Tumaini, Karis, who has just finished high school plans to do the fellowship with Tatua and Trinity plans to help support him in this work emotionally, spiritually, and financially. Karis will be working mainly with Tumaini and helping the home mobilize the community around them into action so that the resources in the community can be used to create sustainability for Tumaini and create some real change for the boys living on the streets of Nairobi. The mutuality piece of the fellowship comes from Tatua not only helping give Karis the skills and training he will need, but also Karis and Tatua staff will be helping Trinity to think about how this type of work can be utilized in our community here and how we can use some of the same methods to work for mission and justice in our communities. This is the perfect example of how communities can walk along side on another as they learn, grow, and support the work that each community is doing.

- **With local leadership, complete an informal asset/needs assessment of the development situation in the area. Identify opportunities for local capacity building, and issues of concern**

One of the key struggles that local communities, especially those close to Trinity, and the diocese at large are facing is the heartbreak and devastation of gun violence in the city of Boston. Over the past year, communities in this diocese and those close to Trinity have witnessed horrible acts of violence and most affecting the young people in the communities the most. In an effort to help put an end to this senseless violence, Trinity church, the Trinity Boston Foundation, St. Stephen's in the South End, and many other communities in the diocese of Massachusetts and the diocese at large have started working

together in anti-violence campaigns and fundraising. This type of work and local capacity building is especially important for the youth in these communities. It is through the organizing and empowering of the youth that communities can really make a difference in this world of gun violence. Trinity youth program has already begun to think critically about how we can better get involved in this local effort and mission including working with other communities. It is important and vital to this work that the youth at Trinity, St. Stephen's, TEEP, and other youth from around the diocese begin to work together and build relationships and connections here in their local communities in order to help create real change. Some of these relationships have already started because of the Kenya trip last summer. St. Stephen's and TEEP were both invited to be a part of the partnership and come to Kenya with the youth from Trinity last year. This opportunity and fostering of relationships internationally helped Trinity youth to begin to connect with people in their very own neighborhood. It does not make a lot of sense that it would take starting a relationship with an international partner and traveling half way around the world for the youth here in Boston to be able to see one another and start a relationship right here, but then again...it sort of makes perfect sense. This partnership with Kenya has united us with an amazing international mission partner as well as helping us see more clearly each other better right here in Boston.

- **With local leadership, prepare an inventory of other organizations working in the same or nearby community who might serve as partners/collaborators**

In starting this work locally with the anti-violence campaigns as well as continuing our partnerships in Kenya, Trinity hopes to continue working with TEEP and St. Stephen's in the South End. Sustaining these relationships have already begun and leaders from all three groups are beginning to think critically about how to broaden these connections made on this trip right here in Boston. In addition, Trinity leadership has also been meeting with and discussing ways to partner with the Dorchester Bay Youth Force, diocesan anti-violence campaigns, and other area Episcopal Churches working to stop gun violence in Boston with an emphasis on empowering youth. These partnerships are in the beginning stages now and will hopefully continue to grow and take shape into the start of 2014.