



Sundeep Nahal

Medical &
Pharmacological
Sciences

This was my first experience in Africa and after the impression this trip has left on me, it definitely will not be the last time I go there. We first arrived to a somewhat miniature airport with not much going on in particular, very few people, only a small wire fence to mark out the boundaries and surprisingly, a family sitting outside their house literally neighbouring the airport. I knew from then that this was going to be a trip unlike any other. The scenery of Malawi was very vast and changing; you could go from the sweltering heat down by the lake where the shade was your friend with vast fields of red soil, to high up in the mountains abundant with plants and trees, where the temperature would drop to below 10 degrees Celsius.

The people of Malawi I found to be warm and inviting which seemed to contrast vastly with the way in which they were living, as a majority of areas were extremely poor. Farming the land was the main way to feed your family and if anything was left over it would be sold for little more than pennies in our money. This meant most rural children could not afford materials for school and in some cases couldn't afford to attend, meaning the standard of education was much below the standards we'd expect in England. However the people seemed to have a strong community work ethic understanding that working together was a way to help improve their lives in the villages. They would group together in building churches, nurseries and schools.

We witnessed this first hand when we went to help a village high up in the mountainous region, too far and treacherous for any vehicle to enter carrying building supplies such as bricks. We arrived to be engulfed by a large group of the children, as was the case at most villages we worked at. We met a group of villagers who were making bricks from the water, mud and clay dust which was available from the ground itself. The process involved mixing water and mud together with hoes, then all of us jumping around in the mixture till it was a

smooth dough like consistency. I definitely shouldn't have worn jeans! The mixture was then placed in casts and left to dry in the sun. As we started to get involved more and more villagers came out to help which showed a strong sense of community. Even the chief appeared to help which seemed to surprise even the villagers. After the bricks had dried they would be covered in clay dust and baked in mud brick ovens built from the bricks themselves. After this they would be complete and ready for building with, in this case a school. That day we made over a 1000 bricks.

This strong sense of community and hospitality seemed to be a common theme no matter where we went. For example the time we spent fixing a borehole, more and more people would come to aid in any way possible, regardless of ability but just wanting to help. Water was of great importance to the Malawi people as it meant, as one villager put it "life". This could be seen as the people rejoiced once the water began running again for the first time in 2 years. Such a common daily necessity, that in England we would take for granted, would grant these people so much happiness. Malawi has helped me see the world in a very different perspective and I am very grateful.



The male members of Team DASH 2014 next to Lake Malawi: Dan, Tom, Sunny, Rob, Harrison (mechanic from Fisherman's Rest and our driver on the trip), Kieron