

## Section I

### a. Summary of the Project Goals

The goal of *A Breath of Fresh Air* was to improve the effectiveness and reach of the government's existing Canarumwe improved cookstove (ICS) campaign.<sup>1</sup> First, we hoped to facilitate the adoption of clay-based biomass stoves in the previously underserved village of Bwana and the Rwamagana Sector in Eastern Rwanda where we were living. Second, we worked with SNV, the Netherlands Development Organization, and the Rwandan government to create an SMS platform that would enable widespread monitoring and maintenance. This would both help make the project more efficient from a centralized perspective, but also improve the ability of the program to expand quickly into more rural areas without losing touch with maintenance systems. These small goals were intended to support the ultimate goals of reduction in deforestation, decreased time spent foraging for wood, faster cooking, and improvements in respiratory health.

### b. Other Fundraising

We received a grant for \$1,500 from Georgetown's Social Innovation for Public Service (SIPS) Fund, which exists to support students' efforts at innovation for the common good, which went toward stove production and project implementation.

### c. Project Activities

Implementing our project required two very different types of work. About half of our time was spent in Kigali, working in an office, and staring at a screen. The other half was spent living about 2 hours east in a village without electricity. In Kigali, we worked on the technical side of the SMS platform. We met with tech experts, local phone companies, and other stakeholders to make a product that would be practical and effective for centralized use but accessible for every stove owner, stove installer, or stove retailer. While outside of Kigali, we spent our time meeting with people in the area, hauling stones and other materials for installations, and trying to bring the model of stove adoption to the area where we lived. The SMS platform was based on a system called TextIt, with flows adapted for the Canarumwe project specifically. The model that we tried to implement in our sector was a financial model developed by SNV that provided a return for the producer, retailer, installer, and marketer of a stove. All of this was done interchangeably over the course of 12 weeks, but we spent almost all of our nights with our host family in Bwana.

### d. Difficulties

We faced difficulties primarily in two respects: the perception in our rural community of our role in the project and bureaucracy. In the rural areas, our funding created an apparent misalignment of expectations between important actors in our project and ourselves. This complicated negotiations over the financial terms of our partnerships, especially given that the Rwandan government stipulated that the supply chain be entirely commercial. In Kigali, we faced bureaucratic challenges. Many employees were also on leave for portions of the summer and their absence made progress difficult because we were often dependent on guidance and approval from leaders in the organization to move forward.

### e. Projected Impact

In the rural area where we worked, through the installation of stoves, at least 50 people benefitted from the decreased cooking time, lower deforestation, and lower smoke levels that attend stove use. We set up the infrastructure for approximately 300 further people to benefit in the same way through further stove installation. In Kigali, the SMS platform can immediately reach the approximately 3,900 households that provided a cell phone number to the Canarumwe initiative. The project financed 100,000 SMS for the initiative, which would permit the initiative's leaders to reach far more

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.snvworld.org/en/countries/rwanda/news/establishing-a-last-mile-retail-system-for-canarumwe>

## Section II

### **a. How do you define peace?**

Peace is much more than an absence of war; it is also a state of happiness and healthiness. To that point, Maire Dugan's nested theory of conflict posits that peace building must attend not only to the immediate issue, but also the relationships, the subsystem, and the system that surround it.<sup>2</sup> The links between these aspects of peace building were very apparent for us during our project. Working in Rwanda, the Rwandan Genocide of the 1990s existed as a context for all of our work. Many great initiatives focus on reconciliation for recovery from conflict. We hoped to build on those projects by supporting an environment of good respiratory health and plentiful resources for peace to flourish and to present more opportunities for happiness and healthiness.

### **b. How does or will your project contribute to peace? Short-term? Long-term?**

The current social structure in which deforestation fuels fires at the expense of human health and soil quality is not a recipe for durable peace; it does the contrary, because it endangers health and the agricultural subsystem that employs 70% of Rwandans.<sup>3</sup> In the short term, our project was able to make an impact by introducing the Canarumwe stove to the village we lived in and by piloting an SMS platform, allowing dialogue that will improve accessibility and service. The SMS platform will permit stove-owners and stakeholders to voice their opinions to policymakers, to whom they otherwise have limited access. Because the current system of cooking rests on unsustainable and unhealthy practices, we hope that our short-term efforts have driven toward our long-term goal: creating a space where empowered Rwandans can make their peace more durable.

### **c. Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has it changed you?**

The project this summer had a large impact on both of us, but in different ways. For Philip Dearing, it was his first extended stay in Africa. It challenged him in ways that he did not expect. In fact, the hardest part of the summer was not the project itself, but confronting the markedly different standards of living. This understanding of his own privilege transformed from a distant concept to an indisputable reality. However, some of the bigger changes were self-realizations of limitations and unknown abilities in himself. The limitations were made clear in the form of difficulty communicating and patience with bureaucratic delays. The abilities shown through in terms of resiliency in the face of the challenges listed previously and an eagerness to engage larger topics of peace rather than focusing narrowly on a project. On the whole, this project broadened Philip's perspective on issues related to community and health, while also helping him to understand a great deal about himself.

For Philip Wong, this summer reaffirmed the need for cautious optimism. Peace building has the potential to be very empowering but, as with any line of work, is disheartening at times. In some of our most difficult moments we were pulled along by our friends: one person helped us to haul wheelbarrows of stones for a half-mile uphill--at 6am no less--to ensure that the first round of stoves could be successfully installed. If we had not remained cautiously optimistic, we might have written off opportunities and thus limited our project unnecessarily; and there were almost certainly times when we did just that. Of course, such optimism needs a large dose of realism to prevent it from becoming pure naivete. This delicate balance was not so much a new lesson as one re-learned emphatically.

### **b. Personal Statements:**

"A Breath of Fresh Air taught me to view the world through the lens of opportunity instead of limitation. It's a lens that can be difficult to maintain at times but proved very valuable this summer." Philip Wong

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<sup>2</sup> Maire Dugan, A Nested Theory of Conflict, A Leadership Journal: Women in Leadership - Sharing the Vision, Volume I, July 1996

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.usaid.gov/rwanda/agriculture-and-food-security>

A Breath of Fresh Air

Rwanda

Philip Dearing, USA, Georgetown University

Philip Wong, USA, Georgetown University

“The Davis Projects for Peace grant gave me the opportunity to break out of the rigid programming that had been in my life through high school and college. By going out in the world to try, and fail, I learned so much more about the world and myself than I ever could have in a structured program.” Phil Dearing



A Traditional 3  
stone stove



A Kiln for producing the  
Canarumwe stove



Hundreds of stoves in storage  
and ready for installation