

Tanzanian Women's Health
Tanzania
Trinity College
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Synopsis: The Trinity College African Development Coalition successfully completed the construction of a maternity ward in the village of Lotima, Tanzania. The ward is expected to serve a total of 15,000 residents. The new ward boasts five rooms, two wheelchair ramps, and a bathroom. We left Tanzania with a guarantee from the Ministry of Health that they would assign additional doctors to the facility, which would allow it to operate on a 24-hour basis.

Pre-departure: Prior to our trip to Tanzania, the ADC group spent many hours preparing for the implementation of this project. With the help of Professor Seth Markle, we reached out to community leaders in Tanzania to inform us about our work and get their helpful input and suggestions. We networked with people from the World Health Organization of the United Nations, the World Bank, as well as community-based organizations, such as AfriRoots.

On The Ground: Upon arriving in Tanzania, the ADC spent a few days in Dar es Salam, the capital, before traveling to the village of Lotima, in Moshi. We were able to exchange some of the money we brought with us and establish a relationship with AfriRoots, a community-based organization. In addition, we were able to secure a translator who was part of this organization. We also discussed prices for the construction of the maternity ward and got an estimate of the materials that we would need to purchase.

Construction: Upon our arriving in Lotima, we held a meeting with government representatives from the community, the district medical officer, as well as local community leaders. We expressed to the leaders our expectations and the nature of our partnership. We informed the leaders that our goal was to leave their village with a functional medical center. We hired construction workers from the community, set a clear schedule for our work, and laid out our goals and expectations for the project. We discussed salaries and incentives that we had for them. Having secured our team for the construction, we immediately started working on the construction of the maternity ward. Our primary role was to supervise the project. We worked alongside the construction workers to ensure that we were able to provide everything that they needed. We brought them truckloads of bricks and cement. We made arrangements with a local supplier to ensure that we had all the materials needed, from the roofing to the painting of the structure.

Another aspect of our project was to bring clean water to the community. We contracted a company to work on this as soon as we arrived. MajiTech, the water pump company we hired for the project, drilled up to 115 meters in search of water for the community. Unfortunately, we were unable to find water, which was a huge disappointment for our team. However, we were glad to have constructed a five-room maternity ward for the community.

The Community: The people of Lotima Village welcomed us into their homes with open arms, and we developed meaningful relationships with many of the people there. We learned a lot from their humble way of life. They brought us joy and laughter during some of the most challenging aspects of our project.

Opening Ceremony: Upon completing the project, we organized an opening ceremony where we invited the entire community to join us. With over 500 people in attendance, it was truly a celebration of a month of hard work. Our structure was ready to be showcased to the community and doctors and government officials alike were impressed with our work. We were reminded that the government has been trying to build a facility there for over 40 years, to no avail. We toured the new facility with government officials

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and community members who were present at the ceremony. We arranged for the feast to feed all of the people who showed up at the event.

Lessons Learned: The ADC team walked away from Lotima having learned about this community, about ourselves and the change we were capable of creating in this village. This project tested our patience, our willingness to listen to others, and most importantly, our tenacity in the face of a multitude of challenges. We worked as a team to deal with the issues that we faced. We learned about a way of life and a culture that some of us had never been exposed to. Finally, we all walked away from this experience knowing basic words and phrases in Swahili – the national language of Tanzania.

Appreciation: This project would not have been possible without the generous support of many individuals and organizations. First, we would like to thank the Kathryn Wasserman Davis Projects for Peace for their grant. We would also like to thank the Shelly and Donald Rubin Foundation for their continued support over the years. We want to thank the Trinity College community for believing in our initiatives and having faith in a group of college students to work on projects of this magnitude. We also want to thank our friends and family who cheered us on every step of the way. Last but not least, we want to thank the people of the village of Lotima in Tanzania, who spent countless hours making sure that we are comfortable and shared with us the little that they had. Their humble way of life was our source of inspiration. Without them, this project would not have been possible.

