

8-2009

Intern Debriefing Report. Oyugis Placement

Jennifer Eldridge

Jennifer Eldridge – Debriefing Report

Oyugis Placement: May-August 2009

Goals

- Have kitchen up & running
- Learn all hotel staff's names
- Learn all Yogurt Mamas names
- Speak a decent amount of Luo

Accomplishments

- Learned names of all hotel staff I interact with June 20
- Learned a good amount of Luo July 9
- Learned all Yoghurt Mamas names July 13
- Start production at the kitchen July 19

Suggestions for project needs

Better communication between WHE & projects on the ground. For example, WHE thought that training would be complete and production would be started, when in reality there were still many things that had to be completed before this could happen. Milestones should be established by the African Project Coordinator, and status updates on each item submitted on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. There is also role confusion- no one is really sure who they are reporting to (the interns nor the Project Coordinator) or who needs what information. With a Canadian Project Coordinator (Ellena) and Project Leader (Isaac) listed, who is responsible for what with the project? What is the interns/African Project Coordinator's relationship with them supposed to be? Why were the interns only introduced to one of these people, and why were our project related questions not re-routed from Bob to Isaac?

Recommendations for the steering committee

Advice for structuring future Internships

- Clearly define relationship between interns and Project Coordinator- co-workers, boss?
- There is also poor understanding on many of the players' parts as to their roles & responsibilities within the project. Apparently the Mwanza project is a Western Heads East project, while the Oyugis one is not. Instead, the funds flow through the University of Western Ontario. However, WHE still sends interns, has visited the site & met the local players, and fundraises for the project. This relationship is not very well defined, at least by the Kenyan team, including the interns.
- Need for more work-related training- increase information in Orientation Guide
 - We are given many, many documents before departure- importance & relevance of Orientation Guide should be stressed- I didn't read until a month into my internship,

and found many of my questions answered there- should be one of the first things given to interns, gives a nice background

- All interns should be given a copy of previous interns' reports
- This will decrease the adjustment & learning time once on site
- Will allow for continuity of the project and ensure that interns' work is actually put to use
- All project information should be shared with interns, including project budgets, challenges & obstacles faced in the past & currently, and contact information of previous interns (especially those whose work was related or created the building blocks for their work)
- Training was too focused on cultural adjustment & not enough on project information- Project Coordinator should be much more involved in preparation phase

Problems with the current program

- The Mwanza kitchen is not currently producing probiotic yoghurt- they are instead using previous days' prepared yoghurt for inoculation, which results in a very diluted product
- The Yoghurt Mamas have observed that the work & research being conducted by the WHE interns have not yet resulted in any tangible benefits for their kitchen
- Important to have evaluations of interns work, from the Mamas, the African Steering Committee, Project Coordinators in Africa & Canada, their faculty supervisor, and the WHE Steering Committee
- WHE insists on some policies that can impede the process. For example, Microfinance Training must be completed before operations can commence. Therefore, funds allocated for these items sit unused in the bank account, while money cannot yet be extracted for supplies until it is spent. As far as the Microfinance portion is concerned, the Chair Lady of (one of the women's groups) has a degree in business and is a government official (official position?). She is more than qualified to instruct on the business component of training. It would also be more prudent to wait to conduct the Microfinance training until the women are close to reaching the commercial phase. Being trained before the phase where the kitchen is being used for the study is not nearly as relevant, as most of the business practices are being conducted by the Project Coordinator and the interns. Once these practices are tested and integrated into the daily operation of the kitchen, the Mamas will learn how to conduct this aspect of the business on their own, and then will be in a position to learn more from Microfinance instruction.
- The methods used to carry inventory are also causing major losses. A freezer was purchased to hold the yoghurt because of its significantly larger capacity. However, the weight caused by build ups of product causes many of the lower packets to burst, wasting all of the yoghurt within as well as the package. Additionally, this requires the freezer to be emptied and cleaned daily. A fridge has been ordered to reduce the load in the freezer, but is already two weeks late in its delivery.

- The only funds that are often released are those for the milk, which leaves the kitchen in dire need of basic supplies, such as pens, soap, detergent, scouring pads, towels, cooling vessels, and transportation funds.

Communication Breakdowns:

- WHE does not inform interns of past interns' work
- WHE is not aware of specifics of project status & therefore cannot adequately prepare interns
- No formal line of command- no one really sure who they are supposed to report to or what they are supposed to report
- Since the Project Coordinator has prepared the kitchen for production virtually alone, there was no need to contact the Yoghurt Mamas regarding every development or issue that came up. So when KEMRI demanded that we complete a tendering process despite already having located suppliers, the PC did so. However, in neglecting to inform the Yoghurt Mamas, a huge controversy was started where rumours were spread that the PC was no longer accepting their bid and was keeping it for himself. Unfortunately, the milk supply issue got so out of hand that Francis, the Project Leader for the Kenyan team, had to be brought in

Power Struggles:

- Project Coordinator & Yoghurt Mamas
 - Mamas have difficulty respecting the Coordinator due to their significant age gap
 - Mamas do not see value in Project Coordinator due to their "ownership" of the kitchen
- KEMRI & The project
 - Since the project has such a small budget, it is never a high priority for KEMRI
 - KEMRI does not use the honorarium given to them to help the project

Frustrations:

- KEMRI slowing down process of money retrieval
- KEMRI insisting on using their own suppliers to purchase kitchen materials, often resulting in the wrong materials bought at too high of a price
- Inflexibility of World Bank budget- no room for saving money or finding better solutions
- Decisions made by the Project Coordinator and interns dismissed by the Yoghurt Mamas
 - Re: milk tendering, selecting 40 ksh supplier
 - Re: allocation of different coloured towels to separate items for QC purposes
 - Re: no children in the kitchen, for QC purposes

Weaknesses of the Project:

- Due to need for accountability to KEMRI, receipts are demanded for all expenditures
 - However, as anyone who has travelled to Africa is well aware, obtaining said receipts is much easier said than done, especially for local transportation

- Project participants often pay for transportation & food costs out of their own pocket- not a good way to reward and retain hard working employees

Advice for Selection of Future Interns

- Most important qualities:
 - Self-motivated (no one is telling you what to do or monitoring your work, must improvise a lot)
 - What would you do if your boss just didn't show up to work one day?
 - What if within a week of arriving, you discovered that the project you had been assigned was no longer feasible or necessary?
 - What is the most important outcome of this project for you?

Future Project Needs

Will need interns:

- January-April to coordinate conclusion of Phase 1 of the study, assist with transition period (while either production is reduced from 80 L to 20 L or sales are increased from 100 packets to 400 packets), help with data collection, write WB report, coordinate Phase 2 of the study
 - At least 1 Business intern and 1 Science intern
- July/August-October to coordinate conclusion of Phase 2 of the study, assist with transition period (while either production is reduced from 80 L to 20 L or sales are increased from 100 packets to 400 packets), help with data collection, write WB report, establish new sales channels, prepare kitchen for sustainability post-study
 - At least 1 Business intern

Personal Development/Effect

- Learning to listen more than talk
- Learning not to judge people as quickly
- Appreciating how spoiled we are, especially with choice (food, clothing, jobs, banks, everything)
- Learning more about how black people view Mazungus
 - Cash cows
 - Superior race
 - More highly developed & intelligent
 - Access to limitless opportunities
- How knowing mazungus personally changes their opinion
 - See us as more friendly, less judgemental & talkative than their kinfolk
- I complain too much- need to learn not just to suck it up, but to internalize it and not let little annoyances or differences bother me at all
- Try to think about what in someone's past would make them do this/react like that/treat me like this, rather than becoming resentful towards or losing respect for them

Professional Development/Effect

- Working on improving data analysis skills, which is a skill I need to develop for my expected career path as a consultant
- Importance of separating personal life/issues from work life/issues
- Integrity & solid work will earn people's respect better than any other display of maturity
- People often do not appreciate the work you do or the sacrifices you make, but as long as you have internalized your goals, you can push through

Greatest Learning Experiences

- I own hundreds of things that are worth more money than the average person here earns in a year
- People in North America are way too worried about their children- kids here look after each other, are free to play without supervision, can cry without being comforted & move on, wear whatever clothes fit, can run around barefoot, play in the rain
- People in North America are obsessed with perfection- won't wear clothes with rips in it or that don't match or aren't seen as "cool" (saw a man playing soccer in cream shorts with teddy bears hugging on them- no guy would be caught dead in these in NA)
- People in North America believe that money means you should get to demand exactly what you want- people here are happy to receive what you give (e.g. types of eggs), will wait for food to be prepared & delivered
- People in North America are obsessed with timeliness & keeping yourself entertained & occupied & productive