



GU-Q Students' Kenya Trip: A Journey of Social Entrepreneurship and Community Impact

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In May 2024, a group of students from Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) embarked on a trip to Kenya, expecting an adventure. They did not anticipate a journey that would profoundly reshape their understanding of community and social impact.

For Saim Haider (SFS'26), who signed up for the Community Education Program (CEP) trip to study social entrepreneurship and looked forward to travel, safaris, and cultural experiences, the trip transformed his understanding of local development. "We landed around 7 a.m., and went straight to the hotel for breakfast and meetings," Saim recounted. Their first meeting, with a World Bank representative, provided a crash course on Kenya's socio-economic landscape, setting the tone for their experience.

The CEP, rooted in Georgetown values, merges academic learning with practical field experiences fostering critical thinking and cross-cultural problem-solving. In Kenya, students explored the nation's vibrant culture and entrepreneurial spirit, focusing on social entrepreneurship and community development.

Learning and Engaging in Nairobi and Nayuki

In Nairobi, they immersed themselves in Kenya's multifaceted context to understand the foundations of social entrepreneurship. "We designed the program to give students a broad understanding of Kenya's history, politics, economy, sociology, tribes, and nation-building before diving into specific issues," explained Malak Elmoh (SFS'21), a Student Development Officer at GU-Q.

The students engaged directly with local communities, exploring sustainable solutions to societal challenges. They interacted with entrepreneurs, visited social enterprises, and participated in workshops emphasizing innovative approaches to social issues. "Each meeting allowed us to ask questions and gain insights. Everyone on the CEP was working on something impactful, from accessibility projects to agriculture-based social entrepreneurship," Saim explained.

From Nairobi, the students traveled to Nanyuki to participate in Habitat for Humanity's volunteer program, helping to build houses for people in poor communities. Aya Hassan (SFS' 25) was deeply touched by helping construct a house for a single mother with five children. "Seeing the family that would live in the house made it personal," she said.

Bringing Lessons Home

Back at GU-Q, the students share their experiences through presentations, discussions, and community projects, enriching the community's understanding of global social entrepreneurship. "Our main priority is to push students outside their comfort zones," said Malak. "The CEP extends beyond the trip itself. It's about implementing what they've learned on campus and within their communities."

Reflecting on the experience, the students highlighted the profound lessons about community and social impact. "My biggest takeaway was the strong sense of community we saw there," Saim noted. For Aya, the key lesson was the importance of intentional collective work and engaging with people outside her usual circles. Ultimately, "Everyone came back a different person," she said.

