

# JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

## REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/  
Conference Title:**

Research on Aridity and Malnutrition at Sadhana Forest Kenya

**Travel Dates:**

1<sup>st</sup> June – 10<sup>th</sup> July 2016

**Location:**

Samburu County, Kenya

**Group member(s):**

Amy Russell

**Aims:**

-Assisting in data collection      -Experience a simpler way of living

-Learn about the culture in Kenya

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**OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-**

Along with a friend who I travelled with, computer based research on arid and malnourished countries was carried out, to assist Sadhana Forests founder in funding applications for future projects. We ranked the top 20 hungry countries in terms of undernourishment, and also looked at factors such as the proportion of land which was arid, the country's political stability, and the most arid and malnourished regions in each country. This information helped to decipher the most suitable countries for future Sadhana Forest projects – those which are somewhat politically stable so that volunteers are able to travel and stay there, and malnourished regions which are also arid. From the information we decided on the top 3 countries (one each from Asia, South America and Africa) to be considered for future projects.

As well as research, we also helped out in communal duties such as food preparation, composting and cleaning. We slept in tents, and did our cleaning, washing and cooking outdoors. The electricity was solar, and we used either electricity or charcoal fire for cooking when electricity was low. We used a traditional charcoal-burning stove called a jiko. It was very eye opening living in such a simple manner and doing daily routines outdoors, surrounded by nature. It made me very aware of my water usage and what I was putting into the natural environment, and made me think about how I could reduce waste in my life back in Scotland.

There were opportunities to interact with the society, go to local events and visit manyattas (houses) where Sadhana Forest has previously planted trees. On our first day we visited the manyatta where the first Sadhana Forest tree was planted, where a man lived with his two wives and children. We also went to see how the trees were getting on at Marks, who is a day-guard at Sadhana. We learned about the indigenous species that people plant with Sadhana Forests training, as well as some basic techniques which are used for high survival of plants in these arid areas.

On Saturdays we attended a market which was a 30 minute walk away, where shoes, clothes, jewellery, medicinal remedies, and food were sold. We went to the tearoom there where they made mandazi (Kenyan donuts), and tea. One Saturday after the market we visited to Resinoi's manyatta. Resinoi stands at the front gate of Sadhana Forest and charges local's phones throughout the day for free. People can also get free water from taps at the gate, as there is a borehole. Resinoi had saved up money from her work at Sadhana and was beginning to build a new manyatta. We had some tea then helped her to build some of the walls, with sticks, branches and finally a mixture of mud, dung and water.

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Many of the materials she had collected herself, but she had bought items such as a front door. We also attended some meetings with the local forestry commission in the town of Maralal to discuss the work that they do and the possibilities of funding. One Sunday we attended the local church service where we were warmly welcomed.

We also got the opportunity to visit the home of a friend of the friend I was with in Kenya. She showed us her maize, potato, bean and pea fields, and we went a lovely walk and cooked dinner with her. We stayed overnight in her home where her shop was also situated at the front of the building. It was very interesting to observe another way of life in Kenya other than tribal living.

It was a truly amazing experience to take part in activities such as building and visiting a manyatta, attending local markets and business meetings, as well as seeing local village and town life. My favourite part about it was learning about a culture so different from my own. I enjoyed travelling in the matatus (buses), visiting manyattas and building one, discovering what people eat in Kenya, the kind of things they sell in shops, their clothes, their way of life, and of course seeing the zebra! I would like to give a huge thanks to the James Rennie Bequest fund which enabled me to have such amazing experiences that I will hold close to my heart and never forget.