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My fieldwork experience as an intern at Rural Outreach Africa (ROA)

Rural Outreach Africa (ROA) is a non-governmental organization working to improve the lives of rural communities in Africa. It addresses challenges that hinders their development as well as identifying opportunities to alleviate poverty in the communities. The main activities within the organization cut across the board and they range from food production, water and sanitation, health, nutrition and economic development. The main aim is to eradicate poverty and restore human dignity. ROA works in partnership with other organizations, communities and schools to achieve its mission which is to empower rural communities.

The organization offers opportunities to fresh graduates to learn in different capacities. After my undergraduate studies I got an opportunity to intern at the organization. I am a graduate in Food Nutrition and Dietetics and I can assure you that the experience at ROA is rewarding. I have learnt a lot and I will briefly share my experience I got from the field while working with the organization.

The following are some of the things I found rewarding from fieldwork experience:

Traveling and Networking

I have travelled a lot, locally around different counties. This has been great in exposure, getting myself out there and showing people who I am. I have met different kinds of people where we have exchanged ideas. This has helped me expand my knowledge and allowed me to see things from another perspective. I have also met people who are less privileged than me. I have known of their struggles and it has made me appreciate what I have instead of complaining about what I don't have. I have also interacted with wonderful people who share the same interests and intentions as me and I found a sense of belonging with them. Through this, I have developed professional relationship and learnt to accept the views of other people from different backgrounds and appreciate other cultures.

Acquisition of work experience

I have acquired the experience of working as a team and handling different people. I have got more practical insight into the nutrition profession, in terms of change in perceptions about the nutrition profession, dietary diversity and food habits among different people, which has helped me develop more interest in the profession. I have been involved in different data collection methodologies. For example, Focused Group Discussions (FDGs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and others. Before I joined ROA, I used to read about FDGs and KIIs in books but now I have done it practically and I know what it takes to guide the discussions and interviews. I have also developed strong interpersonal skills and I can easily work with any other group of people. It has been a great accomplishment for me to train other people (enumerators in the field). I have been treated like an expert and listened to carefully during the trainings because they (trainees) believed I had what they didn't have. It's a great experience meeting people with different cultural diversity and learning from them

Increased confidence

Field work has boosted my confidence and made me believe in myself. Being out there meeting new people has helped me step out of my comfort zone and build invaluable social skills and self-confidence and ability to work in a group. For example, I always did not feel comfortable speaking in front of people, but during the field days, I had to. The more I talked, the more I became comfortable. Now I can confirm that I'm not as shy as I was, and my communication skill has greatly improved. Being in the field means meeting people with different beliefs and views, this has made me to be more patient and tolerant to other people's views.

Generally, Field work has been vital for my career development. I have got the opportunity to put theory into practice and acquire more knowledge and key concepts in food and nutrition and development of new skills. Field experience at ROA has also opened up my mind to new ideas and opportunities.

In conclusion, working at ROA is an amazing experience. It gives fresh graduates a platform to learn much about themselves and life around as they are exposed to different environments. These help them to prepare for their future career. The other benefits acquired while working in the field at ROA include development of social skills, improvement in content knowledge and above all acquisition of work experience. Therefore, if you are interested in developing your career as you meet people from different cultural diversity and gaining a true work experience, then a stint with ROA may be the place you are looking for as it is the best place to draw out your full potential to practice and grow skills.

I truly have appreciated these opportunities.

Below are images of the field work exercise I participated in



