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African Adventures As Seen Through the Eyes of a River Steward

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Monday, January 5, 2015

African Adventures As Seen Through the Eyes of a River Steward

Bryan Westerlund, 2016 Cohort

This is an excerpt from my journal while I was in Zambia this past summer. This particular day, we visited a community well-digging project in another village:

Wednesday, July 2

“In the morning, we got up and prepared to go to Chicumshile to help with the borehole site. We all tightly crammed into a van and drove an hour on a long bumpy road. At the borehole site, Carmin taught us the basic process of digging while the workers demonstrated. It consisted of a simple pulley system, with 4-6 men using 2-3 rows of tree branches tied to the string and pulling simultaneously to produce force. Above the hole they were digging, about 4-5 men pushed long pipes into the hole with each downward force of the pulley. At the end of the 15-meter pipe was a sharp end to break through the rock and clay. After some time, they would “flush” the system, by pouring water down into the hole and using the force of the pipes to flush out the excess clay or dirt. The clay water would shoot out the top of the pipe and into a small pool that they had previously dug. The goal of the wells being built manually was to reach 15-20 meters underground. This was the distance to the groundwater aquifer, which would supply the local village with clean water for many years.

Throughout the morning/afternoon, our group helped their team in shifts. After my total of 3 times helping with the digging process, I already developed pretty big blisters. But the diggers made me smile when they would yell, “MORE POWER! MORE POWER!”, “2 Hours!”, and “Dig A Well!” It was cool to be a part of this digging process because we helped the team dig from 7m to 11.5m in only a couple hours!”

Bryan Westerlund - 2016 Cohort