Interview with Endriean on his trip to Rwanda

***How did you experience the journey in general?***

The travel in general was enjoyably and safe! I’ve seen so many pleasant aspects of the country and also had the chance to meet with so many inspiring locals, who have been very nice and friendly. I really had the feeling I’ve merged myself into the Rwandese culture during these 3 weeks. Being back in my own country feels like a minor culture shock.

***Can you describe some of the pleasant aspects of the country you saw?***I really liked the beauty of the country. Now I know why Rwanda is called the country of Thousands Hills: wherever you look, you see mountains all around you! Besides the view, another pleasant thing to see is that the majority has access to basic health care. This is really great, especially if you take into account the horrific events the country had to go through.

***Can you give a global description of your daily activities during these three weeks?***

Every day was different during these three weeks. On the Mondays and Fridays we usually spent lots of time travelling by public transport in order to reach our destinations, which are spread out throughout the whole country. Once arrived at our destination, we received a small introductory tour in order to have an understanding on the processes at the designated location.

We’ve mainly discussed with the contact person(s) about the issues they’re currently facing and how they would like to solve them in the nearby future. For us this resulted in a better understanding of the entire system and could seek for future improvements. This resulted in exchanging personal experiences and gaining new insights and understanding from each other. In the end we’ve mutually managed to inspire each other!

***What were your nicest experiences?***

Actually I’ve experienced many nice experiences during this trip. Just being present in this country and participating in the project was already a great experience. None of the days were the same, which makes the trip really dynamic and challenging. You’ll always meet new inspiring people and exchanging stories and experiences with these people is one thing I really cherished during this trip.

***Can you give examples of some other nice experiences you had?***What I really love is the 40 minute motor taxi ride from Ruhango Town to the Ruhango Hospital. It was not the most comfortable trip since it was off-road, but it certainly was a really beautiful trip seeing the amazing view and the villages we have crossed through.
Also the local people are really helpful. Whenever the locals saw us wandering around with our enormous backpacks looking lost, they tried to help us pointing in the right direction.

***What were your less pleasant experiences?***

In my opinion, seeing many (disabled) children and adults begging for money and/or food was one of the negative things I experienced during this trip. As a Muzungu you definitely stand out among the locals. So they quickly ask for your help, hoping that they can be helped out for the time being. I really would have liked to help them but at the same time I know that my help cannot get them out of the negative spiral, which made me feel powerless.

***If you could do this journey again, what would you do different?***

Since we belonged to the first batch of students for the project, we had to do lots of screening and analyzing, trying to map out the issues they are currently facing. Instead of only encountering these issues, I also would have liked to solve these problems on a project base. So spending more time in the country would be the key. A minimum stay of 1 month at a fixed destination would be a minimum in order to see improvements. The longer the stay, the more beneficial it can be.

***Can you describe some of the issues you observed them facing?***In the hospitals we saw the daily routines of the hospital pharmacist. One of the issues is the big amount of administrative work they are facing. On top of that, the administration is also very inefficient, making it even more painful to look at. Also the IT facilities could really be improved at the hospitals we visited. The health care providers can save much time on data access when having for example a faster internet connection.