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Welcome

Dear GESI Student,

Welcome to the ninth annual Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI)! GESI began with the idea and perseverance of an undergraduate like you. It has since grown from a small experiential-learning program in Uganda exclusively for Northwestern students, into a nationally recognized model that has trained and sent over 400 students, from almost 100 colleges and universities, to seven countries for community development work.

GESI offers students the unique opportunity to apply their classroom learning toward addressing global challenges. Students will spend their summer working with, and learning from, our community partners across the world. Northwestern University provides students with comprehensive preparatory coursework and training, ensures a structured and supported in-country field experience, and facilitates critical post-program reflection.

This program will challenge you to think and act differently. To create change you will need to listen, ask questions, and build relationships, not merely provide solutions. We trust you'll approach GESI with the respect, curiosity, and humility requisite to understanding people, their talents and challenges, and the role you can play to support positive social change.

GESI is one step on a path toward your personal, professional, and leadership development as well as your understanding of complex issues of consequence to the planet and its people. Throughout the summer, our professors and student instructors will be in contact with feedback and encouragement; in August they will help debrief what you've learned. Even after GESI, our staff will be a strong support system as you use your own unique skills and passions to live lives of global social change.

We have seen this program make a tremendous impact on students’ academic pursuits, career paths, and worldview, as well as their skills in cross-cultural communication, project management, and collaboration. We are excited to join you on this journey and to see where it leads. Get excited!

Best of luck,

*Patrick Eccles*
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Global Engagement at the Buffett Institute:

The Buffett Institute for Global Studies mission is to prepare undergraduates with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to address shared global challenges and to lead lives of responsible global engagement. Global Engagement at the Buffett Institute is a comprehensive student support center dedicated entirely to improving undergraduates’ abilities to address global poverty and inequality. We help students attain tangible skills and critique academic theory through experiential learning. Through a unique set of multidisciplinary opportunities, ranging from study abroad programs to fellowships, the Institute builds the capacity of young global leaders to cross borders and partner with communities to produce responsible, sustainable solutions to global challenges. We connect students to a network of individuals and organizations at Northwestern and around the world and are actively shaping a new generation of experienced, effective, and compassionate global leaders in a variety of fields. The Buffett Institute runs the Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI) program. To learn about other programs and activities, visit: www.buffett.northwestern.edu

GESI History:

GESI was first conceived in 2005 by a group of undergraduate students led by Nathaniel Whittemore, then a Northwestern University junior who had recently returned from volunteering at refugee camps outside Cairo. Talking with dozens of other students volunteering and researching abroad, Whittemore realized that he was not alone in feeling a gap between the desire and ability to make a difference in the world: “The story among my peers was pretty common… tons and tons of passion and energy, a deep belief and desire to connect across cultural, religious, and national borders to make a better world, and frustration at the lack of support, infrastructure, resources, and education necessary to really move beyond our good intentions. Young people knew they didn’t have the skills or resources needed to impact the problems they were trying to solve; they didn’t even know where to get those things.”

Whittemore and a fellow Northwestern student, Jon Marino, went in search of academic training that could be combined with off-campus experiential learning to help students gain the tools they needed to be agents of change. Rather than founding another program to raise awareness of global issues, they sought to create a new type of study abroad experience that would provide the educational tools and experiences that could help students in the field, and then help students reflect on what they had learned by working at the grassroots. The program, they hoped, would provide the training and capacity-building young people would need to run, start, or participate in international development, service, and social entrepreneurship.

From these student-initiated roots, and together with support from across campus—including the Northwestern Office of the Provost, Buffett Institute for Global Studies, School of Education and Social Policy, and School of Communications—the Global Engagement Studies Institute, developed.
Who does what in GESI?

The Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI) is a program, not a physical institute (despite what the name might suggest!). Whether or not you are a Northwestern student, the "acronym soup" that surrounds GESI is often confusing. It is important for you to understand the difference between each organization that helps make GESI happen so that you can communicate it effectively to your friends and family and so you know where to turn for support (now and in the future). There are numerous partners who make important contributions to your academic, cultural, and personal experience in the GESI program.

Global Engagement at the Buffett Institute: The Buffett Institute is the Northwestern University office that runs GESI. We include people you've met or spoken with (Patrick Eccles, Meghan Ozaroski, Emory Erker-Lynch, and Corey Portell) when applying to the GESI program. GESI is part of the Buffett Institute for Global Studies, which is run by Bruce Caruthers. Brian Hanson and Paul Arntson will be your main professors during the GESI coursework. The GESI team supports you before, during, and after your trip, in the following ways:

• **Program Arrangement and Logistics:** GESI works with the on-site teams to make arrangements for your trip. We also provide you with lots of information and supports you during the program application phase.

• **Pre-Departure Orientation and Materials:** GESI provides you with important information about your program to help you prepare for your experience. This includes resources, such as this packet, and in-person meetings related to health, safety, budgeting, travel, and academics.

• **Academic Coursework and Credit:** GESI is responsible for organizing all Northwestern coursework.

• **In-Country Support:** Your on-site team will provide support for you while abroad and should be your primary resource, but if you need additional assistant or would feel more comfortable approaching GESI staff with any matters experienced in-country, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Ozaroski, Program Manager or Patrick Eccles, Assistant Director (contact information on page 6).

• **Reintegration Support:** Upon your return, we will provide you with resources to help you transition back into campus life, as well as connect you with other returnees and opportunities.
Patrick Eccles | Assistant Director

patrick.eccles@northwestern.edu

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Patrick Eccles joined the Buffett Institute staff as Assistant Director during the fall quarter of 2012. Prior to joining the Institute, Patrick spent seven years working to expand and deepen experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students while coordinating local, domestic and international immersion experiences at Loyola University Chicago. Patrick earned his bachelor’s degree from Northwestern, majoring in political science with minors in international and environmental studies. During his college years, Patrick spent a year volunteering on a reforestation project and assisting with various community development efforts in the western highlands of Guatemala. He earned his Master’s degree in Latin American and Caribbean Studies from the University of Chicago. In his Master’s thesis and fieldwork, Patrick pursued research interests in trade, human rights and the environment through a critique and comparison of fair trade arrangements in coffee production as a sustainable development approach in Guatemala and Mexico. He speaks fluent Spanish and limited Portuguese.

Meghan Ozaroski | Program Manager

m-ozaroski@northwestern.edu

Office: +1 847-491-5932

Meghan is program manager of Global Engagement at the Buffett Institute where she works with the GESI program and the Institute’s co-curricular student groups. She created the Northwestern University Global Opportunities (NUGO) website, global.northwestern.edu. She also founded AHEAD@NU: the Association for Higher Education Administrators’ Development, a professional development group for employees of the University which has grown to over 700 members. Before coming to Northwestern, Meghan worked at the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM), coordinating study abroad programs in Tanzania, Botswana, India, Japan, and Chicago. Meghan has a master’s degree in Higher Education Administration and Policy from Northwestern. As an undergraduate at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, she majored in Psychology and Music.

Corey Portell | Program Coordinator

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Corey joined the Buffett Institute in October 2013 as Program Coordinator. She came to the Institute from Stephens College, a women’s college in Missouri, where she worked in admissions with domestic and international recruitment. She received a BA in international studies, political science, and religious studies from Loyola University Chicago, where she focused much of her co-curricular efforts on harm prevention, women’s rights, and social justice issues both in the United States and during her time studying abroad at the University of Ghana.

Emory Erker-Lynch | Graduate Intern

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Emory joined the Buffett Institute in 2014 as an intern while working towards her master’s degree in Higher Education Administration and Policy from Northwestern. Before coming to Northwestern, she worked in Boston as a housing resource manager and advocate for persons experiencing homelessness. Emory has a master’s degree in Theological Ethics from Boston College, where she also worked as a graduate assistant with the Arrupe international immersion education program. She received a BA in Religious Studies and History from Santa Clara University before living and working in El Salvador for two years with the Casa de la Solidaridad study abroad program. When not working, you will often find her with her nose stuck in a novel, her hands covered with dirt in the garden, or out exploring new parks.
Emergency Contacts

Students will receive detailed in-country emergency contact information at the pre-departure summit in Chicago. In case of emergency, parents should call (in this order):

1. Patrick Eccles  
2. Meghan Ozaroski  

**Parents should not call the site teams.**

Patrick Eccles  
Assistant Director, Global Engagement  
Office: +1 847-467-0844  
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Meghan Ozaroski  
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m-ozaroski@northwestern.edu

HTH Health Insurance:  
001- 610 254-8771

University Police:  
001-847-491-3456
Program Partners

The Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD):
FSD is GESI’s on-the-ground partner for sites in Bolivia, India, Nicaragua, and Uganda. FSD is a non-profit, non-governmental organization created in 1995 to offer capacity building and funding to grassroots community based organizations throughout Africa, Latin American, and Asia. A professional field staff and trained volunteers provide on-site technical training and project support, while enabling information sharing to more than 300 partner organizations around the world. FSD is GESI’s oldest partner. FSD has played a key role in supporting the development of the GESI model over the past seven years.

Social Entrepreneur Corps (SEC):
SEC is GESI’s on-the-ground partner at the Dominican Republic site. SEC is a social enterprise that leads innovative and dynamic international internship programs. GESI students will work with SEC’s sister organization, Community Enterprise Solutions, to support the creation, development, growth and impact of social innovations focused on intelligently and sustainably alleviating poverty. Participants create sustainable impact in the field while gaining the perspectives, skills, and knowledge to become the social entrepreneurs of the future.

ThinkImpact:
Our on-the-ground partner in South Africa is ThinkImpact. Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, ThinkImpact is a global social enterprise that trains the next generation of social entrepreneurs to think differently about poverty alleviation. ThinkImpact sites are located in rural Africa. GESI students will learn about new cultures while exploring market based solutions to poverty. ThinkImpact’s approach utilizes an asset-based community development philosophy to fuel social innovation in developing economies. Students work with local community members promoting a mindset of innovation and self-sufficiency rather than dependency and aid.

Each GESI partner has unique offerings based on their networks and development model. All partners have a commitment to asset-based community development, provide exemplary health, safety and logistical support to our students, and are well respected locally and internationally, including by our peer universities. It is important for you to understand that each year we adapt our programming to fit the feedback of our alumni and in-country partners and to align with the learning goals of our program. Given the different cultural contexts and models employed by our in-country partners, your experience will differ from what you’ve heard from alumni. To succeed in this program (and in any international engagement), you must be flexible and open-minded. You must also listen to be surprised—something you’ll hear us say a lot during your courses. It is important that you take time to get to know students who are traveling to other GESI country sites. The experiences of your peers in different cultural contexts, working with different types of organizations, can enrich your own learning and reflections on community development, cultural exchange, and global issues.
Pre-Departure

What is experiential-learning?
The following are definitions of various types of experiential-learning. GESI fits most closely into the “service-learning” category, though the program incorporates elements of all of the below:

- **Volunteerism** – Students engage in activities where the emphasis is on service for the sake of the beneficiary or recipient (client, partner)
- **Internship** – Students engage in activities to enhance their own vocational or career development
- **Practicum** – Students work in a discipline-based venue in place of an in-class course experience
- **Community Service** – Students engage in activities addressing mutually defined community needs (as a collaboration between community partners, faculty and students) as a vehicle for achieving academic goals and course objectives
- **Service-Learning** – Students engage in community service activities with intentional academic and learning goals and opportunities for reflection that connect to their academic disciplines


What to expect at GESI Pre-Departure Coursework (June 15 - 21):
The GESI pre-departure coursework at Northwestern University is an intense seven days of class. You are expected to arrive by 11 am on June 16th; we will spend the rest of that day getting to know each other, getting to know representatives from FSD, SEC and ThinkImpact, and establishing expectations for the week ahead. From June 15 through June 21, you will be in class from 9 am to 9 pm, with breaks for meals. GESI alumni will serve as student instructors, facilitating class activities and discussions. We will have many guest speakers supplementing class lectures as well; it is important that you complete all course readings before arrival. Some nights, we will assign additional (short) readings. You will need to discipline yourself so that you are able to complete these assignments and be alert and engaged for long days of class. If your group flight departs on June 22nd, you will have free time that day until your flight departs for your host country. We will provide CTA cards for you to get to the airport.

Below is a sample day of class. A detailed schedule will be provided upon arrival in Chicago.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 10:55 am</td>
<td>Lecture by Brian Hanson on International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 - 11:55 am</td>
<td>Language lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 12:55 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 - 4:45 pm</td>
<td>Lecture and group activities with Paul Arntson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 - 5:55 pm</td>
<td>Guest speaker on your host country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 - 7:30 pm</td>
<td>Dinner with group or on your own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Back to hostel for evening reading and sleep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic Information

In-Country Assignments:
We feel strongly that in a foreign context you should look to your local hosts for “expert” advice. Your interaction with GESI staff and faculty while abroad will be limited. Occasionally, GESI staff, faculty or student instructors will reply to your weekly updates (and/or other deliverables, as outlined below) with comments, questions, cautions or feedback. However, given that they are not in-country with you, their written feedback will be limited. Only you, your site team, and community colleagues can truly understand your situation and challenges in country. Please note that GESI staff are always available to discuss any program, health, safety or other concerns you have.

You will be evaluated based on satisfactory submission of the following (through Canvas):

1. **Project Proposal.** This should be a maximum of 2 pages; initial proposals are due within the first few weeks abroad.

2. **External work plan.** These are due at the same time you submit your project proposal. These should be a maximum of two pages and conform to the template provided. FSD students will also be required to submit a budget along with their proposal and work plan.

3. **Weekly group reports.** These are due on each of the seven Fridays while in the field. Submit these online on your group's Blackboard blog. Entries should be a maximum of 1 page, and should answer the following questions:
   - What you accomplished the previous week
   - What you plan to accomplish in the week ahead and who is responsible for these goals
   - What are the barriers/challenges that you are dealing with in terms of accomplishing the work plan, and interacting with your organization, community and your group

4. **Reflection Journal.** You will be given a spiral-bound reflection journal upon arrival in Chicago. It is your responsibility to complete at least two of the reflection activities outlined in the journal each week. You will choose from a variety of reflection topics outlined in the journal. While we will collect these journals from you at the Final Summit, you can choose to fold any page you do not want us to read and we will honor your request. We will mail the journals back to you after we are done reviewing them.

5. **Final Reflection Summit Summary.** In order to share your work with your fellow GESI colleagues, you will complete a summary of your work, including your rationale, process, and assessment. This will be shared with all students at the Final Summit to guide discussions.

6. **Evaluations.** Before you return to the US, the country site teams will complete a 2 to 3 page evaluation with you. You will also be required to submit a comprehensive GESI program evaluation electronically by August 25th. Failure to complete the electronic evaluation will result in an “incomplete” grade appearing on your transcript until we receive your completed evaluation.

**Note:** There may be times when you do not have access to internet or communications for some time. If you are unable to submit any of the aforementioned assignments due to communications issue, do not worry. GESI staff and faculty are accustomed to technological delays and this will not be held against you as long as you submit any missing deliverables once your internet access allows for it.
Academic Information

What to expect at the Final Reflection Summit (August 17 - 19):

Upon returning from their host-countries, students meet back in Chicago for a three-day Final Reflection Summit where we will reflect on some of the program's learning outcomes, including but not limited to the following:

- Understanding ethical, historical, political, economic, and/or social issues in relation to community development
- Analyzing multiple perspectives of the social issue at hand
- Taking responsibility for your own actions as they have an effect on society
- Contributing to the society through the application of new field knowledge
- Appreciating ends as well as means
- Appreciating cultural pluralism and global connectedness – as well as the challenges and opportunities of each

In addition, GESI participants from all six sites share and compare geographical experiences while processing their immersion and what it has taught them about global development challenges, culture, and themselves. Students will also consider how to respond to the GESI experience by networking with professionals who are creating social change in a range of fields.

What Happens After GESI?

As the program closes, GESI transitions into the role of alumni support. GESI aspires to help students lead lives committed to international social justice. For us, this means helping our alumni find internships, jobs, or project support opportunities that allow them to continue engaging with the issues they care about most. You may always contact the GESI team for guidance and support.
Crisis and Emergency Procedures & Contacts:

In the event of any unanticipated crisis or emergency, it is important that you understand the action plans that your on-site staff will follow to ensure your health and safety, as well as your roles, responsibilities, and appropriate prevention and response steps.

General Policies and Preventive Measures:

• Site teams will arrange to ensure students have cell phones. You must provide your cell phone number to your on-site staff, so that you can be contacted in case of emergency. You should also program your cell phone with your country Program Director’s, GESI’s, other students’ and local emergency contact numbers.
• All students must carry the list of emergency contacts and the Emergency Card--both provided in Chicago during the pre-departure coursework--with them at all times. If an emergency arises and you cannot access the contact numbers in your cell phone, you should have a backup, so that you can call the emergency phone numbers.
• Contact your country Program Director first if an incident arises. They will lead you through next steps and make any necessary arrangements. If your Program Director is not available, contact another on-site contact to help you. If the incident involves your on-site administrators or if, for some reason, you cannot reach anyone on-site, contact GESI staff.
• Do not participate in any kind of rally, protest, or political manifestation.
• Report any independent travel, including a written itinerary and contact information, to your on-site administrators. Also enter your travel information into the Personal Travel Locator in International SOS.

Scenario I: Physical or Mental Health Emergency
If you are not feeling well or are experiencing emotional distress, contact your country Program Director or other on-site administrator, and they will help you get the care that you need. You will be given more specific informaiton at you in-country orientation

Scenario II: Crime Committed Against a Student
If you are the victim of a crime (e.g., a robbery or assault), contact your country Program Director or on-site administrator, and they will notify you of the proper procedure for reporting the crime and if applicable, the steps for replacing stolen items. If your passport is lost or stolen, you will need to contact local police and the US Embassy.

Scenario III: Hostility Toward United States Citizens & Terrorist Acts
We monitor International SOS and the State Department for announcements regarding the safety of our students abroad. In case of emergency, we will work with the US Embassy, the State Department, and International SOS to analyze the severity of the situation. We will keep you informed of any situations that have occurred and any relevant warnings and update you about any potential risks or areas to avoid. If necessary, we will make arrangements to evacuate students to a secure and calm location far from Anti-American or terrorist activity to prevent attack.

Note: You will be provided with comprehensive safety sheets and emergency contact information prior to your departure!
Cultural Adjustment

Cultural Norms & Adjustment:

Students will experience cultural differences and react to these differences (commonly referred to as "culture shock") in a variety of ways. There is a lot of helpful literature related to the cultural adjustment process, including common themes and experiences, representing phases of highs (comfort and excitement) and lows (discomfort and anxiety).

Your on-site teams will be the most important resources for helping you to navigate cultural differences and adjustment, but just keep in mind a few things:

• Culture shock is normal and however you experience it is normal.
• Intercultural adjustment not only varies by individual, but also by program. You may find that some of the traditional “low” phases may correspond with program excursions and produce a “high.”
• Culture shock can exacerbate other mental health challenges or conditions. If you have seen a therapist or psychiatrist for any mental health conditions within the past three years, be sure to indicate this on the required NU Health Assessment Form and meet with your doctor to discuss your condition in light of study abroad. If you require any special accommodations, be sure to discuss your situation with GESI prior to departure, so that we can work with on-site staff to determine what—if any—provisions can be made.
• Be aware of what you are experiencing. If you encounter any difficulties or discomfort, which prevent you from being successful, discuss this with your on-site administrators or GESI staff ASAP.

Encountering Culture:

For many GESI students, witnessing extreme poverty first-hand causes a great deal of culture shock. Encounters with beggars, for example, can be a deeply unsettling experience. Richard Slimbach offers the following advice,

“Begging may be a deeply flawed method of redistributing wealth, but letting ourselves lapse into callous indifference only injures our moral sensibilities. Whether to give or not to give ultimately must be decided case by case, because much depends on our knowledge of the particular beggar and the larger social context. We simply cannot give to all beggars but neither must we refuse all. Over time, our giving probably will be selective, biased in favor of those who provide some service. Instead of our “gift” reinforcing the notion that poor folk are simply welfare wards of wealthy westerners, it can become a legitimate and dignifying form of payment for services rendered” (Slimbach, p. 188).

Bargaining is another cultural experience that can sometimes overwhelm students. Yet bargaining can be the most enjoyable of experiences abroad and we hope you’ll learn to have fun with it! Remember that if you really want something, you should plan to pay fair price, not the lowest possible price. Bargaining can be a fun way to form relationships with locals. Just be careful not to pay high prices for basic goods because it may harm locals. If local merchants can get premium prices for their goods and services from foreigners, they may be less likely to sell to their neighbors at lower, fairer rates.
Homework

By doing some research before you go abroad, you will begin to grasp important historical events, as well as social, economic and political systems that shape the cultural realities in your host country. Knowledge will make you better equipped to interact with residents in a substantive way, throwing aside stereotypes of the “Ugly American”. Without doing research and grappling with multiple perspectives about your host country, you are likely to have many misconceptions about the place and people, carrying counterproductive stereotypes with you that taint your ability to fully comprehend what you experience on the ground. “Carrying knowledge conveys a curious and concerned self, one who cares enough about the peoples and places in one’s destination country to invest the time learning about them. This, in itself, may not be enough to distinguish us from the camera-toting and culturally clueless tourists piling in and out of tour buses, but it’s a good start” (Slimbach, p. 128).

Therefore, don’t leave home without “packing” place-specific knowledge into your head. You should develop at least a basic understanding of the cultural, social, political, historical, and environmental dynamics of the place where you will be living. Knowledge of the local language spoken is also critical. GESI predeparture coursework will provide you with some of this information, but you will take more out of the classroom and field experience if you discover new knowledge about your host country on your own as well.

Please complete the following activity before coming to Chicago on June 15th:

This activity is taken and amended from Richard Slimbach’s Becoming World Wise. Divide up the following sections among your teammates. See what you can learn about your assigned topics, make sure you read from multiple sources with conflicting viewpoints, and be prepared to informally present your findings with your teammates, faculty, and GESI staff. Once abroad, you will have the opportunity to reflect as a team on what you read versus what you encountered. The following are examples of questions you can consider for each category—but you are encouraged to dig deeper!

a. Geography: In what region of the world does your host country lie? What are the neighboring countries? What is the climate in each of the host country’s main regions? What are its major natural resources (e.g., forestry, fishing, mineral)? What are the names and locations of the country’s major states/provinces? What are the names of the major urban centers in each? What is the national capital?

b. Political History: What are the major periods and watershed events in your country’s history? Was there a classical era or “golden age”? Describe the experience of colonialism or foreign domination: How was the colonial rule imposed? How was independence won? What historical events are annually commemorated? Who are the nation’s heroes and heroines? For what are they best known?

c. Economy: What percentage of the labor force is involved, respectively, in agriculture, industry, services, and the military? What is the country’s annual per-capita income and gross national product? What are its primary agricultural and industrial products? Where are they produced? What are the leading exports and imports?
d. Groups/Ethnicities: What are the various groups in the country called, and where are they concentrated? What groups occupy the service sector and which make up the elite? Is there an indigenous population? Are there any intergroup tensions based on race, religion, territory or language? Among what group(s) will you be living and serving?

e. Current politics: What is the form of the national government? What are the majority and minority parties, and what issues and perspectives do they represent? Who are their leaders? Does any one group or family dominate local politics? What is the political relationship between your host country and your homeland? What countries are important to them and why?

f. Religion: What religions are practiced? What proportion of the people are followers of each faith tradition? Is there one national religion? What are the most important religious ceremonies? Have you read any of their sacred writings?

g. Arts and sports: What are some of the most popular music and dance styles? What traditional or popular sports are regularly played? What cultural festivals will be held during the time of your residence in country?

h. Environment: What factors affect the productivity of the land and the quality of life of those who farm it? (Consider climate, overpopulation, pests, land ownership, farming methods, indebtedness, seed varieties, deforestation, and desertification.) What environmental factors—like climate, rainfall, calamity, and land productively—negatively affect the country?

i. Education: What indigenous, pre-modern institutions and practices have historically served educational functions? Currently, what are the major divisions in the public and private education system? How many grades are there in each division? Is the school system modeled after that of another country? What are the most pressing issues facing modern education?

j. Current events: Judging from current newspaper articles, what are some of the most important issues and problems engaging the minds of the people?

k. Languages: What languages are spoken in your host country? Are these official or unofficial? Do these languages represent any ethnic, geographically, or socioeconomic divisions? List and learn five essential phrases in the local language.
Food for Thought

You are passionate about making a positive impact this summer, yet short-term study abroad can have long-term negative impacts if the traveler and program provider are not thoughtful and reflective about their engagements abroad. The following are a list of questions taken from First, Do No Harm: Ideas for Mitigating Negative Community Impacts of Short-term Study Abroad (Schroeder, Wood, Galiardi, and Koen, 2009). These questions are meant to help you think about the unintended consequences of study abroad and foreign travel. Many GESI sites are located in areas frequented by general tourists throughout the year. We encourage you to reflect on these types of questions with your GESI groups, in your personal writing reflections, and whenever you travel abroad again. These questions can help us continue to develop programming that does not harm local communities.

- Upon arrival, figure out where your food/water/housing comes from. Do foreigners/tourists impose any hardship on local people, such as water shortages? What about garbage disposal and pollution? Is land being used for visitors rather than local needs?
- Does the economic impact of study abroad or tourism create economic inequality in the community? Do foreigners or local elites own or manage the hotels that students/tourists frequent? Are guides and drivers outsiders or wealthier members of the community? Do local prices go up as a result of the student visit? The giving of gifts can contribute to similar questions, however well intentioned—can nonmaterial gifts be given instead, or gifts to the community as a whole?
- Do student/tourist visits contribute to economies of dependency on outsiders, orienting those economies to pleasing or providing pleasure for wealthy foreigners rather than to local needs?
- Is there a season for foreign visitors to come to the area, such that student visits contribute to a boom and bust cycle in the local economy? Is there any way to mitigate this effect?
- Do outsiders’ patterns of consumption contribute to problems in the community? The “demonstration effect” of students bringing high-end travel gear, lots of clothes, spending money easily on restaurants, giving gifts, etc. may create resentment, the perception of American students as wealthy consumers with no responsibilities at home (McLaren 2006), or the desire in local people (especially youth) to leave the community so they can make money to buy similar goods and services. Even traveling on an airplane or traveling away from home can create these problems among people who do not have that option.
- Are local people excluded from any of the areas where foreigners are encouraged or allowed to go?
- Are foreign visitors well-behaved and respectful in terms of the local culture? Do they dress appropriately, or otherwise commit cultural offenses that will anger, distress, or shock people in the local community? Do outsiders see culture and the “authenticity” of local people as commodities to be consumed? What other cultural impacts results from outsiders’ visits? Cultural differences in themselves are likely sources of confusion and conflict in unanticipated ways.
- Do foreigners smoke, drink, or do drugs during their visit? The effect of these behaviors can range from being poor role models for local youth to bringing new addictions to the community.
- Do students/tourists demonstrate other expressions of privilege during their visit, such as doing things “our” way, eating “our” food, playing “our” music, requiring things to be done on “our” schedule?
- How well are students prepared to understand the community they are visiting? Do they bring damaging stereotypes that can be countered throughout the program? These might be as narrow as “Bolivians” but for most students are more likely to be broader such as “poor people”, “indigenous people”, or “people in developing countries”, as well as racist an exoticizing images of people in out-of-the-way places.
- Are there human rights issues already present that are exacerbated by the presence of foreigners?
- Does anything about the students’ presence or activities reinforce a negative self-image for local people, for example that Americans are smarter, more competent, more attractive? Is there any way their presence could promote a positive self-image instead?
Food for Thought

To mitigate potentially negative impacts, we encourage you to honor the host community's independence and encourage self-reliance; to never impose your personal agenda when working with the community; to respect local people's visions and opinions above your own; and to be vigilant of any cultural impacts you might be having and adjust your behaviors and actions as necessary. Here are some additional tips to make the most of your time abroad and to leave a positive impact:

• Take advantage of opportunities to interact with people who are different from you.
• Engage in every activity fully, remaining mentally and emotionally present. Consider going unplugged, leaving technology like laptops and iPods aside or even at home. While technology can be helpful to keep us connected to our world and people at home, many times it ends up restricting our ability to immerse ourselves in the local community or interferes with our ability to make ourselves available to the people right in front of us. Think about ways you will travel abroad with technology and still remember to look up.
• Do not try to replicate the U.S. in your host community; avoid demanding the services you would expect at home. Observe the way things are done locally, refrain from judgment, and when you feel yourself getting irritated or judgmental, take a step back and try to understand why the locals do things differently from the way you are accustomed to. Speak with locals to understand their viewpoints, listen to be surprised so that your own assumptions are challenged.
• Question your and your peers’ use of words like “authentic”, “real”, “rural”, “indigenous”, and “traditional”. (“To suggest the life of a rural citizen is any more or less “real” than that of an urban citizen of the same culture is condescending and can indicate a disturbingly colonial nostalgia for a cultural experience laden with pre-development realities”) (Johnson, 184).
• Avoid the “theme park” experience, the places that were clearly designed for foreigners’ amusement.
• As you meet people and form strong relationships with your hosts, remain curious about the larger global, national and local structures that exist, that recreate the poverty and inequality you are trying to grasp. Global learning must reach in both directions—toward persons and structures.
• Recognize the value of play and lightheartedness in cultivating friendships.
• Practice culturally sensitive photography: Always ask first. Be especially mindful of children, who are often readily photogenic. Photos of children are sometimes easily taken as we seek to document memorable experiences in the community, but be careful and considerate when taking kids’ photos.
• Keep an open mind and heart but avoid romanticizing your experiences in host communities. Remember that below the surface of a seemingly homogenous social structure are power hierarchies, conflicting interests, and patterns of discrimination and exclusion.
• Be a listener, more than talker; a learner more than teacher; a facilitator more than leader.
• Observe, listen, and inquire rather than criticize, rationalize, or withdraw.
• When confronted with a language barrier, speak English as little as possible. Expand your vocabulary, if necessary, actively engaging community members with nonverbal communication.
• Risk making mistakes.
• “Go slow. Respect People. Practice humility, and don’t condescend with your good intentions. Make friends. Ask questions. Know that you are visitor. Keep promises even if that means mailing a photograph a few weeks later. Be a personal ambassador of your home culture, and take your new perspectives home so that you can share them with your neighbor” (Potts, 2008).
Food for Thought

*Stop complaining and start reflecting!* When you catch yourself complaining, ask yourself: Can we—both hosts and guests—learn to adapt to each other? Can our differences be a source of mutual enrichment rather than separation? When we discover that things abroad are profoundly different from things at home, our natural tendency is to flee away from them. Instead of seeking to understand why certain practices irritate us, our immediate impulse is to simply spurn them as primitive and uncivilized, even immoral... “Doing so justifies our escape from the culturally disagreeable environment into behaviors where we can feel protected and affirmed: calling home frequently, sleeping either too much or too little, reading romance novels, blogging or listening to music for hours, movies... We may not “return home” in a physical sense, but psychologically we’re a world away” (Slimbach, 158-160).

*Get out your journal.*
Writing in an analytic mode helps us to calm down, gain some objectivity, and ask the critical questions: What provoked this reaction from me? How do locals interpret this act or event? And what does my reaction tell me about myself? Especially as we learn to put personal experiences and reactions into a larger social and theoretical context, our writing takes on a distinctive character—one that joins personal expression with cultural analysis—and encourages a more rigorous cognitive process than is common in conversation.

**Think About the Six Skills of Intercultural Communication:**

1. Cultivating curiosity about another culture and empathy towards its members;
2. Realizing that effective communication requires discovering the culturally conditioned images that are evoked in the minds of the people when they think, act and react to the world around them;
3. Recognizing that role expectations and other social variables such as age, sex, social and economic class, religion, ethnicity and place of residence affect the way a people act and behave;
4. Recognizing that situational variables and convention shape behavior in important ways;
5. Understanding that people generally act the way they do because they are using options that their society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs; and
6. Developing the ability to evaluate the strength of a generalization about the target culture (from the evidence substantiating the statements) and to locate and organize information about the target culture from the library, internet, mass media, people, and personal observation and reflection.
Works Cited


International Program Development Study Abroad Handbook, Northwestern University, 2011.

PART II

JINJA, UGANDA
Letter from FSD

Congratulations again on your choice to work abroad on sustainable development projects in conjunction with Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD) and Northwestern University!

For many of you this experience will spark a lifelong interest in development. For others, it will be a chance to gain insights into other cultures that can only be obtained through direct experience. For all of you it will be a chance to make a lasting impact on people and communities in your host country, and an opportunity that will make a lasting impression on your life.

Many challenges await you. It is likely that the most difficult obstacles you face will not be the ones that test your technical skills or knowledge. More often it will be the difficulty of gaining the cultural competencies necessary to do successful work in a community. It will be learning to see the problems facing a region from the eyes of a community member rather than through the eyes of an outsider. Remember that culture, community, and language should guide your work as much as your own knowledge.

During your program you will represent both yourself and FSD in your community. Many people in the region that you will work in have had very little experience with people from outside their country. As such they will develop opinions of you and the work of FSD through their interactions with you or what they hear about you. We ask that you take your visibility into consideration when you make decisions about your actions in your host country.

It is the intention of FSD to provide you with a broad support network to best position you for success, but at the end of the day, it is your effort that will most influence the success of your experience with FSD. You will need to take initiative and put yourself in situations that stretch your comfort levels. You will have to work within cultural contexts that can cause extreme frustration. Many other challenges await, but at the same time you face these challenges you also have an incredible set of opportunities. Go into the experience with the willingness to listen and learn. You will find that through this willingness you will increase your ability to give to your community.

This guide has been developed to help make clear what FSD expects of our interns and volunteers and what you can expect of us. We look at your internship or volunteer program as a partnership. It is our hope and belief that clear expectations are the foundation for a solid working relationship. Please read this guide thoroughly; it contains information that is crucial to the success of your experience and our partnership.

Above all, be aware that you should feel comfortable contacting the FSD site team and/or your Northwestern support staff if you need any additional support or have any questions.

Good luck!
About FSD

Values, Vision, and Mission:
At the center of the student experience are the core values, vision, and mission that make FSD the organization that it is. We ask that you understand and remember these tenets throughout your time abroad, in order to make your program a meaningful experience for both you and the communities in which you serve.

Vision: FSD envisions a world where all people have the opportunity and capacity to direct economic, social, and environmental resources toward sustainable outcomes that improve their lives and communities.

FSD's mission: FSD achieves community-driven goals through asset-based development and international exchange in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Core Values:
• **Start with Assets, Not Problems:** We take an asset-based approach to development work. We begin by listening to the priorities set by our community-based partners at our international program sites. We then identify and utilize existing assets and capacity to address those priorities.

• **Motivate Community Ownership:** We partner with leaders, organizations, and stakeholders committed to change, action, and social justice. We stress community ownership and participation before launching initiatives, especially in our volunteer and student programs.

• **Generate Enduring Results and Impact:** We ensure the outcomes of our support have long-lasting benefits for our partners. We think hard about how to participate appropriately and effectively in development, and on how to become redundant so that our initiatives outlast our involvement.

• **Focus On The Site Teams:** We are headquartered in San Francisco, but our 10 Site Teams direct our programs across Africa, Asia, and Latin America on the ground, 365 days a year. These teams build partnerships based on trust, respect, efficacy, and alignment with an asset-based approach.

• **Build Capacity:** We strengthen the skills, competencies, and abilities of the leaders of our community-based partners and of our students and professional volunteers. We educate and train, facilitating the sharing of best practices across all of our stakeholders to support our partners’ priorities.

• **Be A Bridge:** We relentlessly build a network of students, professionals, and passionate advocates for our community-based partners to access. We connect this network of assets and volunteers with the work of our partners through our international exchange and grantmaking programs.

• **Change Perspectives:** We share our experiences and learning about the complexities of development with friends, family, and colleagues. We promote cultural exchange and sensitivity, encouraging a reflective approach to navigating cross-cultural issues, confusions, and tensions.

• **Promote Reciprocity:** We operate on our founding principle that producing strong community outcomes must be the priority. We base all partnerships, strategies, and decisions on the Fair Trade Learning concept that we must be ethical and reciprocal in our planning, implementation, and outcomes.
About FSD

Web of support:
FSD is a key partner in your experience. Below are the two main players on FSD's team, with a description of exactly how they will support you.

Site Team Roles:
• Program Director: Program Directors are local experts in the field of community development. Their experience and strong community ties make them a great resource to support you during your in-country project work. The Program Director develops and maintains FSD's relationships with our Host Organizations and is heavily involved in the process from the time you apply to GESI, through your NGO placement, and through the duration of your program.
• Program Coordinators: Your Program Coordinator(s) provide ongoing support to you, FSD's host families and our partner organizations. They also fulfill the following roles:
  • Culture and language bridge
  • Placement advisor
  • Culture shock lifeline
  • Project development advisor

San Francisco Office (SFO) Roles:
SFO works closely with the Northwestern staff to ensure safety and productivity of your in-country experience. Northwestern is in direct contact with the SFO office.
• Emergency Contact: SFO is available at all times in the case of an emergency.
• Additional Support: If the support offered in your host country is not satisfactory.
• Re-Integration Support: Upon your return, SFO will connect you with other veteran and offer opportunities for you to share your experience.

International Programs Team (San Francisco Office):
Mireille Cronin Mather
Executive Director
mireille@fsdinternational.org

Keiko Pinces
International Programs Officer Asia and Africa
pinces@fsdinternational.org

Julia Mergendoller
Senior International Programs Officer Latin America
julia@fsdinternational.org

San Francisco Office Hours:
9 am – 5 pm PST
Office Phone: 415-283-4873
Emergency Cell Phone: 415-828-8414
About FSD

Jinja Site Team:

Margaret Nassozi Amanyire | fsdmargaret@gmail.com
Program Director
Margaret is a development worker with more than a decade of experience working with communities to cause social development. She began her career as a Government Civil Servant with Ministry of Gender and Community Development in Uganda, where she worked on issues of culture, women and gender, as well as youth and development. She later worked as District Community Development Officer in Western Uganda, before joining the Civil Society fraternity in 1998. She has since been working as Coordinator for a Civil Society networks, and has done consultancy work with European Union and CARE International. She has facilitated the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of both strategic and action plans for several Organizations. She has experience in supporting volunteers to do development work in Uganda. Margaret holds a Bachelors of Development Studies, the Commonwealth Diploma in Youth and Development and a Diploma in Performing Art. She has passion for children and young adults.

Jonan Nandolo | fsdjonanb@gmail.com
Local Program Coordinator
Jonan holds a Bachelor’s in Social Sciences and a major in Public Administration and Management from Nkumba University Uganda. Before joining FSD as a program Coordinator, Jonan worked with Apas Consultancy Firm as a Research Assistant in health insurance policies, youth and education. This experience helped him develop a love for community work. He also worked with VEDCO (Volunteer Effort for Development Concerns) in the sustainable agriculture farming and produce sector. Jonan loves entrepreneurship, media production (especially radio voicing), meeting people from different walks of life, traveling and trying out different recipes.

Kelly Stieglitz | fsdjonanb@gmail.com
International Program Coordinator
Born and raised in California, Kelly has always had a passion for traveling and experiencing new cultures, languages, and food. Kelly holds a B.S. from Baylor University, and an M.S. in Global Medicine from USC. In 2012 she founded The Kai Project, a non-profit organization whose goal is to empower small business owners in developing countries by promoting and supporting entrepreneurial ventures. In addition to her volunteer work through The Kai Project, she has participated in medical mission trips to Mexico, Honduras, and Myanmar and is a member of the Rotary Club of Downtown Los Angeles. As an FSD intern last year, she worked with Women Fighting AIDS in Kenya (WOFAK) in Mombasa, Kenya. Her internship project focused on integrating support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children into WOFAK’s ongoing programs, as well as creating income generating activities for the primary caregivers of the OVCs. She is excited for the opportunity to continue her relationship with FSD and to support this year’s volunteers in her new role as IPC in Jinja.
Safety & Security

The safety and security of our program participants and staff is our first priority. Our safety and security protocols meet international standards and have been developed over our 15 years of operation, and from the practical experience of our staff. We have rigorous and conservative safety and security procedures, including triaged security measures for students (such as restricted travel, curfews, and buddy systems) should any emergent or potentially emergent event occur. Every site has an emergency evacuation plan (supported by our travel insurance partner) that identifies safe houses, identifies on-call transportation, and provides a variety of options for moving participants out of unsafe area via land and air routes.

For each site, we have identified physicians, health centers and hospitals for routine and emergency care that meet standards of care for foreigners, and we know the locations of and how to contact the relevant embassies and consulates. These procedures are supported by duty officer training of our support staff in San Francisco who monitor an emergency call line 24/7. But the most critical components of our safety and security system are our local staff, who are also on call 24/7, and our network of community partners at each of our program sites. Our local staff have the best knowledge as to the potential of local events to become critical, and have a network of community members to turn to for safety information, such as best routes to safer locations. Every program participant undergoes safety and security training during orientation.

It is an unfortunate but usual part of development work that emergencies occur, and we have had experience dealing with a variety of issues, from localized civil unrest and natural disasters to total evacuation of programs. The US office is in constant communication with our program sites through a variety of communications channels, including biweekly phone calls and reporting on each participant, and we also monitor international media for emerging events.

All of our sites are in safe areas. However, similar to any semi-urban or rural area in the US, certain common-sense safety measures must be taken. These will be reviewed extensively during orientation, when every participant receives a safety briefing. We emphasize that the most important ways to stay safe are to exercise good judgment, to have a strong network of local contacts, and to have a strong awareness of the potential for harm.

FSD will do its utmost to provide a safe environment and a responsive support system to you throughout your experience. To ensure a safe and successful experience for everyone involved, we depend upon our staff to serve as a barometer of the local political, social and economic climates, and to use that knowledge to maintain a safe and secure environment for FSD participants. We depend on our participants to act prudently and be receptive to instructions and suggestions regarding safety and security.

**FSD’s responsibilities:**
- Ensure a safe and secure host community. Our host organizations and programs are run by FSD staff and trusted colleagues who live locally and often have years of experience with FSD. While the political climate varies by location and timing, we feel that our extensive local networks of host families and partner organizations provide us with a good barometer of the climate in relation to the safety of foreign volunteers.
- Inform you about safety and security in your host community through materials like this pre-departure guide. We equip you with the information and tools to be aware of the realities of your host community, to avoid situations that would put you at risk, and to manage these situations should they arise.
- Send you an electronic proof of insurance card.
- Direct you to a preferred medical facility in the case of an emergency.
- Support you logistically and emotionally through any medical or emergency situation.
- Contact your emergency contacts in the case of a major emergency.

**Your responsibilities:**
- Learn about the history and current events of your host country and community.
- Secure all recommended vaccinations.

*Continued on next page*
Health Preparations

- Follow the directions of your site team and host family.
- Register with the US State Department or your country's equivalent.
- Avoid volatile or risky situations. Travel with someone you know, and avoid being out alone after dark.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Walk purposefully and act as though you know where you are going.
- Notify your site team of any incidents of harassment, illness, accident, or any other serious event as soon as possible.
- Review your insurance coverage to determine whether you want to purchase an enhanced package. FSD program insurance ensures that adequate support is available to you in the case of a major emergency. There is a US $250 deductible for which you are responsible. The illnesses and medical issues you are more likely to encounter may require medical consultations and prescriptions that will generally incur a cost between $25 and $100. Beyond taking all necessary precautions to prevent illness and accidents, please plan financially for these types of expenses. Hospitals and clinics may require payment up-front for services; please bring cash and/or a credit card (Visa or Mastercard) for emergency medical expenses and seek reimbursement directly from the insurance provider. FSD is not responsible for up-front costs or cash-related medical fees.

As a GESI student, it is your full responsibility to identify and take all necessary health precautions prior to, during, and following the Program. Please start your health preparations early, as some vaccinations must be taken as far as eight weeks or more before departure. Providing detailed medical advice is beyond the expertise of FSD so it is very important to consult the resources below as well as medical professionals such as your doctor or local travel health clinic.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
Recorded information about health risks and precautions for international travelers:
1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747)

MD Travel Health: Uganda Page
Malaria Hotline: 404-332-4555

Topics to talk to your doctor or local health clinic about:
- Anti-malarial medications and mosquito repellent
- The symptoms of the most common illnesses contracted by travelers, and the appropriate treatment
- Medicines and supplies for preventing and treating common illnesses and maladies (diarrhea dehydration, sunburn, food poisoning)
- Dengue fever
- Tetanus
- Rabies
- Food and water-borne diseases
- Nutrition (especially for those with dietary restrictions)

What happens if I get sick?
For serious illness that may occur during your program, there are public and private clinics and hospitals available in most areas. If you should become sick, please alert the FSD Site and your host family immediately and they will ensure that you receive appropriate medical care. Jinja is home to several very good hospital facilities and well-trained, sensitive doctors are easily found.
Visa Info

The recommendations provided here are subject to change at any time. As a GESI student, it is your full responsibility to secure the appropriate visa and ensure the full legality of your stay in the host country during the program. To do so requires consultation of the following resources beyond the information provided by FSD and GESI.

U.S. State Department: Information for U.S. travelers to Uganda:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1051.html

Embassy of Uganda
5911 16th Street NW Washington, DC 20011
Telephone: 202-726-7100 | Fax: 202-726-1727
info@ugandaembassy.com | www.ugandaembassy.com

Guidance (subject to change at any time):
The recommendations provided here are subject to change at any time. As an FSD participant, it is your full responsibility to secure the appropriate visa and ensure the full legality of your stay in the host country during the program. To do so requires consultation of resources above and beyond the information provided by FSD. Please check with a Ugandan consulate or embassy for the most current information.

Please check with the Ugandan Embassy in your area to ensure the full legality of your stay in Uganda. Normally, a 90-day, single entry visa can be obtained by United States citizens upon arrival at Entebbe International Airport for $50 USD. You must procure a visa from the Ugandan Embassy before coming to Uganda to receive multiple entry visas for six ($100) or twelve ($200) months.
Packing List

**Clothes:**
- Underwear
- 1 warm jacket and/or sweater
- 2-3 pairs of pants/jeans
- 3 dress shirts for women or men
- 1-2 long-sleeved warmer shirts/tops
- 1 nice outfit for special occasions
- 3-4 skirts knee-length or longer (for women, skirts are more acceptable than pants)
- 3-4 pairs dress pants/khakis for men who are working in an office environment
- 1 pair of comfortable sturdy shoes for work and/or special occasions
- A modest bathing suit
- Sturdy cotton socks/nylons if needed for dressier outfit
- Modest sleepwear
- Sun hat
- Windbreaker or light waterproof jacket/umbrella

**Health and hygiene:**
- Anti-malarial pills
- Sunscreen/sunblock (high SPF)
- Strong insect repellent and itch-relief cream
- Aspirin and/or non-aspirin pain reliever
- Antibiotics for travelers diarrhea
- Any medications you use (in their original containers) and a copy of your prescriptions
- A supply of hand wipes/wet wipes and anti-bacterial hand lotion such as Purell
- Vitamins (especially for those with special health or dietary needs)
- Personal hygiene products – shampoo, favorite toothpaste, tampons (which are difficult to find and expensive)
- Sunglasses/glasses (extra pair if you have a prescription or contacts), copy of your prescription and saline solution

**Practical supplies:**
- Water bottle (steel/plastic)
- Travel alarm clock
- Batteries
- Towel (quick dry or regular - Families may not have them and they are useful for beach days. Hostels will almost always have them.)
- Medium-sized backpack for day trips and weekend trips
- Flashlight or headlamp (headlamp is recommended as you will be without electricity a lot of the time and it's nice to have your hands free)
- Lock for your luggage
- Camera, memory cards, cord for uploading photos
- Notebooks, pens, paper
- Reusable shopping bag

**Documents and money:**
- Passport vaccination booklet
- Airline ticket
- Insurance card
- ATM card (must have PLUS sign on the back)
- Visa Card (Mastercard is NOT accepted here)
- Photocopies of all documents
- Cash (U.S. currency, 50’s and 100’s from 2006 or later); traveler's checks are not recommended
- Be sure to bring any documents needed for your entry/visa in your carry-on luggage!

**Other:**
- Pictures of your family, friends, school, neighborhood, or work to share with your host family (optional)
- Small gifts for your host family

“**What I wish I brought to Uganda**” Packing tips from 2012 students:
- Baby wipes
- Tissues
What kind of luggage should I bring?
Don't overdo it – pack lightly so you can travel more easily and store your bag in small places. Think in terms of a backpack, duffel bag, or moderate-sized suitcase and a daypack. Bags with shoulder straps are preferable to suitcases because they're easier to carry.

What should I bring in my carry-on luggage?
We recommend that you carry all valuables (money, credit card, passport, identification, immunization booklet, insurance card, etc) and a complete set of clothes (change of shorts, pants/skirt, underwear) in your carry-on luggage in case your checked bag is temporarily lost or delayed.

What documents should I bring?
You should bring your passport, vaccination booklet, insurance card and list of FSD contacts in Uganda. Bring 2 copies of each. During the program, keep the originals and one copy safe in your suitcase and keep the other copy on you.

What are some items especially difficult to get in Uganda?
Tampons, batteries (can be found here but are very expensive), novels (only found in Kampala and are quite expensive), face wash, hand sanitizer, good shampoo and conditioner, good chocolate (chocolate here has anti-melting agents in it that diminish the taste). You can find almost anything in Jinja and if it is not available here then you can go to Kampala. However, western products tend to be really expensive so it is better to bring necessities from home.

Should I bring donations?
Donations are not required. If you choose to bring donations, please think about the practicality, sustainability, and durability of those items. Email your Site Team to find out the best types of donations to bring with you.

How are clothes washed?
Your host family will wash your clothes (except your underwear and socks). Washing machines will not be available – your clothes will be hand washed and line dried. You will wash your personal items by first soaking them in powdered detergent and then washing them by hand. Please note that hand washing is much rougher on clothing than the “normal” cycle on a washing machine therefore, your clothes will endure a lot more wear and tear. Also, there is a common stigma surrounding ladies underwear being aired outside. After women wash their underwear they hang them to dry inside their room (preferably in a closet or behind a door out of sight).

What should I wear?
The rule of thumb (for men and women) is to dress conservatively.

• At work: Women should plan on wearing skirts or nice pants (not jeans) most days at the office and every time you go to a village. Ugandans have little qualms about women showing skin above the waist but showing legs is considered inappropriate. Skirts should reach at least the bottom of the knees and the longer the better. Shirts should not be risqué, but sleeveless shirts are fine providing they are not spaghetti strapped and low cut. It is also a good idea to bring blouses, decent looking t-shirts and polo shirts. Men should plan on wearing pants or slacks and short-sleeve shirts during the day. It is uncommon for Ugandan men to wear jeans as they are quite hot to wear. If you are working in town then you should bring a decent looking pair of brown/black shoes. Ugandan's will polish their shoes every morning before work so make sure that you are wearing something that suits. You should bring polo, collared, or button-up shirts (especially if you are working in town), and some decent looking t-shirts.

• Around town after work or on the weekend: In Jinja, and especially in Kampala, Ugandan's dress is typically similar to ours at home. Girls and boys alike wear jeans, t-shirts and shorts. You can wear casual clothes, but must make sure that you are clean and your clothes are free of wrinkles or holes. Ugandan's are impeccable dressers and are always seen wearing freshly ironed clean clothing.

• At home: This is very dependent upon where you are living. If you are living in a village with a traditional family, it is best to remain conservative and neat. If you are in town pants and even shorts may be okay. The best thing to do is to observe those around you and see what your family wears. Both men and women should bring one nicer outfit in case you are invited to events such as weddings or burials, or in the case that you give a presentation as part of your work. A pair of sturdy sandals that you can walk in is also essential, and a pair of close-toed shoes for cooler evenings during rainy seasons. You may wish to bring a bathing suit to use at the pool in Jinja or in case you travel. You should also bring a raincoat or umbrella, as well as sunglasses and a hat for sun protection.
Packing & Electronics

• What type of clothes should I pack?
Bring some lightweight clothes and warm layer for varied temperatures. Keep in mind that darker colors are easier to keep clean, and that your clothes will endure a lot of wear and tear from being washed by hand. Also, consider clothes that will breathe in the heat and dry quickly.

• What kind of weather should I expect?
Uganda has two rainy seasons and two wet seasons. Rainy seasons are April-June and October-December (generally, but this varies). The temperature during the wet seasons in Uganda is generally warm during the day and cool at night. Rains will come every couple of days and will last anywhere from 1-5 hours. The rains make the cities and especially the villages quite muddy. Therefore, expect to get dirty! Do not bring anything white that you like because it will not remain white for long. It is best to bring darker or patterned clothing that will hide dirt. Remember as well that it will get quite cool at night so bring long sleeved shirts or a hoody. The dry seasons are named accordingly as they are dry with rain not being seen for months. The weather is generally much hotter than during the wet season and it is quite dry and dusty. The dust fills the air and will turn you orange. Again, it is not recommended to bring white clothing. Looser clothing is also better than tight fitting shirts or pants to allow for airflow.

• Should I bring my laptop?
Personal computers are not common in Uganda. Access to computers at your host organization will be limited and it is highly unlikely that your host family will have one. The advantage of bringing a laptop is the ability to work on documents at home without paying for computer time. You can then save your work to a USB drive and email/print it at an internet café. If you do decide to bring your laptop, please take the necessary precautions! It should be in your carry-on bag to take on the plane and you should keep it at your host family’s home.

Please understand that taking a laptop entails the risk that it could be lost, stolen or damaged – GESI and FSD are not responsible in these scenarios.

• Should I bring my iPod?
Ipods are becoming more common; however, you should generally not walk around with one in plain sight because this will draw attention to you and could put you at risk for theft. Keeping it secured and hidden on your person or at home and listening to it with your family is perfectly fine. You may not have a television or a radio, so it is nice to bring something that you can listen to your music on.

• Voltage Converters:
If you do decide to bring your laptop or other American electronic devises, you will need voltage converters which convert to 230V-240V with a “g” plug. Converters can be bought in Uganda, however to be safe you may consider purchasing one before departure.
Food & Water

• Can I drink the water?
NO. Do not drink the water. You are only to drink water that is bottled, has been treated or is boiled.

• Where can I get safe water?
It is hot in Uganda, so please pay close attention to your hydration at all times and be sure you’re getting plenty of (safe) water. Your host family will make purified water available to you. When visiting other families or communities; bring your own bottled water with you at all times, and when in doubt, drink a bottled beverage. Passion-fruit juice is quite common in Uganda and it will look tempting on a hot afternoon. Do not drink the juice unless you are positive that the water added to the juice has been boiled first. Never buy passion-fruit juice from a store or stall (no matter what the shopkeeper tells you). The most sustainable way to ensure that you always have a supply of purified water available is to bring a stainless steel water bottle and re-fill it each morning from your host family’s supply. You may also consider bringing water treatment tablets for backup. Bottled water is available in any small shop or supermarket.

• What is typical food?
The main staples in Uganda are rice, matooke (steamed, mashed banana), posho (maize meal cooked with water until it is thick enough to eat with your hands), sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, cassava, ground nuts, fish, and maize. These foods are eaten with a sauce such as peanut (groundnut, or g-nut) sauce, beans, or occasionally fish or a small amount of meat (goat, chicken, or beef) in a large amount of stock. The Ugandan diet is based on fresh local produce. Fresh fruits and vegetables, such as pineapple, mango, papaya (paw paw), bananas, passion fruit, jackfruit, tomatoes, beans, carrots, cabbage, etc. are readily available. Most foods found in the country, especially in the restaurants, are rich in carbohydrates. Calcium is conspicuously missing from the Ugandan diet; if you are concerned about this you may bring calcium supplements or other multivitamins.

• What do most people drink?
Most families drink tea, usually in the mornings and in the afternoon “teatime”. Tea is usually served with milk, but you may request it without if you are lactose intolerant. Families also drink either water or passion fruit juice, or occasionally a soda to honor a visitor in the home.

• How vegetarian friendly is the local cuisine?
Meat is not served often in most households and is reserved for big celebrations, so it should be easy for families to accommodate a vegetarian. Please be specific as to your preferences (i.e. whether you eat chicken but no red meat, or no animals, no dairy whatsoever) and let the FSD staff know beforehand. Fresh fruit such as pineapple, mangoes, sour oranges, sweet bananas and jackfruit are readily found and cheap!

• What foods should I avoid?
- Avoid uncooked food, street vendors and restaurants that have not been recommended by FSD Site Team.
- Do not eat fruits or vegetables that have been washed with water unless they are peeled or the water was treated.
- Other foods likely to be offered that you should avoid unless they are prepared properly by your host family are Mchomo (barbecued goat, generally served on a stick), passion fruit juice (and other freshly squeezed drinks), milk or other dairy products (there is no refrigeration).
- Do not eat pork to avoid the risk of acquiring schistosomiasis.
- To prevent parasites and diarrhea, you will want to eat lightly upon arrival and stay away from milk and cheese that has not been pasteurized.

• Can I eat fresh fruit from street stands, and trees?
In Uganda, you are likely to encounter an abundance of fresh fruit. As a rule, if you can peel it, you can eat it! Avoid peeled fruit served on the street unless you watch the vendor peel it.

• How should I express my preferences, or turn down unsafe food that is offered to me?
In many places food is an important form of hospitality and it is cultural practice to offer food and drink as a welcoming, friendly gesture. Never put yourself at risk, but please be diplomatic in expressing your needs. Take care not to offend your hosts with negative comments or facial expressions. Your host family will be notified of what you can and cannot eat or drink, but you should also be sure to tell your family what you do and do not like to eat. You should feel comfortable politely asking your family for food to be less oily or salty, to mention that you like fruits and vegetables, or to be given more or less food.

• Are there any US-style restaurants?
There are many within Kampala (including Pizza hut, Nando’s, and other Mexican, Indian, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, hamburger joints etc.). Most small restaurants in Jinja serve local food such as matoke, posho, potatoes, cassava, along with beef, chicken, goat meat or a peanut sauce. Restaurants also typically prepare chips and chicken, chips and liver, chips and sausages. There are a few places (mostly major hotels) to get pizza or steak.
Communication FAQs

• What is the best way for friends and family at home to reach me?
The best ways to communicate with your family and friends back home are through email, Skype or receiving calls on your Ugandan phone.

You will be provided with a cell phone to borrow once in-country with minimal credit for emergency purposes. However, you will have to purchase credit to cover personal calls you want to make. The network is fairly consistent in and around Jinja. It is recommended that your parents purchase a calling card or phone plan that will allow them to call you. It is very expensive to call from your cellphone and landlines are rare in Uganda.

Please notify your friends and family that reception is often quite poor on international calls and there will be a few moments delay when talking. Also, service may cut off at any time or you may lose your network so that your friends/family cannot contact you. Inquire with your home phone service provider about the best way to avoid the expensive charges of calls, internet data, or even when others leave you messages. You may want to keep your home cell phone off the entire time you are in Uganda. Please ensure that your friends and families are aware of this and understand that it is best not to schedule international calls at exact times. You can also call phones using Skype.

In case of an emergency, your family can call the US emergency cell phone.

• Are cell phones available?
You will be provided with a cell phone upon arrival by your Site Team. Network is fairly consistent in and around Jinja. It is recommended that your parents purchase a calling card or phone plan that will allow them to call you. It is very expensive to call from your cellphone and landlines are rare. Since calling people can be quite pricey, most people use texts which are much cheaper.

Please notify your friends and family that reception is often quite poor on international calls and there will be a few moments delay when talking. Also, service may cut off at any time or you may lose your network so that your friends/family cannot contact you. Please ensure that your friends and families are aware of this with the understanding that it is best not to schedule international calls at exact times.

• Is there access to internet and email?
Yes. You can purchase an internet modem ($30-$40) which uses USB connection to connect local internet service to a computer. This can be used anywhere from urban areas and even rural villages. There are also several internet café’s in and around Jinja. Flavours, Source Café, and Space Café have wireless connections at various speeds. Customers with their own laptops are allowed to use this wireless as long as they are also making purchases in the restaurant. Cafes and restaurants with wireless generally close at about 9pm or 10pm and are cheap at up to $1 per hour.

• Can I make and receive phone calls at my host family’s home?
No. Unfortunately, none of our host families have landline telephones. In fact, landlines are rare altogether in Uganda and are generally only found at places of business. That said, almost everybody has a cell phone. Cell phone airtime is expensive so it is not appropriate to ask to use someone’s phone unless you will pay them for the time used.

• How do I call the U.S.?
Calling the U.S on a mobile phone is expensive. If you need to call someone it is recommended that you call them and tell them to ring you back. When people are calling you they will dial: +256 (which is the country code for Uganda) and then your cell number, but omitting the first 0.
Money

• How much cash should I bring with me?
You should plan on bringing $200 cash with you and a credit card in case of emergency. You can exchange money when you arrive at the airport at Entebbe. U.S dollars are best, do not bring travelers check's as they are difficult to exchange and bring a lower rate. Please note: you should bring $50 and $100 bills minted after the year 2006 to be able to Exchange at Forex Bureaus.

• How much money should I plan on spending in country?
GESI covers all of your necessary expenses, including room and board, in-country transportation, orientation and debriefing sessions, etc. You may want additional money, however, for entertainment, snacks, books, gifts, newspapers, weekend excursions, additional transportation and health emergencies. You should budget for about $10 a day and about $100 for a weekend trip. There is quite a bit of activity in and around Jinja. It is best to research the costs of activities that you would like to do in Uganda and budget accordingly. Never carry a large sum of cash or your passport on public transportation; if you must, please do so with caution. Bring only what you need for the day and use a nondescript bag to carry books or papers.

• How can I get cash?
There are multiple bank machines in Jinja that will accept international ATM or Visa cards. Please remember that MasterCard and other credit cards are NOT accepted in Uganda! There are several Forex Bureaus in Jinja to exchange money. Traveler’s checks are not recommended as they do not get a good exchange rate and are not widely accepted.

• What is the local attitude towards bargaining?
Bargaining is definitely part of the culture here and is expected at the local market. There is also a “Mzungu” price (foreigner price) that most taxi drivers and dealers will try and give you. In the beginning it will be difficult to know if you are getting cheated, but the Site Team will give you a breakdown of costs during in-country orientation.

Monetary Unit: Ugandan Shilling
Exchange Rate: Currently 2610 Ugandan Shillings to the USD, but check again before you leave.
Arrival & Transportation

Arrival:

• Your Arrival in Uganda:
The FSD Site Team will be waiting for you at the greeting area of the airport upon your arrival. They will have a sign with the letters “FSD” on it.
• Your Departure from Uganda:
The Site Team will work with you to arrange for your departure. They will accompany you to the airport as well.

Transportation in Uganda:

• Can I travel after dark?
It is not recommended to travel after dark. If you happen to be in town at night, make sure you are with people (preferably someone from your host family or another local) and call a Special Hire to take you home. You SHOULD NOT use a taxi, bus or boda at night.

• Is it safe to go out at night?
As in most big towns around the world, it is not advisable to walk around at night. If you must, do not go alone and try to take a Special Hire. It is best to travel with a local who knows which places to avoid.

• What kind of transportation is available?
Jinja is a relatively small town and most things are accessible by foot. However, should you need it there are other forms of transportation available as described below:

• Buses: Going to other towns and regions in Uganda leave from the bus park in Jinja, which is next to the taxi park. Buses are usually packed beyond their capacity and drive incredibly fast. They are the quickest way to travel to other areas of Uganda but are certainly not the most comfortable and definitely not the safest as accidents are common.
• Special Hires: Special hires are the same as taxis in the US, and are usually white sedan cars. They drive around town and will call out to potential customers although they are also found in groups at taxi ranks, called a stage. You can also book one by phone if you happen to know a drivers phone number. Fares are negotiable but are generally expensive.
• The Post Bus: The post buses, which take the mail from the main post office in Kampala to other towns in Uganda, also take passengers. The advantages of the post buses are that they are more comfortable, not over filled, road worthy and usually driven safely. They are also slightly cheaper than other bus companies. The disadvantage is that they take considerably longer than the other buses, partly because they don't drive like maniacs and because they stop at small towns and villages to drop off mail to the post offices. They are usually friendly and can be an interesting way of seeing the country.
• Taxis (Matatus): Matatus are small mini buses that carry 14 passengers (though frequently the driver will try to squeeze in 20), and travel in and out of central Jinja along the same routes. They are usually white with a blue stripe around them and are very distinctive. There is always a driver and a conductor who will hang out of the window calling for passengers or calling out where the taxi is traveling to if it is going out of Jinja.
• Boda bodas: Boda bodas, known as 'piki pikis' in some parts of the country, are bicycles or small mopeds or motorbikes with seats on the back to take 1 passenger (or 2 or 3 or 4), and Jinja is packed with them. They are probably the least safe form of transport, but are very quick for going short distances. The fares are definitely negotiable and the drivers will sometimes start quite high if they think you are new in town. Please know that riding on the moped or motorbike bodas is strictly prohibited while participating with FSD. Bicycle bodas are allowed but can also offer considerable risk.
Family Homestay

One of the most rewarding, challenging, and meaningful experiences during your time in Uganda is likely to be the time you spend living with your host family. Host families offer the rare opportunity to truly integrate yourself into the local culture and build meaningful relationships that will last long past your stay. The families who host GESI participants are carefully selected and offer their homes out of a genuine sense of generosity and the wish to learn about another culture. Your host family will view you as a member of the family and treat you as such. We hope that you will feel equally at home with your family but we ask that you never forget you are a guest in their home. Please always be respectful of their rules and help out the best you can.

A typical FSD host family in Jinja, Uganda:
The most common host families tend to live in 3- to 4-bedroomed houses, with electricity, running water and indoor plumbing. However most homes do not have showers and usually take bucket baths. It is important to note though that Uganda’s electricity supply is not very stable, which means that most of the families routinely experience blackouts which can be anywhere from 10 minutes to 8 hours long. Another host family arrangement is located in the village. These households have no electricity, running water or indoor plumbing. The homes are usually located on a small farm and are surrounded by gardens and occasionally animal sheds. These families are usually walking distance from the host organization. The most common pets are cats and dogs. Pets are mostly kept for security safety purposes rather than for company. Many homes tend to have chickens running freely in the backyard. Most of our host families have both parents and 3-5 children living with in the home. However, we do have a few large families that have up to 15 members. All the families are required to of safe drinking water.

- **What will my host family provide?**
  Your family is required to provide you with a private room, three meals a day, purified water and weekly hand-washing of your clothes. Toiletries and a towel are not provided; you must bring your own.

- **What are the living accommodations like?**
  Living accommodations may be basic by U.S. standards. Electricity often isn’t available for short periods of time. Due to water shortages, bucket showers are the norm. You will become accustomed to a fair amount of night sound, including traffic, animals, and radios. Earplugs can help. Ants, mosquitoes, lizards and occasionally spiders and small rodents can creep into the house. Your family can help prevent these unfortunate visitors, so let them know if you see something. Your house in general will be cement walled and potentially inside of a family “compound”. The host family conditions vary considerably within Jinja.

- **Will a mosquito net be provided?**
  A mosquito net will be provided in most cases. These are readily available in the local market if you would like to purchase one upon arrival.

- **How are families structured in Uganda?**
  Many Ugandan families consist of single mothers and their children, and it is not uncommon for several generations to live in the same house together. Children in Uganda, like children anywhere, can be both adorable and annoying, but try to maintain your patience with them in order to integrate smoothly in the household. Polygamy is also common where the husband may have different wives in different villages or both wives living in the same “compound” but in different apartments.

- **Do I need to help out with chores?**
  We ask families to treat you as another member of the family, which means you will pick up after yourself, keep your area neat, and help out with the cooking and cleaning as appropriate.

- **Is it safe to bring/store valuables with my host family?**
  There is no need to bring many valuables. We require that you keep items of value locked in your luggage at all times. This is extremely important because friends and relatives are often in and out of the house. However, there have been incidents when a student thought something was stolen only to find that s/he had misplaced it. This kind of incident is hard on the host family who take great care to protect you and your things. If something unusual of this nature does happen, please speak with your host mother and/or the FSD Site Team immediately.
Family Homestay

• **What are standard meal times?**
  Meal times are scattered and irregular in Uganda. Most families tend to eat in "shifts" with the males eating first then the wives and children. Therefore, there is not usually a set meal time. Your family will probably provide you meals separately either in your room or by yourself. Do not take offense at this, but this is them showing their respect for you. If you feel uncomfortable eating alone, you may ask your host mother to eat when she does. Generally, Ugandan's take tea at about 10am, lunch at 2 or 3 and dinner around 8 or 9. If you feel that meal times are too late and you are feeling hungry, you may request to eat your meals earlier or buy some biscuits or fruit to tide you over.

• **How should I tell my family that I'd like less food, or different kinds of food?**
  Don't be shy about asking your family for particular foods or the amount of food you want to eat. You should tell your family what you do and do not like to eat. Vegetarian food is always available.

• **How much time should I spend with my host family?**
  One of the most rewarding, challenging, and meaningful experiences during your time in Uganda is likely to be the time you spend living with your host family. You will learn a great deal about Uganda through the people who live there, so cultivate a habit of listening and observing, rather than merely hearing and seeing. Ask questions and share your perspective. Be sensitive to the feelings of others and embrace the different viewpoints, lifestyles, experiences and company your family provides. Host families are eager to get to know you and learn about your American life so be ready to talk about your interests, culture, family and plans. We encourage you to share pictures and stories from your life at home.

• **How often should I check in with my family?**
  You are entrusted in the family's care and just like your own family they will worry about you if you don't check in. Please advise your family in advance if you do not plan to be home for a meal. Likewise, be sure to notify your family in advance of any weekend excursions you take other than those in the scheduled program.

• **Can I have visitors come over to the house?**
  Please advise your family before you invite anyone to the house, especially someone of the opposite sex. Overnight guests are NOT appropriate and are unacceptable during the program. Protect your family's safety and privacy. Do not give out their home number. Remember: Even though you will be treated as part of the family, you are still a guest in their home and must be respectful of their rules.

• **Will I receive my own set of keys?**
  You should receive your own set of keys to the house so that you are free to come and go as needed.

• **How do people spend their free time?**
  Families generally sit around at night talking and listening to the radio. Many families are keen on international football and they support various teams. This is a great time to get to know your family as you will find that during the day women are quite busy cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of children, etc.

• **Can I go out at night?**
  Yes. If you do make plans to go out at night, please advise your family of your transportation, who will be accompanying you, your return time, and arrangements for getting home and into the house. Exercise good judgment: As anywhere, it is best to go out with family members, coworkers or friends that you meet. Simply being an American makes you more of a target for theft, harassment, etc. You should never be out alone at night past 8 p.m.

• **How should I handle requests for money?**
  FSD program fees cover all of your room and board expenses so there is no need for you to discuss money with your family. They should not ask you to borrow money and if this happens, tell them it is against your program rules to lend money. If children ask for money, gently remind them that it is against the rules, and let your Site Team know about the incident.

• **What types of gifts are appropriate to bring for my host family?**
  We suggest that you bring small and modest gifts for your host family as a token of goodwill and gratitude for their hospitality. Ideas: souvenirs of your home town or state, chocolates/candies, inexpensive solar calculators or watches, inexpensive jewelry, or school supplies for the children, etc. It is possible to purchase small gifts in Uganda too, but regional gifts are special. Use your imagination!
When I was considering my plans for the summer, I wanted to do something constructive and useful for my journalism career. GESI provides valuable experience for anyone interested in working as a journalist abroad. As a journalist, one must understand her community and country, which is difficult for an American working in a place like Uganda. Also, you cannot be afraid to go out of your comfort zone; many countries in Africa and the Middle East are dangerous for foreigners who don't know their way around, but who still have a job to do. Finally, GESI has the potential to help one grow as a person, which is useful no matter what your career might be. I chose GESI because of these factors.

I worked with three other American interns; one also from Northwestern, one from Wellesley College, and one from the University of Illinois. The NGO where we interned was called St. Eliza's Community Development Organization and it focused on providing health care in the slum where we lived. Most of the work performed by the staff centered on providing immunizations, treating malaria, and helping patients living with HIV or AIDS. St. Eliza's was working on expanding its community development work to other areas when we arrived.

After visiting as much of the community as we could in the time we had, we came up with a project for a school within St. Eliza's jurisdiction called Kagogwa Primary School. A problem for all the schools in our area was the lack of food during the school day. Kagogwa had three or four acres of fertile land, so we proposed growing maize there and feeding the harvest to the children. There was enough land to grow a crop that would feed every child in the school once per day per term. The school agreed, and we put everything in place for the project to go forward before we left. About a week after our departure, the school planted the maize—the rest is yet to come.

Learning to connect with and understand the host community was important to my work, and I became aware of my own biases going into interactions with other cultures. It's hard to accept that you don't know much about the world, but once you do, you can start looking and learning to gain more knowledge and actually become effective, no matter where you are or what work you're doing. As a journalist specifically, the program was eye-opening in terms of what life would be like if I worked as a foreign correspondent. It taught me how difficult and important it is to understand and respect the area where you're reporting from.
Cultural Practices & Beliefs

The following are designed to be a few notes on some of the issues that foreigners are most struck by when living in Uganda. Being aware of some of these issues before your arrival in Uganda should help you during your transition into Ugandan culture.

• Extended greetings are very important to Ugandans, and you should at least learn the greetings and some other basic vocabulary (such as “thank you” -- webale) in Luganda in order to appropriately converse with non-English speaking Ugandans. You will notice in Ugandan culture that when two people greet, a woman or child will often kneel down to men/elders. However, as a foreigner you are not expected to do so, but do not be surprised if children and women pay you such respect.
• Hospitality is also very important to Ugandans, which they will often demonstrate through offering food or drink. It is polite to accept whatever they offer and thank the person who has cooked the meal. It is rude to decline food or drink – if you are not hungry or are concerned about the safety of the food, try to eat a few bites and make a compliment about the food.
• Religion plays a major role in the lives of many Ugandans. 85% of Ugandans are Christian (roughly evenly divided between Protestants and Catholics), 11% are Muslim, and the remaining 4% are Hindu, Jewish, or animist. Many Ugandan Christians are very vocal about their faith, and may press you about your beliefs or ask you if you are “saved” or “born again.” Religion, generally Christianity, also plays a major role in many community organizations and families, and prayers to begin gatherings are common.
• As a foreigner, you will inevitably come across individuals who wish to gain something from you – whether it be money, sponsorship for their education or for their children, or a visa back to your home country. Be polite but firm in communicating that you are unable to do so. Please note that rejecting such a request is not rude and when you do give in (unless you know and trust the individual asking) it only serves to confirm stereotypes of foreigners in Uganda. Many Ugandans will be intimidated by foreigners, and many will give you great amounts of respect simply for being a foreigner. The intimidation will abate as you build a relationship. It is helpful if you are politely open with your family about your likes and dislikes and how you do things – they may be nervous because they are unsure of these things. Ugandans may also assume that you have far more knowledge, skills, connections, abilities, etc. than you actually posses simply because you are a “muzungu”.
• Polygamy is common in Uganda. In polygamous families, each wife lives separately with her own children and each family cooks their own food. The co-wives may live in different parts of the same “compound.” Families, both polygamous and monogamous, also usually have many more children than in western countries. Many households include many more members than the nuclear family – they may also include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, half-siblings, a “girl” that the family “keeps” (who cooks and cleans in exchange for room, board, and sometimes a very low monthly wage), and orphaned or vulnerable children (either related or unrelated) that the family has taken in.
• Gender roles are very different from most western societies, and are usually more rigid. For example, only women cook, take care of the house and gather firewood. Women tend to have significantly less formal education than men.
• The concept of time is very flexible in Uganda. Many people in the villages do not use or own any time-keeping device. Some Ugandans will be significantly late by western standards, and often there is no way to communicate when someone is running late or is unable to come.
• Privacy is not a value in Ugandan culture. You will often be surrounded by people or children, particularly if you live in a village. Many Ugandans are not shy about asking questions once they know you. There may also be many more people in a small house than you are accustomed to, but you should always be allowed privacy within your room.
• In general, taking photographs is fine however; it is always polite to ask permission if you are taking a picture of someone or someone’s property. Also, if you take someone’s picture they will probably ask you for a copy. If it’s possible, go for it! Pictures are wonderful gifts here as most people (especially in the villages) do not have cameras. Remember that it is prohibited to take photos of military or security zones (i.e. airports, dams, borders posts).
Workplace

Working in Uganda will be a very rewarding and, at times, very frustrating experience. You will get the most out of the GESI program if you are able to balance patience, open-mindedness, to take advantages of unique learning situations, and show enthusiasm for your work. Your first week may seem like a month and you may feel unclear about many things, but by the time you leave you will have learned more than you thought possible, and will have made a contribution that will continue to improve the effectiveness of your organization.

· What is the general perception of work in Uganda?
Work is valued in Uganda and you will always hear stories from people about their successful sons or siblings. In the villages, work is generally divided according to your gender. Women’s work is cleaning, washing of clothes, cooking, raising the children and maintaining the gardens and rice fields. Men’s work is handling of the finances, controlling his household and doing the larger more strenuous jobs in the fields. In the city, work is also generally divided by gender. Directors, field workers, trainers, drivers and upper management are dominated by males whereas secretarial and maid services are dominated by women.

· What is a typical work day like?
The day-to-day work culture of Uganda is very different from most western countries. Work schedules are generally very flexible – it is more acceptable for work to be interrupted by issues such as lack of transportation, weather, family commitments, burials, planting or harvesting, etc, than in most western workplaces. Most organizations work 5 days a week, about 8 hours, and sometimes on Saturdays. Adherence to work schedules and work conditions varies considerably and is different in rural areas and in Jinja Town. Some organizations have an office in Jinja Town, which may or may not mean access to electricity, computers, and other such amenities. Meanwhile, more rural locations will often have an “office” housed in an unoccupied building in the community or in church building, and usually do not include access to amenities such as electricity.

· How do people in Uganda view time and/or punctuality in the workplace?
Time and punctuality are generally viewed differently in Ugandan culture. Don’t be surprised if you try to hold a meeting for 2 and you are the only one sitting there at 3pm. It is called Africa Time and it is something that you will have to adjust to. However, with that said, there are some people that do respect punctuality a lot. That said, it is best that you always keep time (to avoid the situation that you are late for something) and just bring a good book along with you to read while you are waiting.
Race, Sexuality & Gender

How you interact with others will initially have a lot to do with preconceptions. You’ll feel more comfortable once the inevitable “getting to know you” period is over, but keep some of these cultural norms in mind.

Race and Ethnicity:
In Uganda, you may not encounter the same level and/or kind of awareness and sensitivity surrounding race relations and conceptualizations of heritage as you may be accustomed to finding in the U.S. If you have features associated with an Asian heritage, you may be referred to as “Chinese.” If you have fair skin, kids and adults will shout out, call or greet you as “Muzungu” (Lit. “European”). Even persons with dark skin and an African heritage will sometimes be referred to as “Muzungu”, in this case meaning any westerner or, often any person showing the appearance of wealth associated with western nations. If you have features associated with an Indian or South Asian heritage, you may be referred to simply as “Indian.” In most cases, these names are not necessarily derogatory terms; many people use them simply because your skin color or features are unusual or intriguing within that context. Please be patient and try to remember that, especially in more rural areas, your appearance is most likely very unusual and provokes curiosity in locals. In some cases, it may be valuable to engage the people you meet in a conversation about the specificity of your heritage.

LGBTQ Considerations:
Same-gender relations are illegal in Uganda, and are punishable with incarceration. Additionally, social norms around gender identity vary, and transgender individuals may be the victims of discrimination. As such, sexual orientation and/or transgender identity are not topics that can be openly discussed safely. Please realize that it can be dangerous to disclose or openly express your sexual orientation and/or your transgender identity, and you need to take this into consideration while abroad. The recently enacted Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2014 criminalizes “attempts to commit homosexuality” and extends to other provisions, which include banning the “promotion of homosexuality.”


For more information and resources you can contact the GESI office, visit Northwestern’s Study Abroad website, LGBTQ Students and Study Abroad: http://www.northwestern.edu/studyabroad/resources/online-guide/identity-and-diversity/lgbtq-students-study-abroad.html


Gender:
Expect to get a lot of unwanted attention. If you are a woman, it is likely that men will talk to you in the street and attempt to engage you in conversation. Use your common sense. The best thing to do is to ignore them. Do not give out your phone number to people you don’t know. You can explain that you are living in someone else’s house and are not allowed to receive calls or visitors.
As a former British Colony, many Ugandans speak English. English is the primary language used in schools and therefore most people within and around the cities speak fluent English. There are numerous local languages spoken throughout Uganda. In Jinja district, the local language is Luganda. It is very useful to know some vernacular when dealing with local taxi drivers and in the market to avoid being cheated and to show that you are not a tourist.

**At work:** All communication, both written and oral, will be in English. Staff may occasionally talk with each other in their local language. Do not take offense at this and know that it is just sometimes easier to use vernacular. If you feel that it is becoming a problem though (i.e. you don't know what's happening at meetings, etc) then talk with your supervisor or to your FSD Program Coordinators.

**In the community:** In Jinja district, the main languages used are Lusoga (which is the local language) and Luganda which is mostly a business language and is widely spoken around the country. Someone in your host family will know how to speak English but it will be very much appreciated by the community and your family if you learn some of the local language.

**Kiswahili:** Kiswahili is spoken throughout East Africa, however, in Uganda it is reminiscent of dirty politics and war. Most Ugandan’s associate Swahili with soldiers and thieves (which in the past were often one and the same). Because of this, even though it is used in most neighboring countries, most Ugandans have been hesitant to learn it. This is slowly changing thanks to many popular Kiswahili music videos played on East African TV but it is recommended that you refrain from using Swahili and opt for using Luganda.

**Tutoring:** If you are interested in tutoring upon arrival, please let your Site Team know. They will help you set up sessions. See the chart below for some phrases to get started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Luganda</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello (Casual)</td>
<td>Jambo (actually Swahili)</td>
<td>jam-bo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you? (To a man, formal)</td>
<td>Osibye otya Ssebo</td>
<td>o-sib-e-o-tee-a say-bo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you? (To a woman, formal)</td>
<td>Osibye otya Nyabo</td>
<td>o-sib-e-o-tee-a nee-ah-bo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am fine</td>
<td>Ndi Bulungi</td>
<td>Indi boo-loon-jee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you ? (Casual)</td>
<td>Oli otya</td>
<td>Oleotia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am Fine</td>
<td>Ndi Bulungi</td>
<td>Indi boo-loon-jee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>Weble</td>
<td>way-ba-lay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May I have?</td>
<td>Mpaako</td>
<td>Mpaako</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much is this?</td>
<td>Sente mekka</td>
<td>sente-ee-mekka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>Kale</td>
<td>ka-lay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand</td>
<td>Ntegeela</td>
<td>entregeilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Emmu</td>
<td>ee-mu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bbiri</td>
<td>beereee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Saatu</td>
<td>sa-too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nnya</td>
<td>nya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tano</td>
<td>taan-oo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mukaaga</td>
<td>moo-kaa-gaa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Musanvu</td>
<td>moo-san-woo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Munaana</td>
<td>moo-naa-naa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mwenda</td>
<td>moo-wen-da</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kkumi</td>
<td>koo-me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABC Africa (2001) - At the request of the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development, Iranian filmmaker, Abbas Kiarostami traveled to Africa to make a film about the work of the Uganda Women’s Effort to Save Orphans, a volunteer group established to provide food, shelter, and care for the more than one-and-a-half million children left to fend for themselves in a nation torn apart by war, poverty, and the AIDS epidemic.

General Idi Amin Dada (1974) - Ugandan dictator Idi Amin Dada was but a distant irritation to everyone but his own countrymen and the British Empire until his perfidy became headline material in the early ‘70s. The first director to provide an in-depth study of this gregarious madman was director Barbet Schroeder, with his General Idi Amin Dada. In this documentary, Schroeder and his crew travel to Uganda to spend several days with the despot, one-on-one.

War Dance (2006) - Set in civil war-ravaged Northern Uganda, this Best Documentary nominee for the 2008 Oscars follows the lives of three youngsters who attend school in a refugee camp and find hope through a rich tradition of song and dance. Coming from a world in which children are abducted from their families and forced to fight in the rebel army, these kids give it their all when they travel to the capital city to take part in the prestigious Kampala Music Festival.

Kassim the Dream (2008) - This is the story of World Champion Boxer, Kassim “The Dream” Ouma - born in Uganda, kidnapped by the rebel army and trained to be a child soldier at the age of 6. When the rebels took over the government, Kassim became an army soldier who was forced to commit many horrific atrocities, making him both a victim and perpetrator. He soon discovered the army’s boxing team and realized the sport was his ticket to freedom. After 12 years of warfare, Kassim defected from Africa and arrived in the United States. Homeless and culture shocked, he quickly rose through the boxing ranks and became Junior Middle-weight Champion of the World.

Dr. Lucille (2000) - This made-for-TV drama is based on the true-life story of Dr. Lucille Teasdale (Marina Orsini), who was one of the first female surgeons to practice in Canada. After establishing a practice in Quebec, Teasdale was re-introduced to Dr. Piero Corti (Massimo Ghini), a fellow surgeon she first met while studying in Montreal. Corti persuaded Teasdale to join him as he traveled to Uganda, and they soon fell in love and got married. Corti and Teasdale dedicated themselves to helping heal the people of Uganda through poverty, plague, and bloody civil war; together they founded St. Mary’s Hospital, which was regarded as one of the finest medical facilities in Africa.
White Pumpkin by Denis Hills
This book describes the life of Denis Hills, a lecturer in Makerere University, and Idi Amin the Ugandan dictator in the 1970s. Because of the criticisms about Amin found in this book, Hills was sentenced to death by a firing squad for treason but was saved by a personal appeal from the Queen.

Abyssian Chronicles by Moses Isegawa
At the center of this unforgettable tale is Mugezi, a young man who manages to make it through the hellish reign of Idi Amin and experiences firsthand the most crushing aspects of Ugandan society: he withstands his distant father's oppression and his mother's cruelty in the name of Catholic zeal, endures the ravages of war, rape, poverty, and AIDS, and yet he is able to keep a hopeful and even occasionally amusing outlook on life.

The Mountain People by Collin Turnbull
In 'The Mountain People', Colin M. Turnbull, the celebrated author of the classic 'The Forest People', describes the dehumanization of the Ik, African tribesmen who in less than three generations have deteriorated from being once-prosperous hunters to scattered bands of hostile, starving people whose only goal is individual survival.

The Lunatic Express: An Entertainment in Imperialism by Charles Miller
Entertainingly written nonfiction of what lead to building a railway to an uncharted land, and the early consequences of it, until the beginning of WW1. The book shows from how small events created the present day borders, locations of cities of East Africa. And how bureaucrats were busy slowing down everything with red tape 150 years ago.

Fong and the Indians by Paul Theroux
this is a comic-moral tale about an innocent Chinese store-keeper in East Africa. Although cheated and manipulated by those around him, Fong maintains his sorely-tried faith that “man is good”.

Alumni Recommendations:
Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes by Mutibwa
Developing Uganda by Holger Bernt Hasen
Uganda at 50
Museveni's Uganda by Tripp

See the BBC's time line of key events in Uganda:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1069181.stm

Stay up to date on current events by reading local articles featuring Uganda:

Find archived articles from The New York Times:

Read a general overview of Uganda: