



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Teaching and Living Aboard The Africa Mercy in Benin **Name:** Samantha Thompson

Other Team Members:

Program: Greater Houston Area Program

Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001 **Location Visited:** Cotonou, Benin (West Africa)

Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 01

Project Summary: I have always strongly believed that everyone, even those with little, must give back. Perhaps this belief is why I spend my summer vacations traveling and working in any place I can find need. My proposal was simple: I wanted to be apart of an organization that allowed me to help and serve those in Africa, while also improving my ability to teach and relate service ideas to my students. What I gained from this experience was anything but simple. My experience has significantly effected my passion for teaching and for empowering my students to make a difference in the world.

I traveled to Cotonou, Benin and lived aboard a traveling hospital ship. Aboard ship, I gained experience as a teacher in an international setting, discovered new ways to apply learning objectives to service and field trips and gained new insights into living and interacting with those from different cultures.

I have brought back first hand experiences of buying food in the markets of Benin, hiking to a waterfall in Ghana and playing soccer on the beach in Togo to excite my students and inspire their own travel ambitions. I gained insight in working with children from many different cultures throughout the summer and using their backgrounds to make learning experiences meaningful to them. I have also gained much understanding of my own student's feelings as immigrants and ELL's, by living on a ship housing 400 people from all over the world.

Most importantly, I have found my passion for teaching again and feel that is truly impacting my classroom in unbelievable ways.

Career Impact: * Gained insights into teaching students living outside of their native homes that will directly impact relationships I built with many of my students who have immigrated to the United States.

*Gathered materials, stories and personal experiences to teach my students about giving back to those throughout the world.

*Created new curriculum on issues and problems facing Africa and how students in the United States can make a difference internationally.

Classroom/Community Impact:*Created new curriculum on issues and problems facing Africa and how students in the United States can make a difference internationally.

*Feel a renewed passion for teaching and creating meaningful learning experiences for my students.

*Have had the opportunity to share my passion for volunteering with my co-workers and students.

Open Response: *A video project detailing my experiences and those of friends who have also worked in Africa.

*A class project geared toward raising support and awareness of issues facing African countries.

*A detailed cross-curricular binder for other teachers to use when trying to relate material pertaining to Africa to their subjects.

Quote: This was by far one of the best experiences of my life. Living and working in Benin has made me a better teacher and inspired me to continue making a difference in the world.

Photos:



A group of us took a trip to nearby Ghana to explore and hike to waterfalls.



I spent my mornings with a loud group of international preschoolers.



Working with kids at a local orphanage.



This orphanage had a school for the 35 children living there.



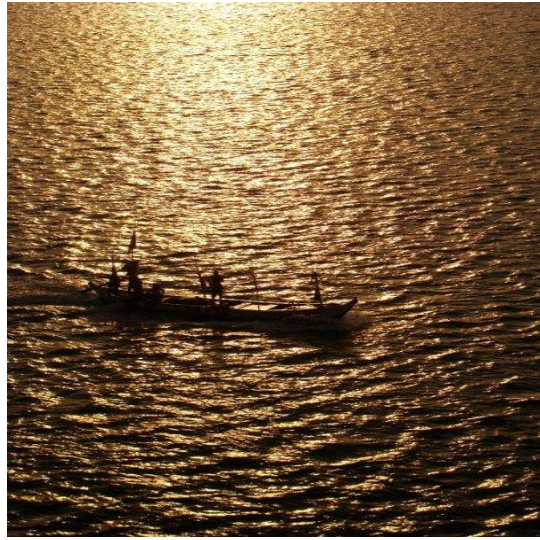
The ship being welcomed to port in Benin.



My home for six weeks.



Me, very sweaty, hiking up to a beautiful waterfall in Ghana.



The view from the ship at sunset.