



Adieu

DESPITE THE DESCRIPTIVE BLOG ENTRIES AND EVOCATIVE IMAGES that we post from overseas, time spent in deep immersion is rarely just a collection of romantic tales of adventurous bus rides, sunset epiphanies, and tasty exotic delicacies. Gap year and college students participating in volunteer programs in the developing world know this all too well. Having spent over 15 years as a field instructor, program manager, and director of international volunteer programs, I have seen, supported and trained hundreds of well-intentioned young adults through the ebbs and flows of navigating life and volun-

teerism in small, rural communities all over the world. From the seemingly mundane frustrations of simplified living conditions to the profoundly unsettling questions of overall project efficacy, our courageous young students have much more complex stories to share.

This photo was taken of a young volunteer with her host mother in Tanzania, five weeks into a three month program, on the day the volunteer had decided to return home. Hers was not an African fairytale, but a sad and challenged story that had no happy ending ahead. She made the impossible decision to return home, which she believed

would be a healthier and more productive option for the remainder of her semester. The joyful and loving goodbye that these two shared in the moments that I took this photo were so sincere, tender, and earnest, it affirmed my single greatest and sustaining experience over the last two decades: these programs, students, communities, and their combined outcomes restore my faith in humanity, in some ways making every story have a meaningful, if not always happy, ending.

JANE GOLDSTONE SAROUHAN
Director of Admissions
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YOU'RE INVITED! We invite you to submit your photos along with a brief (approximately 200 words) description of why these images are important in your understanding of a person, place, idea, or incident from your experiences in international education. The photos could be of a simple moment on your home campus involving international students, a major event in an exotic location, or anything in between. The editors of *International Educator* will run selections on this page throughout the year. Please contact us for submission details at elainal@nafsa.org.