

Expectations

The most important thing that I have ever learned about expectations is not to have any in the first place. As I embarked onto my first flight to begin my journey to Kampala, Uganda I had only the slightest idea what I was getting myself into, and with just the information that I had, I was perfectly comfortable. My plane landed five minutes to midnight, and I was met by a couple of men with the widest smiles I had seen since my twenty hours of flying had begun and was loaded into the car and driven an hour to my hostel. Before I had much time to process where I was, what I was doing, or where I could find something to eat in the morning I was picked up by a motorcycle and told to hold on. I spent a few hours visiting the major landmarks of the city (including one of the largest universities and largest mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa, to name a few). One my impromptu tour had ended I was dropped off at a small workshop nestled in a opening behind a local church, this is where I was to spend much of my time here at Awamu Biomass Energy. My NGO contact happened to be the Co-founder and CEO of this start-up and his mission was simple, to be the nation's strongest advocate and supplier of clean-cooking gasifier technology. For the uninformed (much like I was) gasification is a technology which utilized pyrolysis to create a wood-burning stove that behaves more like gas than biomass. It was truly a sight to see the first time I witnessed the stove in action. Nolbert had placed so much belief, effort, and capitol into Awamu but o far has not been seeing the results that he had wished for during Awamu's inception in 2012. This is where my project comes into play, I was here to venture out into towns, districts, and villages that he simply does not have the available man-power or money to visit and meet with the end-users of his product and conduct interviews, surveys, and focus groups to determine what may be slowing the adoption of this impressive technology. We spent some time discussing our overall timeline for my stay in this beautiful country and had a rough outline of the project created by the end of the day. Once we locked up the workshop (with the three padlocks and steel doors) Nolbert took me to his house where I met his girlfriend Latifa, son Beylon, and visiting children Benjamin and Frank. My first meal in Uganda and indeed my first meal in about twenty hours was Matoke with G-nut sauce and avocado, esesentially boiled unripe bananas and peanut flour sauce. After the food I hung around his small home for some time simply talking and getting to know my surroundings and the peopleI would see often during my stay, then I went back to my hostel about a five minutes walk away, it was midnight. My first twenty-four hours in Uganda were some of the busiest, but most exciting of my life.