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The Charity:

[Dufatanye](#) has a mission to combat HIV/AIDs, malnutrition, and poverty by focusing on vulnerable populations in areas with high malnutrition and extreme poverty.

The Project:

My project involves developing a sustainable, affordable sanitary pad solution using banana fibres and other local materials to help women go to work and school during their menstrual period. The aim this year was to develop, test and receive feedback on prototypes on the ground in Rwanda, and if possible, train some ladies on how to make them by themselves.

At the end of my time on the ground in Rwanda, I am happy to say that I left having imparted a great deal of knowledge on how to make a sanitary pad from scratch using local materials. I was able to help train two individuals on how to make the pads and lab safety, and one of these also underwent documentation, project management and presentation skills training, led by me. The expedition can be counted as a success not only by these achievements, but also in the fact that we were able to establish a reliable supply chain for key materials needed in the production process. We were also able to draw a framework for how to proceed given the new information we had learnt about what materials, tools and skills were involved, and how best to pilot test and scale up.

I think the biggest skill I learnt this year was leadership and training skills. Much of my job included being able to coordinate plans daily, and learn how to disseminate information and skills clearly, despite communication challenges. Of course, I also acquired further skills in communication, logistics and procurement, something I am happy I was able to because it drew from and built on skills developed in my third year DMT project.

I think the biggest lesson for me in this trip was realising that I enjoy developing, testing, and refining a product, and more importantly providing the key building blocks for others to build on for any given product. From there, I think I'm the kind of person that would like to move on to another project and do the same.



The novelty of different projects keeps my internal cogs turning and helps me draw different insights that I can transfer into previous projects when I have learnt more about other things. Further action points in our project include developing code in relation to the packaging of our pads, and the excitement I have regarding this task shows me that combining design consultancy with software engineering might be where my interests lie, and I am currently looking at internships and jobs that will allow me to explore this realm better.

Highlights:

- Finally constructing an entire pad from start to finish
- Seeing the difference in presentation and documentation skills of the people I trained (proud teacher moment!)
- Making our own bioplastic

Find out more about the Dufatanye Sanitary Pads Project via [YouTube](#).

