

On 6<sup>th</sup> July, 14 girls set off from Manchester Airport accompanied by Ms Maher

and our leader from World Challenge, Tim. Leaving plenty of crying mothers at the airport, we boarded the plane with 22 days worth of kit stuffed in a rucksack. We encountered our first unforeseen problem discovering that our money for the entire trip was in Manchester...whilst we had just landed at Heathrow. With world challenge's assurance that the money would be wired out to us, we boarded the plane still feeling somewhat terrified at the prospect of landing in Africa with



no money. The entire flight went without a hitch but upon arrival at the terminal Ella's rucksack had not arrived with us and would also have to be flown out to us at a later date. Taking it in our stride, as Withingtonians do, we were then able to withdraw a third of our money at Nairobi airport so as to be able to cross the border into Tanzania. The first phase of our trip was to be the acclimatisation trek which would prepare us in part for the main trek and allow us to see more of Tanzania. We climbed for a day and a half in order to summit and just less to return to the bottom. The climb was tough especially towards the top where there was a vertical scramble but we were rewarded with fantastic views over Tanzania and into Kenya when we reached the top. Before leaving Longido, we were taken on a tour to a Masai village and shown into a Masai hut. This was our first real interaction with Tanzanians and we were overwhelmed by the warmth with which we were greeted and this continued throughout the trip. We spent the following two days in two different cities preparing for our ascent up Kilimanjaro. We woke at 6am in order to arrive at the base of the mountain in





time and met our guide, Laurence who would travel with us for the entire six days. Over the course of the next four days, the walking became more strenuous and we began to feel the change in the oxygen levels as we ascended higher and higher. We were to attempt our summit at 1am on the fourth night. We retired to bed at 5pm with many having read letters from home for some motivation for the night ahead and with a definite anxiety. We were awoken at 12pm for “breakfast” in the pitch black and layered up ready for our ascent. The six hour walk up to Gilman’s point was undoubtedly one of the hardest

things we’ve ever done, with the lack of oxygen and numb bodies but somehow we all found the strength to reach 5685m where we were lucky enough to witness the sun rise from the roof of Africa. Another hour and a half’s walk brought us to 5895metres and Uhuru Peak. This was an incredibly emotional moment for all as we realised



this was the culmination of 18 months preparation and work and every single one of us had made it. Exhausted but elated we then descended to Kimbushi Primary School at the foot of the mountain where we would be working for the next 3 days. Having raised £7000 for the school, we were thrilled to see that our money was already being used for a separate kindergarten building. During our time at Kimbushi we created a vegetable



garden, concreted a chicken coop and painted part of the Kindergarten building; half of the team also returned to Mount Kilimanjaro to plant trees. We also found time to organise games with the children which made the experience wholly unforgettable for all. Finally, we were able to relax for the final few days and travelled to the east coast for two nights on the beautiful beaches of Pangani and finished with a days safari at the Ngoragora crater where we saw all of the big five. Our last night was spent at Carnivores in Nairobi, where members of the group tried delicacies such as camel, crocodile and ostrich. At the end of the 22 days, despite all wanting to rejoin our families, it was very difficult to separate having made such a close bond and none of the group will ever forget the experience.