Located about 30 miles northwest of Nairobi, Kenya, on the infamous “AIDS Highway,” Maai Mahiu is one of the poorest HIV-infected towns in Kenya. About 60 percent of the town’s 30,000 people are HIV positive.

From May 31-June 14, William Hargrove, Kansas Center for Agricultural Resources and the Environment, led a team of ten agriculture experts and extension agents to Africa. Kansas to Kenya, as the team was called, collaborated with an international NGO, Comfort the Children, and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, and worked on five projects.

“This trip was a powerful experience,” Hargrove said. “I was impressed with what our team was able to accomplish in such a short amount of time.”

The first project was the Shosho Shamba, or “Grandmother’s Garden.” This project developed a community garden designed to meet the nutritional demands of households where a grandmother was raising children orphaned because of HIV/AIDS.

The second project was Nutrition Improvement. The team worked with local health workers to develop shopping lists and menus for HIV positive individuals and families with disabled children.

A third project dealt with small business development. The team taught mothers of disabled children to sew so they were able to make things such as reusable shopping bags and generate income. Hargrove said this was an incredible lifestyle change for the women and the project is ongoing.

The Kansas to Kenya team also developed a hands-on environmental curriculum for children.

The final project was the Good Shepherd Children’s Home. Team members conducted health assessments and documentation for the children in the home. They assessed their diets and developed a plan for improved nutrition. They also developed plans to improve production and value from the children’s home garden.

Hargrove said he hopes to continue work with Kansas to Kenya. The team stays in contact with a community liaison from Comfort the Children and is working to raise funds for a future trip.
Kids laughing, the smell of fresh paint and the faint sound of Spanish Barney music are a few things the International Service Team from Kansas State University would experience daily while serving at a daycare for low income families in Puebla, Mexico.

The team consisted of four young women: Tamara Andra, senior in secondary education, Allison Voris, graduate in electronic journalism, Leah Killebrew, graduate in print journalism and Spanish, and myself, senior in public relations.

Each summer K-State sends out service teams to various locations around the world. Other than the Puebla team, the 2008 summer included a team in Bucerias, Mexico, just outside of Puerto Vallarta, and two teams in Gaborone, Botswana in Africa. The teams are chosen after an application and interview process. The teams then participate in a preparation course through K-State School of Leadership Studies to learn about topics such as culture shock, service learning, language, demographics and geographic information about their sites.

The Puebla, Mexico team served for nine weeks. There were several projects coordinated through Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UPAEP) and the neighborhood association. The first and largest was providing service to low income families at a daycare facility. What started out as just “babysitting,” actually turned into something much more. The team decided to help fix up the daycare facility. They painted several large murals in order to make the bland concrete “playground” more enjoyable for the children. The team also organized the daycare to help the staff work more efficiently and to help the overall appearance inside the facility. The staff members were very appreciative and pleased with the final results.

The second project involved teaching English. Adults and children of the Puebla community were eager to learn English. The team set up weekly classes free of charge for two hours where community members of all ages could come and learn English. They also taught classes in the schools around the community twice a week. The students improved their skills and felt more comfortable with English by the end of the summer.

Another project was writing articles for the neighborhood newspaper. This project was very beneficial for the team because it allowed them to practice their written Spanish skills, and also gave them an opportunity to interview members of the community. Each member wrote two articles for the paper on topics such as the environment, history, cultural practices, etc. The community enjoyed reading an outsider’s perspective.

I am grateful that I had this experience. The hospitality our team received was nothing less than excellent. I think service learning is a great learning opportunity that Kansas State provides. I learned so much about Mexican culture, the Spanish language and about the problems people face in daily life. I know that I always have a home in Puebla, Mexico.
ICDD Presents Ideas on Civility at International Conference in Mexico
by Jenny Barnes

In July 2006, Mexico held its most recent presidential contest. In this bitter election, conservative Felipe Calderón managed a razor-thin victory over leftist Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Immediately after the election, charges of voter fraud and abuse of negative campaigning spread across Mexico. Organized protests paralyzed Mexico City for months following the election.

In September 2007, the Mexican Congress responded by passing a constitutional amendment on electoral reform. The amendment represented a sea change in Mexican politics. It required Mexican television to provide free air time for political parties to broadcast political ads and prohibited negative campaigning.

The Federal Electoral Court of Mexico and the Institute for Federal Elections (IFE) are the judicial and administrative authorities organized to resolve all Mexican federal election disputes.

Following the constitutional electoral reform, IFE and the Federal Electoral Court organized an international conference in Mexico City exploring “Freedom of Speech, Denigration, Negativity, and Electoral Campaigns,” to address how they should best respond to the constitutional changes. Political communication and legal experts from Great Britain, Canada, Italy, Spain, Mexico and the United States were invited to attend and address negative campaigning and possible remedies.

David Procter from Kansas State University’s Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy, ICDD, was one of two Americans invited to talk about the American electoral system and alternatives to negative campaigning. Procter talked about ICDD’s training program in civil discourse and ICDD’s participation in a national network of organizations dedicated to empowering citizen dialog and participation in political affairs.

CECD, ICDD Help Bring Special Visitors to Kansas State Campus
by David Procter

The Center for Engagement and Community Development along with the Office of the Provost and the Office of International Programs hosted a delegation from the Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UPAEP) in Puebla, Mexico, September 28-30, 2008.

Eight top-level administrators from UPAEP traveled to Kansas State University for a three-day visit to explore and develop potential collaborations between the two universities. The visit had many highlights. It included a tour of NISTAC – K-State’s business incubator, a dialog between K-State Research and Extension and the delegation, and UPAEP Rector, Jose Alfredo Miranda Lopez’s participation on the advisory board for K-State’s Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy.

It also included a productive discussion on encouraging faculty exchanges, especially faculty from the College of Human Ecology and Arts and Sciences, and a discussion with Pat Bosco regarding student services, a commitment to expand collaboration between the two universities on service learning and community development.

Following the delegation’s visit to K-State in late October, Susana Valdovinos, director of K-State’s office of academic personnel, traveled to UPAEP this November to advance these areas of collaboration.

The delegation took a moment to pose for a picture with ICDD staff Terrie McCants and David Procter.
Public Issues Forum Facilitation is a process that brings people together and encourages constructive conversations around important issues. Facilitating public issues forums is a skill set that has value everywhere in the world, though practicing those skills is not always advisable.

In June 2008, David Procter, director of Center for Engagement and Community Development, and Dan Kahl, extension liaison, hosted a workshop in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Canada to participants from around the world for a pre-conference workshop of the 2008 Community Development Society Conference. The workshop, titled Public Issues Facilitation, provided participants both conceptual planning details and skill development exercises.

“One of the things that really struck me was how, even though we had thought through our examples and presentation in light of appropriateness to the audience, there were some underlying ideologies that we did not even consider,” Kahl said.

For example, in visiting over lunch with some conference participants from Zimbabwe, it became very clear to Procter and Kahl that what the workshop was encouraging people to practice would be a death wish in some countries. Inviting the public to have voice and participate in identifying, defining and resolving issues is a very democratic process.

Kahl said, “While I recognized that going in, the freedoms that come with a democratic government really hit home while visiting with people who did not have the same freedom under their government systems.”

The day-long workshop involved about 20 participants from the United States, Canada and Australia. Participants had an opportunity to learn about forum preparation and framing, as well as facilitation best practices. In an afternoon practice session, participants were also able to test their group facilitation skills and receive feedback from the instructors and others.

The Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy offers a more in-depth version of this workshop at Kansas State University each year. The next workshop will be held January 12-14, 2009 at the KSU Alumni Center. For more information visit their Web site at http://www.k-state.edu/icdd/.