

**What can challenge you as a teacher
in Zambia**

GLEN Internship Report
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Jan Švanyga

Internship Report

Title page

Title of the report: **What can challenge you as a teacher in Zambia**

Name of the participant: **Jan Švanyga**

Sending organisation: *INEX - SDA /CZ/*

Title and No. of the internship: 5000300632 Teach and live in a Zambian boarding school

Country and the place: Zambia, Southern Province, Choma District, Masuku

The period of the internship: 09 – 12/2013

Host organisation: United Church of Zambia (UCZ) – Southern Presbytery

Summary

English

There were several options within the GLEN program in 2013 for voluntary work in Africa. Andreas Kemmer from Germany and Jan Svanyga from the Czech Republic were selected by the national sending organisations ASA /GER/ and INEX – SDA /CZ/ as GLEN participants for the internship *Teach and Live in a Zambian Boarding School*. This project has been running for many years now and with its long history is a stable and meaningful bilateral program between European countries and Zambia.

Zambia belongs to the developing countries of the global South. As a former British colony Northern Rhodesia, Zambia became independent in 1964. After decades of the authoritative rules, the constitution was changed during early nineties and the Zambian political system was transformed into the multiparty democracy. Zambia is peaceful and safe place without any extraordinary risks. Although Zambia is a typical rural country with population mostly working in agriculture, the main part of the national income comes from copper mining and other mineral wealth export.

Andreas (Andi) and Jan spent in Masuku village at local Secondary school three months as teachers. Both of them were teaching students of Grade 10 and 11. The school in Masuku has about 350 students and is run by United Church of Zambia, which is a christian organisation. The village is located in a very remote area at least two hours by truck from the closest bigger town Choma. There are very specific conditions in the village and GLEN participant has a great opportunity to experience and to get know what is a true way of life in Zambian countryside about.

Česky

V rámci programu GLEN bylo v roce 2013 hned několik možností, jak se zapojit do dobrovolné aktivity v některé z afrických zemí. Pro projekt *Teach and Live in a Zambian Boarding School* byl českou vysílající organizací INEX-SDA vybrán Jan Švanyga a německou organizací ASA Andreas Kemmer. Tento projekt běží už řadu let a se svou dlouhou historií je stabilním a smysluplným bilaterálním programem mezi evropskými zeměmi a Zambií.

Zambie patří mezi rozvojové země tzv. globálního Jihu. Jako dřívější britská kolonie Severní Rhodesie získala Zambie nezávislost v roce 1964. Po desetiletích autoritativního režimu vlády jedné strany došlo na začátku 90. let ke změně ústavy a Zambie se stala pluralitní demokracií. Zambie je obecně velmi mírumilovná a bezpečná země bez vážnějších rizik. Přestože je Zambie typickou agrární zemí, kde většina obyvatelstva pracuje v zemědělství, hlavním zdrojem příjmů státního rozpočtu je vývoz mědi a jiného nerostného bohatství.

Andreas (Andi) a Jan strávili jako učitelé ve vesnici Masuku tři měsíce. Oba ve škole učili studenty 10. a 11. ročníku. Škola v Masuku je provozována křesťanskou organizací United Church of Zambia a má něco přes 350 studentů. Vesnice samotná leží ve velmi odlehle oblasti. Do nejbližšího většího města Choma je to dvě hodiny na korbě nákladního auta. Ve vesnici panují svérázné životní podmínky a stážista má tak jedinečnou příležitost poznat na vlastní kůži, o čem je opravdový život na zambijském venkově.

Introduction

My name is Jan Svanyga. I am 31 years old now. I come from South Moravia, the area in eastern part of the Czech Republic which is known for its viniculture and wine-making. Between years 2002 and 2008 I studied biology, ecology and teaching at the Faculty of Science at Masaryk University in Brno /CZ/. I finished my studies in 2008. After my university studies I started work in Nature Conservation Agency in Prague as a coordinator of Action Plans for endangered species. After couple of years I quit my job in the agency and decided to travel. The year 2012 I spent by working and travelling in New Zealand. During my university studies at the Faculty of Science I also had been working for humanitarian organisation ADRA for four years as a lecturer of development education project PRVak. Throughout my travelling around New Zealand in 2012, I spent lots of time by working for accommodation and food or by volunteering which I had to supply completely by myself. I figured out this kind of activities I really liked. Therefore when I got back home I had been trying to find some project to continue in volunteering. GLEN seemed to be a good one matching both, global development education with volunteering together.

My personal motivation to get involved in GLEN came from the basic needs to have some experience with this type of education generally. I mean, our world is globalising further more than anytime before and we just simply can't stand and pretend that the problems of the others have nothing to do with us, especially here in our materially reach Europe. It's very important and desirable to show European Youth even not to all the others that we can't take anything for granted, all the more so everything in our world now is connected to each other.

When I applied for GLEN internship I choosed two projects. The first one was located in Ethiopia, the second one was in Southern province of Zambia. I really wasn't wondering about them too much. I was just dedicated to join one of them, but I was accepted for both of them as a back-up only in the end. It seemed I had to stay in Europe. I was so excited when I received a call from INEX-SDA after couple of months. When I was asked if I was still interested in GLEN and the project in Zambia, it took me less than one minute to answer YES :-)

Main part

As I was working on temporary contract back those days, there was no problem at all to leave for three months for Africa. My job was going to finish in August so the project in Zambia couldn't have better timing. During one week preparatory seminar in June I gained enough valuable information from GLEN organising team and I also met my tandem partner Andi from Germany. We had very good feeling from each other immediately and I somehow sensed that our common stay in Zambia gonna be OK. You have to realise that you are going abroad, to the poor developing country, with completely unknown guy you've never seen before. You have almost no information about each other even any proper idea about the local conditions in Zambia and you are suppose to spend there three months in a row together. You are going to share common space and time. You're suppose to travel together, cook together or do the house keeping together etc. Everything together. Especially in the remote place like Masuku, there is an essential need to keep some basic rules furthermore important than wherever else. Andi is 29 years old man. He is very kind and polite and behaves very friendly. We spent in Masuku whole time without any conflict in the end, what I seriously appreciate.

Zambia belongs to the developing countries of the global South. It is located in south central Africa and with an area about 750 thousands sq km is cca 10 times bigger than the Czech Republic. In Zambian neighbourhood you can find countries such as Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mosabique and Angola. Although the population with 14 milions is relatively small, Zambia is rich in it's ethnicity. There are over 70 different tribes speaking with more or less the same number of different languages. About 75 % people follow christian religion, usually one of the protestant churches. As a former British colony Northern Rhodesia, Zambia became independent in 1964. After decades of the outhoritative rules, the constitution was changed during early nineties and the Zambian political system was transformed into the multiparty democracy. Zambian HDI (Human Development Index) is very low ranking 164. out of 187 independent countries (UN 2011). Zambia is peaceful and safe place without any extraordinary risks. Beside the struggle for freedom during early sixties, Zambia has never experienced any bigger violence nor the civil war. Although Zambia is a typical rural country with people mostly working in agriculture, the main part of the national income comes from copper mining and other mineral wealth export.

It was mid of Septemer when we arrived in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. Hot season had already started there. After stay overnight in a backpacker hostel we caught the bus heading South next morning. We reached Choma, the formal capital of Southern province, late afternoon. Once we dropped off the bus, there were Phyllis and Roy waiting for us. These two guys have been employed in the office of Southern Presbytery of UCZ (United Church of Zambia), our host organisation. They welcomed us very friendly. We also met bishop Mutanuka in the evening who had been driving such a long distance from another town just to welcome us personally. Bishop Mutanuka is a very charismatic man, he is smiling all the time and making jokes. He invited us all for diner. It was our first time we tried nshima, the national maize poridge which Zambians usually eat twice a day at least. So our first feeling from Choma and people from UCZ was great. It was very comfortable and pleasant to have such a start.

The next day there were two people, Mr. and Mrs. Zulu, from Masuku Secondary School who came to the office of UCZ in Choma to transport us to the village. After about two hours on bumpy road we

reached Masuku. It was already Saturday evening when we dropped off the car and met first people from the school. It was really nice to be welcomed so warmly by the other villagers.

The name of Masuku comes from the trees growing in surroundings and bearing Masukku fruit, the incredibly tasty fruit which ripen during November. The village itself used to be a christian mission. There still remain some of the original buildings from the colonial era including gorgeous eucalyptus alley along the main road and an old medical clinic. About 350 students study at the boarding school which is located in the middle of nowhere. The closest bigger town is Choma about two hours far on dust road. There is permanent lack of teachers at the school run by UCZ. The current staff has only 14 members including Head Teacher plus very few technicians and one secretary. Therefore two guys from Europe seemed to be a useful support. Me and Andi arrived in Masuku in order to participate on the regular teaching. I offered teaching of Biology and Geography and Andi offered Civic Education and History so I got four periods a week of Geography in the class 11A and five periods a week of Biology in the class 10B. Andi was teaching 14 periods a week in the end. Our colleagues from the staff welcomed us friendly and immediately introduced us into their ordinary regime. Especially Mr. Munamweemba, the Deputy Head made a very good introduction into the school life and explained us some important circumstances. We had appreciated his help many times later. Generally the members of staff were always very helpful to us in every case of need.

I was really enjoying my stay in Masuku throughout the whole internship. The first two weeks were about how quickly you adjust to the local conditions. The different English accent of pupils as well as the other people around, the teaching at school itself. It was kind of challenge to pick up the lessons having just a black board and chalk for use. And also the housing and our leisure time. The remote place like Masuku with electricity from solar panels only and tap water running twice a day from three taps in the village, the poor furnished house with only two beds, one table and couple of chairs, simply equipped kitchen and cooking on blazier, a small outdoor metal cooker using char coal. It always took more than one and half hour to prepare any simple meal. We usually prepared pasta with some sauce, rice with soya beans or nshima with capenta, the typical Zambian dish. I also enjoyed Andi's company so much. Andi is very polite person with great sense of humor. We spent hours and hours sitting behind our house by chatting on different topics. Although we had sometimes different opinions, there had never raised any conflict, the other way around we always supported each other in several difficult situations which occurred during our stay.

Beside the other things such a medical problems or very simple living conditions which made the daily life more difficult, there gradually came couple of serious challenges too, where the problem with bed bugs was perhaps the worst one. You can get used to rats, spiders, snakes and insect from time to time hanging around in your bedroom. On the other hand if you are not able to sleep due to of blood sucking bugs causing itchy rash, be sure it makes you mad. In that case it was very important to have support from your tandem to stay calm and solve the problem in right way. And we did it well.

Today I can say we know each other well and also realised much about ourselves too. Me and Andi became good friends in the end what I perceive as the greatest by product of my GLEN internship.

Conclusion & perspective

There are so many things which you can get from the internship such as GLEN. The stay abroad itself always enrich you in many ways. You gain many new experience and skills, you meet new people who often think and live in different way.

What is a principal benefit for me personally is the direct experience from the country like Zambia. I've never been in any developing country in Africa before. I've had the only previous experience from Thailand, which is a totally different environment. It is basically extraordinary opportunity to stay in that region for three months as a volunteer, not as a common tourist just for couple of days. Thanks to that you can really get know the local people, their customs and value scales. Through the chat with them you can grasp their specific attitude to the many commonplace things such as shopping, school education, religion even the issues like a shortage of drinking water or poor waste management. You will realise that people in Zambia can also be happy, they can party, smile and laugh, maybe sometimes much more often than we in our materially rich Europe. People there are very friendly and despite the fact that Zambia is a very poor country and the life can be very hard, they have very positive and playful attitude to the life in general. This is a very strong feeling from Tonga people which I gained during my stay in Southern province. Sometimes is good to focus on other things than just on your income, sales and offers in shops and rush in your daily life. We shall stay apart more often and enjoy simple being.

So I gained and took much from the people in Masuku. On the other hand I hope I also passed some of my knowledge and personal values to the people there, especially to my students from class 10B and 11A. I truly enjoyed to teach them as well as to share our leisure time. Sometimes me or Andi just grabbed the guitar and taught pupils to play and sing some songs. We also several times joined the afternoon football training and played with boys. I took an opportunity during the Zambian Independence Day and performed historical Czech dance of young military recruits while dressed in my traditional dress which I brought from my hometown. It was just a small part of my culture which I could show and share with people in Masuku and they were so grateful to that. They were always grateful to everything we extra did for them. It was so great to see pupils' keenness for the trip to the small waterfall called Chillibwe not far from Masuku village. Students are normally not allowed to leave school bounds so that trip was something really extraordinary for them. I also liked the co-operation with my colleagues from the school staff as well as company of other people from the village. Especially George's company, the man who was helping us in our house. George was very polite and kind man, hardworker who despite his low income had been working as a volunteer for the local medical clinic. His personal involvement was impressive.

These all experiences and impressions I carry away back home with me. There are many of them which I am going to use for my global education actions in the Czech Republic. I've already started with projections about my voluntary teaching in Zambia at Czech primary and secondary schools. Within this program I usually display some original art crafts and products of nature which I brought from Zambia and organise interactive discussion with students and teachers too. I always try to cover topics such as different levels of poverty, subjective feeling of happiness, medical risks of malaria and HIV/AIDS, agriculture and environmental issues in Zambia, gender problems, volunteering etc. The feedback I have received till today is very positive and keeps me go on.

There is another idea in my mind which I'd like to realize as GEA this year. I'd like to invite George Manyika to the Czech Republic and Germany, the farmer from Masuku, who was hired by the school as a housekeeper to help me and Andi. As I described above, he has been working as a volunteer in the medical clinic over ten years. George is doing a precaution of malaria and HIV/AIDS through the work with people from wider Masuku area. He is very charismatic and communicative and also has a lot of skills with presentation this topics at schools. Beside his personal experiences, his attendance

during the programs at European schools could be very useful and would make them much more authentic. George could bring some new introspective views on discussed medical issues especially.

My last global education action should focus on a specific workshop within the summer children's camp where I am planning to build a Zambian outdoor kitchen. It's gonna be a serious working outdoor kitchen like those I remember from Masuku. Children are supposed to use only local material such as untreated wood logs, straw, fibre and natural clay. The main activity consists in the process of construction step by step in order to build up something pure natural which can also be good-looking and functioning.

All my planned GE Activities put a target to disrupt some deep-rooted stereotypes about global South countries we have in Europe and show few pieces of true life in Southern province area. It's very important to explain to people in the Czech Republic or in Europe in general that also materially poor people from developing countries can feel happy sometimes even more than we here. We should realise that our happiness is not dependent on material wealth.