



# FINAL REPORT / GLEN INTERNSHIP 2012

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**Home organization:** INEX-SDA, Czech Republic

**Number of Internship:** 5000300632

**Title of the Internship:** Learning by Teaching in a Rural School

**Place and country of the Internship:** Masuku, Zambia

**Period:** September – November 2012

**Host organization:** United Church of Zambia

## **1 Introduction**

In this report I would like to share the experience from the internship at Masuku Secondary School in Masuku, Zambia. Let me start with a few words outlining my motivation and very first steps towards this internship.

After I finished my university studies, I started to work in a NGO dealing with global development education. I started to talk with the students about global problems and to guide teachers how to teach about these topics that are so actual for the current world. After some time, I felt that even though I have already spent some time in abroad on my studies, field trips or travelling expeditions (USA, China, Moldova, Romania, Ukraine and so on), I deeply need the experience of staying and working in especially African countries. When I teach the kids about the problems of Africa and want them to understand why the development cooperation is important, it's much worse when I don't have any personal experience. As a lecturer of global education programs, I would be much more credible, if I am able to support my theoretical explanation with the examples from reality.

That is basically why I joined GLEN program and why I was so happy to be selected for the internship in Masuku. I went there with the feeling I can use my professional skills and background and bring something new while teaching students natural sciences and also that this experience can enrich me personally a lot. I am happy to say that both came true.

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## **2 Masuku and Masuku Secondary School**

Masuku is a hilly village, which lies in the south of Zambia in one of the poorest Zambian provinces. Culturally this area is dominated by the Tonga tribe. It's a place where people live a traditional way of life. The nearest town is two hours far away, people take water from the well, which thus becomes the natural centre of the village, they cook on fire, and electricity is derived from solar energy through solar panels installed by Czechs within the development cooperation project. The buildings of primary and secondary schools and medical clinic create a centre of the village. Most local residents make their living by farming and selling what they grow. They have little free time and spend weekends with their church community.

In Masuku, mainly the teachers and staff of the school and of the rural health centre live. You are directly included to the life of the village community. That means to face the same problems as the locals, for example scarcity of electricity, which is only provided by some solar panels, of running water, but also to share their joys and pleasures.

Economically, Masuku is absolutely dependent of Choma, the district capital. Choma is 76 km away, connected by a dustroad. There is one public transport per day except Sundays. Besides goods from subsistence agriculture and charcoal, every good has to be brought from Choma.

Masuku is a safe place, people are friendly and helpful. In villages not everybody speaks English. A vast majority of the Zambian population follows Christian religion actively.

A permanent shortage of sufficient electricity and, less scarce, of water has to be faced. Electricity depends on unreliable supply of solar power and a generator of 2.5kW. National grid power was supposed to be introduced in the end of 2012.



Picture 1. Our new address for the fall 2012 – Masuku Secondary School

**Masuku Secondary School (MSS)** is a boarding school run by United Church of Zambia. There is about 400 students in 8 classes from grade 8 to 12 (each class has 40 – 60 students). The school is still in the process of development. Right now, there is a lack of books and other teaching materials and equipment.

For each trimester, which lasts three months, students have to pay tuition fees in the amount of 750,000 kwacha (about 120 EUR), which ranks MSS among the averaged prestigious private or religious schools in Zambia. Cheaper, but much less in terms of quality of teaching, are public schools.

Classes at MSS begin each day at 7.00 AM. Students have 9 classes with one 20 minutes break in the middle. Then lunch follows. After the meal, the students meet again in classrooms where they prepare for the next day – they study, do homework etc. In the afternoon, there are sports activities (football, volleyball, netball) or clubs like debating club, choir or drama scheduled. Students end their day with another preparation, which lasts from 18.00 to 20.00.

Among the subjects at MSS belong mathematics, economics, chemistry, biology, physics, English, Tonga language, history or geography, civic and religion education.



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Picture 2. Break at Masuku Secondary School.

### 3 Our work

In Masuku Secondary School, there is a lack of teachers due to insufficient financial support from the government. There was 14 teachers (16 with me and Juliana) to 8 classes, it means to teach about 25 - 30 periods per week, plus extra work in afternoon activities for the students and of course necessary administration work (lesson plans, syllabi, records of work etc.).

With two teachers-volunteers is possible the distribution of teaching periods without overwork, helpful is also contribution to the afternoon activities for students.

Main part of our work was teaching. I taught geography in 10 A and biology in 11 A, my tandem partner Juliana taught English in 10 A and history in 11 B. For me, it was 9 classes per week. Specifically, in geography classes, I covered the topics of river processes, natural hazards such as volcanoes and earthquakes and weather and climate, and in biology it was the topic of human body - blood, heart and lungs and excretion. I must say, that syllabi entered into very detail.

I went to Masuku with the aim that I want to try a variety of interactive teaching methods and methods of critical thinking with the students. That means something students are not very familiar with - yet mostly frontal style of teaching dominates there. Sometimes it was in the number of fifty people in class quite a challenge, but some methods have been definitely proven to be useful - such as study groups, when students learn from each other.

Alongside the teaching, we helped with some administration work. There was just one working computer at school which was used by secretary. She was overloaded by the amount of documents she had to type, so we helped her using our own PCs. For instance, we typed mid-term exams, final exams, different kinds of reports, work plans etc.

Further, a wide range of afternoon activities is offered by teachers. I carried out a Yoga Club in the afternoon hours to contribute to development of students' physical and psychological balance.



Picture 3. Me offering Yoga Club. Students were very interested in.

Another our duty was one week per term of supervisional duties in teams of two teachers.

#### **4 Challenges of our work**

The very first challenge dealt with communication with host organization. The communication before the internship was not very good. We contacted a person who had been in charge in previous years (bishop Kageya), but he never responded. We weren't given any other contact to a current person in charge (bishop Mutanuka), so we weren't able to

communicate with the host organization for a long time. All the information we had about an internship content and logistical support came from the previous participants of the internship. Finally, we managed to get some contacts from the previous participants and we exchanged a couple of mails and calls with people in Masuku. However, we didn't know what subjects we would be teaching until we reached Masuku. To sum up, the communication could have been much smoother, but we believe in the next years it will be much better, because our tandem has established a fair communication with the people in Masuku and also in UCZ headquarter in Choma.

As for teaching, the preparations for the classes and classes themselves were complicated because of a maximum amount of students in class and a minimum of equipment we could use (basically just a blackboard, chalks and limited amount of paper were available). We didn't have textbooks for students; we lacked all the technology, and therefore the substantial sources of information. It was a very good experience to learn how to teach in such condition – we had to be very creative and come up with the teaching methods that don't require much equipment. We tried hard to prepare interesting and interactive classes for our students and I think we succeed in this way.

In general, it was a bit challenge for us to get used to the way of life in the African village. We had to learn how to do without electricity, tapped water, internet connection, fridge... The electricity coming from the solar panel didn't work for a whole day, we had to fetch the water in buckets from the pipes when we wanted to have a shower, we cooked on charcoal, we washed our clothes in hands.

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Picture 4. We met with the local people every day at the pipe.

More than that, to understand and gain a deeper insight into the topics which are very important for local community, but so far away from our lifestyle was challenging. Witchcraft, Satanism, polygamy, HIV/AIDS... I haven't thought about these topics much in Europe, but they were present in everyday life in Masuku and it was very interesting to discuss them with the local people.

In short, to adapt to local lifestyle was not easy some times and often we were awarded by the amused smiles of local people (why do they slave with the buckets full of water in their hands and do not put them elegantly on their heads as the local women?). However, unbelievable friendliness and helpfulness of the people of Masuku always followed.

## 5 Global education activities

Thanks to my job of a global education lecturer in NGO called ARPOK, I have many opportunities to talk about Zambia and my experience from there during our programs for students or during our work with teachers. In addition, I write blog – see <http://stepnickova.blog.respekt.ihned.cz/>. Together with my tandem partner, we prepared a photo exhibition called Stories from Masuku describing the life, family background and dreams and goals of the people we met in Masuku. This exhibition will be open 4. 4. 2013 at ARPOK and will go to different schools afterwards.

7 Apart from that, I already had a couple of public discussions describing my experience:

- Presentation for the kids from Children's home in Olomouc (21. 2. 2013)
- Presentation for public in Divadlo hudby Olomouc (26. 2. 2013)

Also, there is a few of them following:

- Presentation for the Rotary Club in Olomouc (3. 4. 2013)
- Presentation for students at Grammar School in Semily

I have been cooperating with some media to publicize the topic of education in Zambia:

- Interview for a magazine called Our family
- Interview for the Czech broadcast service (16. 3. 2013)
- Article in a magazine called Family and school
- Series of articles in a magazine called Respekt (June 2013)

Last, but not least, together with other Czech GLENies we are planning some action that would take place this summer. The idea contains a kind of road trip during which we would talk about stereotypes connected with developing countries.

## 6 Conclusion

The aim of our internship was mainly to reduce the working load of the teachers at Masuku Secondary School. We took over some of their classes, so they have more time for their preparation for other classes. I wanted to teach the students not just what is included in the syllabus, but also critical thinking. That is why I included some interactive teaching methods like working in study groups, role games or discussions. Students liked that and I am sure they learned much more than normally.

This experience in teaching I gained is invaluable for me as a global education lecturer. The students were simply great, very disciplined, motivated and energetic. "School is my future, a vision and a dream. Through education I can accomplish my dreams and help my relatives," said Ben Milanzi, 12grader. We could feel the education is very important for them, something that opens the door of their future. It was a pleasure for us to be with them for a while, help them and encourage them on their path to better future.

Also, we wanted to contribute to students', teachers' and villagers' life. That is why we offered yoga or French club (something they have never met before), for instance. We answered all the questions from our curious pupils about Europe, our lives in Europe and the world outside Zambia. We tried to provide them with information about future study possibilities and exchange programmes and encourage them.

Last but not least, we wanted to learn something on the contrary. So we learned how to live with no running water or how to teach without textbooks, for example.

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To conclude, I think we, students, teachers and villagers enriched mutually by talking with each other and sharing information about living in our countries. GLEN internship at Masuku Secondary School was one of the greatest experiences in my life. I am deeply thankful for this opportunity.