

FINAL REPORT / GLEN INTERNSHIP 2012

Ondřej Šálek

Home organization: INEX-SDA, Czech Republic

Title of the Internship: Shootback: Sports and media for youth empowerment

Place and country of the Internship: Nairobi, Kenya

Period: July – October 2013

Host organization: MYSA, Kenya

Summary:

Internship is situated in Kenyan capital Nairobi and is provided by well-known non profit organisation MYSA, which operates in local ghettos or slums. MYSA provides numerous facilities (camps, libraries, consulting) and organize football camps, leagues and matches. Through the football activities MYSA try to fulfil children free time in meaningful way, share common responsibility and faith in their skills. Beside the major MYSA football project, there is program called Shootback, which originated fifteen years ago, thanks to korean photographer Lana Wong. She conducted the program, where she gave for the kids from slums photographic cameras to shoot their life. Photos by the kids were outstanding and until today the original book is completely sold out. This action formed Shootback office, which today still serves for the local kids to provide photographic and filmmaking skills and beside that its also incorporated in various MYSA activities. Every year few interns from european GLEN program come to Shootback to provide various audiovisual workshops and support the voice of Kenyan youth.

Shnrnutí:

Stáž je situována do keňského hlavního města Nairobi a je zaštitěna známou neziskovkou MYSA, která působí v sociálně vyloučených oblastech ghatt a slumů. MYSA poskytuje pro místní mládež nespočet různých sociálních zařízení a její hlavní náplní je vytvoření celoměstské sítě fotbalových mužstev, lig a soutěží, kde se místní mládež dokáže smysluplně vybit, získat důvěru v ně samotné a přijmout vlastní zodpovědnost. Mimo tento fotbalový projekt zde najdeme i další program s názvem Shootback, který vznikl před patnácti lety prostřednictvím korejské fotografky Lany Wong. Ta rozdala několika dětem ze slumů fotoaparáty, které pak měl za úkol pomoci

fotografií zachytit jejich vlastní život. Fotografie od dětí překročily očekávání a dodnes je výsledná kniha fotografií beznadějně vyprodána. Díky tomu se postupně zformoval i celý program Shootback, který dodnes poskytuje místním mladistvým prostor pro fotografické a filmové dílny a mimo to se podílí i na většině aktivit mateřské organizace MYSA. Každý rok přijíždí do Shootbacku několik evropských stážistů, kteří mají za cíl zorganizovat audiovizuální dílny a podnítit hlas mladých Keňanů.

Dream land of security stereotypes

Most of the discussions about Kenya are related to two topics - security issues and tourism. As a GLEN intern you will mostly encounter the first one, the other one for those who will travel more to the east. We can divide security issues into three aspects - criminality, terrorism, tribal violence. Nairobi is pretty famous of its level of criminality, once upon a time it was counted among ten most dangerous cities in the world. Nevertheless it used to be. Level of criminality and social injustice is still very high, but your safety really depends on particular circumstances. City is divided into two parts - Eastlands and Westlands. Eastlands are inhabited by rich Kenyans and there are posh shopping malls, tourist resorts and international offices. You can see there much more non-african citizens, than in eastern part. There are mostly middle class, ghettos, slums and former business city center. Security measures are much more tightened in Westlands, than in counterpart. But in the middle class districts there is pretty much safe too, even without anybody local or any further knowledge of the place. In the time of night caution needs to take a place, but nothing horrific. Of course you shouldn't wandering around at night with golden watch, polo shirt or any symbols of european wealth. Socially remoted areas as slums or ghettos shouldn't be demonized, despite they are not completely safe. But in the areas, where some of the locals are already familiar with you, you can with respect and caution move freely. When you will have somebody, who can be trusted and will take you through the slums (eg. Mathare), you shouldn't have any problems, even at night. You should also consider, that your white skin color is moretheless a sign, that you are a foreigner, so some areas are for you little bit more risky, than for locals. In total criminal situation in Nairobi is not so much devastating, as our european media say. Of course some incidents happens time to time, but if you will behave with caution and respect to the others, its the same as in the other european big cities, where you can be robbed

maybe much more easily than in Nairobi.

Another side of national security is matter of terrorist attacks, what you can see on every corner due to raised security measures. Nairobi was already a target of several terrorist attacks. Except well-known bomb blast on American embassy in 1998 or siege of posh shopping mall Westgate this summer, there were minor attacks on Nairobi civilians. These attacks are mostly rooted in attempts to spark religious intolerance among Kenyans, despite religious hatred were not so common issue (Kenyan violence is based mostly on the tribal and political differences). Situation have worsened after their military involvement in neighbouring Somalia, from where the biggest Nairobi minority comes from. This state has led to serious worries of GLEN interns, which resulted in decision, that my tandem partner Phillip Hester from Germany couldn't work in Nairobi due to possible threat of terrorism. Despite of that czech ministry of foreign affairs did not consider any threat to their volunteers, so I was able to come. Although during my stay there was a terrorist attack on Westgate shopping mall, which is located in Westlands, I still think, that due to security measures of Kenyans officials Nairobi, especially the "poor" Eastlands, is safe.

The last security issue, what should be considered, is tribal tension, which is the most visible during and after presidential election. Last but one presidential election in 2007 resulted in mass post-election violence, where over 1000 people died and about 200 000 people were displaced. Last election did not erupt in so big security issues and if we will focus only on the numbers of casualties, than it was much more calmer. There is a consensus across the political platform that this state of chaos and violence can't start again. Despite that there is until today deep tribal division and sometimes you can feel small tribal tension, which is mostly represented in everyday conversation, but nothing what will lead to immediate violence or

something like that.

How I have become a Shootback member?

Internship is mostly based on needs of Shootback program. Peter Ndolo, who was my supervisor, helped me so much, when he announced to me, that from now I am part of the Shootback and I will be treated like the others. It resulted in one week of not-doing-anything, but after that I have developed several projects. Main assignment of interns is providing the audiovisual workshops for the local youth. Beside that interns share responsibility of the Shootback office workflow, public relation activities and maintenance of whole program. To speak specifically, I have organized technical equipment, researched what is still handy, what we can't use anymore and in the end I maintained lending system with all the forms. A lot of technical equipment is already old and doesn't work, sometimes they miss small parts like batteries, chargers, broken buttons or something, but there is lack of funding and will to repair them. Its highly recommended to make a small fundraising before intern will go to Nairobi, to get some old digital cameras or video cameras to little bit supply insufficient Shootback inventory. It doesn't need to be big, nobody expect expensive DSLR, HD cameras or something. At least few compact cameras from your close social circle can make a real difference. Another technical challenge was a computer, what I didn't bring there. Shootback office has only limited numbers of computers, so I decided to assemble my own computer from the excluded computers and parts in MYSA technical warehouse. With the intensive help of Google I was able during one week complete one working computer, which I have transformed into public PC for my students to edit their pictures and videos.

Interns are also involved in various pr activities, in which you can use your

various skills to improve their “marketing” or public image. In practise it means, that I photographically covered various events, made some fundraising proposals, wrote few articles, suggested some social media improvements and have shot several promotional spots. Beside all that tasks my biggest challenge was a reconstruction of the Shootback dark room. This part of the Shootback office was meanwhile transformed into the storage room, but fortunately all the dark room equipment were left there. I have cleaned and organized whole room, I have also discovered all the photographic stuff - eg. they have tons of photographic paper, working enlarger, several chemical bowls etc. Dark room was missing only one thing - working chemicals. I have discovered few, but most of them were expired or they ran out of stock (also working film rolls are very rare). My the most difficult task was to get working chemicals in Nairobi, which, as I have realized after, is completely digitized. In ordinary photo studios is almost impossible to get some working chemicals, so I had to rely on my new friend Charles from really old Nduka Photo studio in the city center. He tried several times to contact his old friends, who after all supplied me and my students with film rolls. But get a working developer or fixer is real challenge, when I went through whole Nairobi without any result. In the end I have got one developer from Ugandan capital Kampala. Last month of my stay I have got another chemicals from one local guy, who have sold me his own stock. So next time it is good to start with intense networking with old photographers across the Nairobi, utilize their contacts and get some chemicals. Another option is through one of the Shootback student Michael Maina, who has learnt analogue photography on his university - at least they can share their contacts of chemical suppliers.

Main charge of the internships is providing the workshops and teaching the local youth. In that case you have same freedom as in previous work, when you can freely choose due to specific criteria, who do you want to teach and what. You can

teach already skilled young adults, or small schoolchildren. Workshops are mostly designed for the weekends, when children has their free time and really depends on the skills of the participants. You can also every month switch the place of the workshops, when I started my workshops in the MYSA headquarters in Komarock and then I moved to Mathare. Every workshop in each location can reach different youths, when in Komarock lessons I have taught mostly the young adults and kids from neighbouring slums, while in Eastleigh I have hosted mostly kids from Mathare. I have especially taught photography, because the sufficient amount of compact cameras and photography training is way easier than filmmaking. I have started with really small kids, when we had a various lessons ranged from genres, photography technique to photostories. After every lessons I gave them some homeworks and lend them small cameras to accomplish it. Next lessons we quickly reviewed homeworks and we moved on. I had also a group more or less adult youth, which were much more passionate for the learning and photography as a art of expression. This group stayed with me whole my internship and their results were really outstanding. Beside that I have led also documentary cinema workshop, which was designed mostly for already skilled youths. Than I have moved in Eastleigh MYSA library, where I have taught photography groups again - kids and teenagers. All that photo workshops resulted in student's photo exhibition. Beside that I have provided several intense workshops of fiction filmmaking, graphic design or analogue photography.

Nevertheless Shootback program offers much more wider space to interns creativity, than only simple photographic or filmmaking workshops. I didn't had a time to implement all of my ideas and and the needs of Shootback. So there is a shortlist, what could be done:

1) Digitize the Shootback archive - tons of old negatives rot in storage

rooms, without any digital copies. Find out how to digitize them in basic and low cost condition and make from it a sustainable project - its a work for a almost a year.

2) Reprint the Shootback book - In the beginning of Shootback there was a famous book Shootback: Photos by Kids from the Nairobi Slums by Lana Wong, that it is almost lost and sold out. Probably some of the negatives are somewhere in the archive. Save at least the negatives, resolve the copyright issues and help with the fundraising.

3) Maintain the sustainable fundraising - Ask for the funds local companies as Canon, Fujifilm or Nikon, who will every year support the cost of the office (new batteries, minor repairs), photo exhibitions and the dark room (chemicals, film rolls). Its highly recommended to ask for the support of local companies, which will make whole fundraising more sustainable and impactful.

4) Group documentary from Mathare - I have already started it, but didn't finished. Maintain the simple workshop of documentary film, learn the basics of shooting, then distribute cameras (I have brought three minidv camcoders) to shoot footage on one theme, which you will select together. This project should result in the short film about perspective of youths from the slum.

5) Cooperation with Slum TV - In Mathare there is project of community television called Slum tv. Interns can do some brief workshops of journalism - reportages, writing, photography - and than try to cooperate with the Slum TV (they can volunteer there, or broadcast the footage by the kids) or local media house. In some local newspaper they can make a small column written by kids from Shootback workshop.

Possibilities are endless and its only a brief suggestions, which come from my personal experience and Shootback needs. I also recommend to keep the small cooperation with Ugandan NGO Somero in Kampala, which I have started last year. Somero focuses on education of young slum girls, who were kicked out from the school. They prepare them for real life and also school exams. There are also GLEN interns (Czech republic included) and their conditions are really suitable for the photographic workshops or something like that. At least its good reason to make a trip to Uganda.

With love from Kenya

My stay wasn't only about a work in the Shootback program, first of all I have met a lot of wonderful friends, with whom I felt like in my home. They were my guides, fellows or just nice lady, who I greeted every morning on my way to work. I have learnt a lot of about different culture, have been fascinated by local craftsmen and see global problems in wider perspective. I have also traveled a lot, when I have visited wonderful countryside of western Kenya, where social injustice until today persist in enormous way. I have got also a sip of local social and economical problems, where I have literally felt racism on my own skin. In the end it was still natty racism, where I was privileged white one, who will be always considered as a rich European. Thanks to my regular visits in western Kenya I had an opportunity to see, how the gender violence crushes whole half of the population. How the tribal rules cannot be overcome over the night by European commission or UN programs.

For me the most important part of the GLEN cycle is after-the-internship activities. I have realized, that I don't want do only classical Global Education

Activities, where I will provide lectures about my experiences, or some photo exhibition, when I will show intercultural differences. I don't believe, that it could have real impact. I am worried, that all that effort could end only at simple pointing fingers on developing countries and their problems. It's creating the myth, that in compare with all Kenyan problems we are really fine. Not at all, our society is suffering from many problems, some of them are not so enormous like in Kenya, but it doesn't mean, that they shouldn't be tackled. I want to use my personal experiences from my internship to do something with our local problems, which touches us much more, than some distant problems children from the slums.

In my Global Education Activities I want to utilize my experiences and know-how, what I have gained in Nairobi to start several projects here. First of all I want to build small photographic project based on audiovisual workshops here in Brno's ghettos, where I want to teach young roma children, how to capture their thoughts and their stories. With these stories I want to tackle some common stereotypes about roma community here in Czech republic, which should result in mobile photo exhibition. This project is designed for low-cost maintenance and long sustainability, when I want to continue in this activity also next year. Another my project focus on gender problems, when sexism goes through whole range of our society. I want to shoot a documentary, what will somehow treats explicit objectification of women body in local advertisement, what you can encounter on every corner. This documentary should thematise sexism in advertising also as a "dude's" problem, when gender stereotypes cause serious social and economical problems in our families, despite the fact that majority (women included) cannot perceive this as a serious problem. I want to reach by this documentary ordinary Czech people, that never have heard word like "gender". If we will convince our men, that gender equality isn't nasty word, then also Kenyan women has a hope, that something will change.