

INTERNSHIP REPORT

Teaching in a Zambian rural school



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TITLE PAGE

Title of the report: Teaching in a Zambian rural school

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Sending organization: INEX - SDA /CZ/

Title and No. of the internship: 5000400626 – Teach and live in a Zambian boarding school

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

The period of the internship: 09 – 11/2014

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

SUMMARY

English

The internship *Teach and live in a Zambian boarding school* has a long tradition and it is seen by all stakeholders as a stable and meaningful bilateral program. Every autumn, since 2006, two volunteers from the Czech Republic and Germany join the staff of Masuku Secondary School and help the school by offering classes of natural sciences and some leisure time activities.

Masuku Secondary School is a Christian boarding school run by the United Church of Zambia which offers education for grades 8 - 12 to more than 350 students from all the country. As it is a boarding school, students spent whole term in Masuku, including weekends and public holidays.

Masuku is a small village located in a rural area of the Southern province consisting of the secondary and primary school, clinic, few shops, little market place and few houses of the employees of mentioned institutions. The majority of locals live in the valleys around Masuku in primitive mud huts and small buildings. The nearest town is Choma, located 60 km and more than two hours long drive on the truck far from the village. Masuku was connected to the electricity at the beginning of the year 2014, until that time school and all villagers related only on the power from the solar panels, which were installed through Czech Development Assistance. Masuku is a peaceful and safe place, where one can see the real poverty and pure happiness at the same time.

Participants of the internship 2014 spent in the village three months and offered lectures of biology, geography, mathematics and physics plus afternoon photography club. They were involved in all other school activities and social life of the village.

Česky

Učitelské stáže (*Teach and live in a Zambian boarding school*) v zambijské internátní škole mají již dlouhodobou tradici a všemi zainteresovanými stranami jsou považovány za stabilní a smysluplný projekt. Každý podzim, již od roku 2006, odjíždí do střední internátní školy v Masuku dva dobrovolníci z České republiky a Německa a doplňují tak běžný učitelský sbor s nabídkou převážně přírodovědných předmětů a volnočasových aktivit.

Střední internátní škola je provozována křesťanskou organizací *The United Church of Zambia* a nabízí vzdělání v osmém až dvanáctém ročníku pro více než 350 studentů ze všech koutů země. Vzhledem k tomu, že se jedná o internátní školu, zůstávají studenti celý trimestr v Masuku, a to včetně všech víkendů a státních svátků.

Masuku je malá vesnice venkovské oblasti Jižní provincie, kterou tvoří střední a základní škola, klinika, několik malých obchůdků, malý trh a několik domků zaměstnanců těchto institucí. Většina obyvatel této oblasti bydlí v okolních údolích v primitivních hliněných chýších či malých domcích. Nejbližší město Choma je od vesnice vzdálené 60 km a více než dvě hodiny jízdy nákladákem. Vesnice byla elektrifikována až na začátku roku 2014, do té doby škola a vesničané záviseli primárně na energii ze solárních panelů, které byly v Masuku instalovány v rámci České rozvojové pomoci.

Účastníci stáže v roce 2014 strávili ve vesnici tři měsíce, během nichž vyučovali biologii, zeměpis, matematiku a fyziku a vedli odpolední fotografický kroužek. Současně byli zapojeni do všech školních aktivit a společenského života v Masuku.

INTRODUCTION

By the time I was applying for the internship I was working in a Czech NGO People in Need on Burmese projects in Human Rights Department. Logically, I was most interested in internship in Burma, and hoped I could be selected thanks to the knowledge of the environment and experience of cooperation with Burmese NGOs. When I first saw the results of the assessment center, big disappointment appeared. I did not understand how I could be selected for the teaching project, especially if I was not a trained teacher and lacked knowledge of natural sciences. But it was a big challenge and half a year later I was extremely disappointed again when I had to leave Masuku and my simple but very rich life I lived there.

Participant's background

I studied International Development Studies in Olomouc and Management of Tourism thus, logically, I have always been attracted by developing countries and possibilities to explore foreign countries and cultures. During my studies I actively participated in several NGOs as a volunteer or part-time employee. The only visits of so called developing countries were mostly short-term holidays. The only longer stay was in Thailand, where I participated in a project of small NGO Phi Phi International Community Center (PICC) and taught small kids from the rural area of Nakhrom si Thamarat English. GLEN Internship was finally an opportunity to spend a longer time in a developing country and gain some practical experience as well as get involved into the global education.

MAIN PART

1. The overall situation

Zambia belongs to the developing countries of the global South. It is located in South Africa and with an area about 750 thousands sq km is approximately ten times bigger than the Czech Republic, but has only around 16 million inhabitants. The country shares borders with Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mosambique, Botswana and Angola. Although the population is relatively small and dense, Zambia is rich in its 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. Zambian HDI (Human Development Index) is low, ranking 141 out of 187 independent countries (UN, 2014). There are still many illiterate people and the access to the proper health care is very limited. Around 60 % of inhabitant's liver under the poverty line and the expected age at the birth is only 57 years. For comparison, Czech Republic is placed on position 28, there is around 8 % of population under the relative poverty line and the expected age at the birth is 78 years.

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. Beside the struggle for freedom during early sixties, Zambia has never experienced any bigger violence or the civil war. Although it 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.

Masuku is located in the Southern province, the homeland of Tonga people out of them majority are farmers. Right in the village live mostly educated people and work in one of the following institutions: basic school, boarding secondary school or clinic. Most of the villagers living outside are farmers with little or no education and limited knowledge of English. People spend most of the day with field cultivation, where they mostly plant corn, sweet potatoes, groundnuts and vegetable such as rape or tomatoes. Some of the buildings of the village (all school properties, teacher's houses, clinic) are electrified which makes the life easier. Nevertheless, people still use the traditional methods of cooking on charcoal and water has to be fetched from nearby taps. It is possible to buy there basic products such as vegetable, milk, dried fish *kapenta*, cooking oil or sugar. For more grocery it is necessary to go to Choma with regular truck transport.

2. The host organization and its work

The host organization is Southern Presbytery of United Church of Zambia and its secondary school in Masuku. Bishop Mutanuka, the head of the Southern Presbytery, is very well-known and active man who is together with few colleagues managing the work of the Church in Southern province. His office is the one which communicates with Europeans organizations and volunteers before the internship and helps to organize the visa extension during the stay in Zambia.

The main host organization is Masuku Secondary School itself and mostly its director, madam Rita Tembo. She is new to the school and takes over the agenda. She is very organized (for local

conditions) and has big plans with the school development. The school itself consists of main administrative building, inappropriate kitchen and dining room (which also serves as a classroom), two buildings of poor equipped classrooms, students' dormitories and laboratories which are already five years under the construction. Overall, the school lacks proper infrastructure and lot of work is needed to be done.

There are around 350 students of grades 8 – 12 and around 23 teachers, out of them are usually present only 15. The school has its strict agenda, which can vary every term. Some of the activities are fixed, especially Monday's morning assemblies and Thursday's morning teacher's devotion. As students remain at school whole three months, there is also very strict program during the weekends with Sunday's church service.

Zambian educational system is very different to the European one and usual teaching method is just a frontal teaching with no focus on practical understanding or experience learning. Students are usually far behind the scheduled plan and have poor knowledge of everything.

3. The process of the internship

The internship was scheduled for the period of 1st September to 31st November, even though the school officially starts at 8th September and logically ends at the end of the first week in December. The volunteers thus arrived two weeks ahead and had just to wait. Zambian attitude to the time and schedule is very poor and for organized Europeans it is a big challenge to cope with it. The real internship thus started the third week in September. Volunteers were given grades 10 and 11 and taught biology, physics, mathematics and geography. At the beginning both sides – teachers and students – were struggling with the cooperation, especially the language and different pronunciation and accent.

Both of the volunteers were teaching around 10 lessons per week and tried to change the typical way of teaching. It required lot of preparation and creativity as you are offered nothing more than a chalk, blackboard and a textbook. Volunteers thus tried to invent participatory methods of learning, conducted group works, projects, competitions and involved methods of experience learning. All the innovations were warmly welcomed by both colleagues and students.

Apart of the regular classes, volunteers were involved in all school activities and duties, meaning that they participated in all assemblies, meetings, school events and were also given the roles of "*teacher on duty*". In the afternoons volunteers ran a photography club which outcome was one of their Global education activities.

4. Problems, challenges, solutions

As the volunteers received valuable information from the previous participants ahead their internship, it was very easy to get used to the local conditions. They were not surprised neither by the environment (no running water, no proper toilet, unfurnished house, no internet connection...), nor by the people and their mentality. Nevertheless, it is always very difficult, especially for organized people, to get used to the local perception of time and attitude to the problem solving. Additionally, they found out that in Masuku people were very seldom sharing information about upcoming events and they found themselves very often not informed about anything. Another problem appeared during the photography club.

As the students are not used to any form of regular activity, it was very difficult to keep them attending the classes and fulfilling all requirements.

5. Results, learning effects and experiences

Spending time abroad in totally different environment and cultural background is always a big and touching experience. Moreover, being engaged into the community and becoming a real and respected member makes the experience even more valuable. It had several learning effects such as real confrontation with theory and reality, discovering the problems of Zambian rural poverty, gaining awareness of *tonga* culture and experiencing the very simple life without luxurious goods and technical (not only) amenities of modern civilization.

As for the Global education activities (GEA), there were several results for both participants of this internship. Together, they prepared online exhibition Humans of Masuku which can be found on Facebook¹ under the same name. Additionally, Benedikt Stumpf participated in organization of demonstration (Recht auf Stadt Never mind the papers!) and Tereza Hypiúsová prepared several discussions and photo screenings for both open public and school pupils.

CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVE

About the positive effects and outcomes of GLEN internship could be written a lot – it was a unique opportunity to experience a simple rural life, get in touch with local community and see the problems of educational system. One realizes that people in global north are not appreciating their living conditions and lost the positive attitude to the life. Nowadays, no one can imagine the life without the modern amenities, running water, fast internet connection and thousands of things and items in our apartments. People in Masuku don't have anything but they can still share their joy and happiness...

The internship itself was working and both volunteers were aware of their tasks and duties. The communication with the host organization was good and both sides were satisfied with such cooperation.

The benefits were found for all stakeholders, even though they are probably not as huge as at the beginning of the project where Masuku school was at the beginning of its development, lacked electricity and mainly trained staff.

¹ For more information see the GEA report.