

Field Report

As a volunteer for the Swiss NGO les Collégiens Akadiens et leurs Amis Africains (CAAA) from the 6th October 2014 until the 23rd December 2014 in Zanzibar, Tanzania.

1. Tasks and expectations of the project

CAAA is a Swiss NGO engaged in the promotion of education for the people living in Zanzibar. CAAA focuses on two main projects: The first project includes the maintenance of the primary school in Ndijani, which was built by the CAAA in 2009. The second project consists of the construction of a school for professional training with an integrated youth hostel in Makunduchi and started at the end of 2014.

I was charged by the CAAA to teach English and Computer to the eight teachers of the primary school in Ndijani. For the project in Makunduchi I was responsible for the organization of the construction that was started with the recovery of fresh water and the construction of the well.

2. On the field

On one hand the school in Ndijani contains a nursery school with 70 children, divided into two classes and led by 4 female teachers. On the other hand there is the primary school which includes three different levels divided in three classes that are taught by four teachers and two volunteer teachers. During my stay in Zanzibar I visited the school from Monday to Friday. In the mornings I participated in teaching the students. Due to the fact that the students didn't speak English I tried to specialize in subjects like drawing and handicraft work. The students liked doing this and I guess it is because these were the only subjects where they could be creative in. What I noticed about the way the other teachers gave lessons was that they used to only do ex-cathedra teaching and therefore prevented the students from actively participating in class. That's why I tried to include every student (of 150 students) of the primary school in one of my biggest projects, which was the painting of the outer walls of the school building.



Some students from the nursery school and me at the beach of Kizimkazi during the school excursion.

After finishing ordinary school lessons in the afternoon, I gathered all the teachers and taught them the English language. Most of them started at a very low level of English and only few had basic speaking and writing skills. That's the reason why I tried to differentiate the lessons to meet the different levels of the teachers.

When I arrived the first time at the school I was confronted to unforeseen tasks. The school is equipped with solar panels which provide power to the whole building but due to a problem in one of the wires the school didn't have electricity for about two months. Therefore I got in touch with the solar company located in Stone Town, which installed the panels on top of the school. Due to the fact that there was a fundamental problem of the solar system, I had to deal with the company over a certain period of time. In the end I organized a solar workshop, where the company instructed the children and teachers about solar energy and its influence on our environment. Besides the tasks already mentioned, I was also doing ordinary work at the school like tidying up the class rooms with the students and putting in order the school material. The final project I organized for the school was the school excursion at the end of the term. After discussing the location and the date of the school excursion with the teachers, I organized the means of transport, I provided the permission for the excursion at the ministry of education and I went buying all the foods on the market in town, which we cooked at school before we left for the excursion. The first day I made the excursion for the nursery school, with 70 children and four teachers and the second day was arranged for the primary school with 150 children and five teachers.

The Makunduchi project was quite different from what I did in Ndiyani. I was charged by the CAAA to organize the start of the construction of the planned professional school. During the first week, I was commissioned to meet the minister of labour and administration in Stone Town to discuss about the project and to take into account his propositions. The first issue I was confronted with was the recovery of fresh water. Several times I visited the architect in charge of this project and we discussed where to take the fresh water from on the construction site, located next to the sea, there was only salt water available. We concluded to buy a piece of land up in the village where we could dig our well and pump fresh water down to the construction site. I was responsible for the money transfer from Switzerland to Zanzibar and for the payment of wages for the labour force.



Workers in Makunduchi who are digging the hole (18 meters deep) to get fresh water for the well.

3. Outlook

After finishing my Bachelor's degree in International Relations, the volunteering for the CAAA in Zanzibar gave me the possibility to gain experience in the realm of Non-Governmental Organizations. As I was the only representative for the CAAA on the field, I learned how to work efficiently and self-dependently. In overtaking the management of the projects I experienced how to assume responsibility and how to adapt the method of operation to the given circumstances. As I was working on two projects at the same time I was able to travel the whole island of Zanzibar. I got the opportunity to discover the Tanzanian culture and to concern myself with the Islamic religion. Furthermore I seized the chance to learn the basics of the Swahili language which turned out to be a huge benefit because the majority of the people living in the rural areas were only able to speak their mother tongue. I see the volunteering in Zanzibar as my first experience in fieldwork and I am eager on participating in further interesting projects.