

Final Report

I came back from Mozambique nearly half a year ago and I am still not able to put to rest the most exciting, moving and educational year of my life.



First of all I would like to emphasize that Mozambique is the fourth poorest country on earth, has been a Portuguese colony until 1975 and still suffers from the consequences of the following civil war (1975 – 1992). The democratic state is not able to ensure its population in any aspect and is marked by corruption continuously. All of this led to a high degree of crime, mistrust and violence. The thing that stood out most to me was the harsh and loveless treatment of the children.



The reason that makes those who know Mozambique return again and again is clearly the strong attitude towards life: many young people live together in the capital Maputo in confined space. Life takes place in public. It is warm, busy, colourful street markets are everywhere, loud music plays, people dance and sing; the vibrant life. People talk

simultaneously, no matter whether they know each other or not, everyone interferes or gets involved. I was stunned by the civil courage that is totally natural for the Mozambicans. As soon as someone is in obvious danger or is treated badly all bystanders will interfere. I was also very impressed by the various non-governmental structures and systems that work perfectly. For example the public transportation: private mini busses that work on request and therefore customize their routes, departure times and speed.



So much about the most important impressions, and now more about my very personal experiences:

What motivated me to go to Mozambique for that year was first of all my adventurousness, a big interest in other cultures and the search for new challenges. But of course I wanted to provide Development Assistance, too, I wanted to help people and bring about a change. I have had more than enough adventures, be it the 4-days-hike through the beautiful and abandoned Chimanimani-mountains where I gathered my water from a river and cooked at a fireplace, obstetrics for a young Mozambique woman who fell to the ground suddenly in a forest and gave birth to her child in five minutes, or house building without machines, electricity and running water but just suture, wooden boards, spade and some tools.



I also had to struggle with a lot of cultural challenges. There were not only the conflicts I had with my host family which led to me leaving them and finding another host family. There was also my project, supervising a center for homeless boys, about which disagreements and discussions occurred very often. I cared most about the children's health and education whereas the Mozambique co-workers' priorities were housework and gardening. Moreover, I value praising and motivating the children and generally having a nice relationship. In contrast my colleagues punished and occasionally hit the children to gain authority.



Of course I helped “my boys” as good as possible – especially psychological – to return to a normal life but as one of the boys, Lírio, told me once: “The nicer you are to us, the more we will miss you. Don’t forget, you’re only here for one year.” That got me thinking and I realized that there is a significant difference between a Voluntary Social Year and real Development Assistance. After this realization I focused on street work, which meant talking to children there, convincing them to visit the center and ease the entry for them. Moreover I got to carry out several own projects in the last third of my Voluntary Year. The biggest and most consuming one was the house building for an extremely poor family that I mentioned above. Their straw cottage had been destroyed by heavy rain. This was made possible by the help of some good and experienced friends as well as the financial help of HBH Logistics. At this point I would like to thank Mr. Hardt.

After settling down in the Mozambique culture, learning to understand the structures and connections and fighting injustices throughout this whole year I have to say that not only I have changed some things there but that those things have changed me gradually.