

HAKUNA MATATA

Kenya Newsletter May 2013



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University of Miami medical student sees a different side of medicine while volunteering in Kenya



"I wanted to see what practicing medicine in Africa is like, as well as help as much as possible." Armed with this motivation, 22-year- old Gustavo Hernandez, a Venezuelan-born medical student now living in Miami, Florida, decided to travel to Kenya to volunteer with Projects Abroad.

Gustavo was placed at the Valley Hospital, a small private facility that is considered one of the best hospitals in the town of Nakuru. Despite its limited facilities, it has

been an invaluable learning experience for Gustavo; shadowing the doctors was the biggest part of this experience.

Some of Gustavo's tasks have included observing surgeries, helping out in the lab and various wards including the physiotherapy ward. "As volunteers, we definitely help out a lot while we are here and the local staff appreciates it as much as we do."

When he was not shadowing doctors, Gustavo would take blood pressure, listen to patients' chests and lungs, change bed sheets, help the nurses in the theatre, as well as take and test blood samples. "This has been a really beneficial experience for me as a medical student, my medical skills and knowledge has grown tremendously, with some doctors allowing me to make diagnoses by myself. I have also learnt a lot of anatomy in the theatre and biochemistry in the lab which will help me later in my studies."



Comparing the Kenyan culture to that of the USA or Venezuela, Gustavo notes a lot of differences. "The people here are more appreciative and humble; I did not think by the time I left I would have so many Kenyan friends." Living with a host family has also helped Gustavo see the roots of Kenyan culture which he would have not experienced if he visited as a tourist.

Despite the beautiful sites that Gustavo has visited his most memorable experience still remains in the medical field. "The medical outreaches were an eye opener for me; they were the most humbling experiences I have had during my 3 month stay in Kenya. Seeing those children and their condition really made me think differently."

After his volunteering adventure, Gustavo plans to finish his medical studies and start practicing medicine as a professional. To future volunteers, he had this piece of advice: "Really get involved in your placements; there is always something to do and learn and enjoy yourself; there are so many places to visit and see."

French agriculture student gains valuable experience while volunteering at a Game Reserve in Kenya



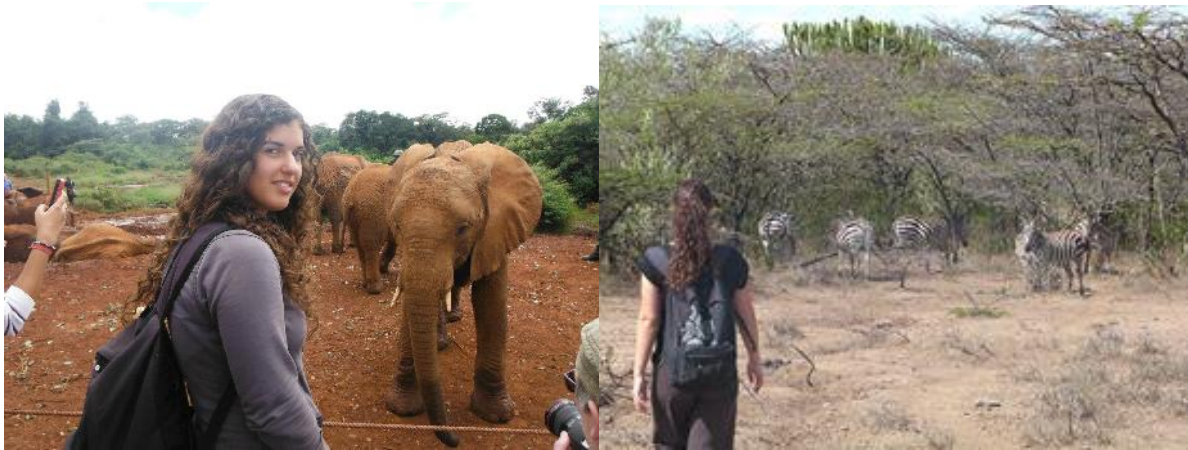
20-year-old Line Libissy, from France, chose to volunteer with Projects Abroad at their Kenyan Conservation Project for several reasons. wanting to learn more English by visiting an English speaking nation, gather professional experience for her future career and lastly to discover something different while lending a helping hand to the environment.

Volunteer assistance has been paramount in Kigio Wildlife Conservancy, a small conservation project on the rise, renowned for trying to preserve some nearly extinct animal breeds. Line's previous knowledge about the Rothschild's giraffe, combined with her dream of becoming a zoo attendant has been quite an asset in the conservancy.

"We are here to learn and share ideas, and with the help and guidance of the head research scientist, every hand is useful. I have learnt a lot in the short time I have been here and it makes me happy when I get to guide the new volunteers around the park which makes me feel confident." says Line.

Kigio's work program has kept Line and the other volunteers quite busy with every morning and afternoon consisting of energy consuming activities. From fence patrol which involves walking along the fence making sure it is in good order, carnivore surveillance, bird surveys, camera trap relocation and data collection, biomass assessment, giraffe survey, and road maintenance which involved making good drainage for the roads and also filling in potholes with rocks.

The beautiful jungle setting has been a gem in Line's eye, but most importantly were the lessons she has learnt. "I have learnt to respect the environment; I can now tell different plant and animal species as well as tell what each animal feeds on. I also love the breath taking view and the fact that this place is away from man's pollution and noise." says Line.



Living in a different country with different people has been quite an experience for Line, "I have adapted very well to the Kenyan culture and despite some differences it seems quite similar to my way of living and thinking. Everything is perfect here, the environment, the activities in the conservancy, the places I have visited around the country and especially the people I live with and those that I have met in my visits I would encourage people from abroad to come and visit, it is a an experience that will change your life and remain dear to you." says Line. Once back at home Line plans to work study and find a job in a zoo where she can utilize her newly earned Kenyan experience and further her career.

New Staff Introduction, Welcome to the Team Carol!

CAROLINE N MUNGAI -MY FIRST DAY AT WORK AS A MEDICAL CO-ORDINATOR



When I got my joining date, I was very happy. But as the date came nearer, I was a bit nervous. Many questions occupied my brain like how will the atmosphere of the office be like, will I be able to adjust with the colleagues, will I be able to work well and complete targets.

When I joined the office, on the first day I was a little tense till I got acquainted with the workplace and the friendly co-workers. On my first day of work experience, at 8:30 Mr. Karanja, the Country Director, took me through an overview of the company and my job description, at 10:00 Jessica the Assistant Country Director, Lucy, the Volunteer Coordinator and I visited medical placements, Evans Sunrise Medical Centre, Bondeni Medical Centre, Nakuru Nursing Home and Langa Langa Medical Centre and I met medical volunteers Nanna Teglbjerg and Mille Andersen from Denmark.

I look forward to working with everyone in Projects Abroad, Thank You.

My working experience for the last four months at Projects Abroad Kenya

Lucy Ngina, Volunteer Coordinator



During my time at Projects Abroad Kenya I have been involved in different areas, one being volunteer coordination. Being a volunteer coordinator has allowed me to be exposed to the entire organization, learning in detail the day to day running of the organization and also how to effectively manage volunteers from their first arrival until their final leaving. I love my work... but it's mostly not because of the job... but the people I work with starting with our Country Director Mr Karanja, Assistant Country Director Jessica, Desk Officer Olivia ,Information Manager Paul, Conservation Officer Tonny, Conservation Volunteer Coordinator Sam (Ki black), Tony the accountant and our newest member of staff Carol Mungai the Medical Coordinator.



And to all my workmates you have not just become team mates or just good friends but you have become like part of my extended family... you are more than friends. And my wish is to be the best support crew that I can be. Lastly I can confidently say that I have developed professional skills which will help me throughout my career and also I have met great like-minded people from all over the world and had a chance to learn a lot.

Dirty Day –Okoa Mtoto.

Together with all members of staff, Projects Abroad Kenya Volunteers extended a helping hand by renovating the dilapidated building at Okoa Mtoto, a home for former street boys. The doors of almost every room in the centre had either fallen down or parts of the door were missing. The painting of the wall had also been there for quite some years making the rooms look dull and old.

Seeing this, Danish volunteers Thomas Elissen and Sandra Christensen both working in the rehabilitation centre, made a request to give the centre a facelift, wall paints, painting brushes, carpentry tools and timber were bought. Tasks were divided among groups with each group having volunteers, the boys and staff members of both institutions. Cooking wood was split, gardens were prepared and some seeds were planted while other groups painted and fixed the doors. Sammy Mbugua, the Centre's Assistant Director, was happy with the input. "This is a major help to us, with the boys getting better living conditions, the idea to plant some crops will reduce the cost of buying food in the long run, and we will develop it to help the boys learn some farming skills which can help in the future. We are very grateful to Projects Abroad for funding and even going to the heights of doing all the labour work." said Sammy



