

# HAKUNA MATATA

Kenya Newsletter September 2013

## Primary school teacher gains valuable experience while volunteering in Kenyan School



29-year-old Luuk Bijl, a primary school teacher from Rotterdam, decided to visit Kenya for the second time for his love of travel and giving back to the society. Armed with 3 years' experience in teaching, Luuk signed up for the Projects Abroad Care Project and was based at Ronaken Education Centre for one and a half months.

Working in a Kenyan classroom has not been without its challenges but this has served as motivation for Luuk who has worked hard to see that the children in his class get a taste of quality education. Bringing with him donations that he raised through the help of his students back in Rotterdam, Luuk has built the school a wall to help keep the children safe, he also saw the need to buy more books and book shelves for the school. "They had only one book per class and a book for every two pupils will help the learning process to become much smoother for both the pupils and the teachers."

At Ronaken Education Centre, Luuk's daily routine was to attend to a combination of two classes with a total of fifteen pupils, teaching them subjects like English, mathematics, life-skills and even an attempt of teaching the local language Swahili. "This has been quite an experience for me, it has presented an opportunity for me to be able to show and teach children back in my school how lucky they are given that children in a country like this live and learn in a poor state. I am able to also help the children here to work as a group which I've realized is not the norm."

In addition Luuk has also helped the local teachers to encourage their pupils by pointing out their strengths and inspiring them to do their best, which in his own opinion is a better teaching method.

Outside work Luuk has also enjoyed the country, especially from living with his host mum who has been very hospitable: "Despite the culture shock for the first few days when I arrived, my host mum helped me get through it; she taught me the local ways of life and cooked very nice food. The Kenyan people are very friendly, there is no way you cannot like the way people live here, I also love working here and relating with the children, the look in their eyes and the joy they get through my presence is very valuable to me.

After one and a half months in Kenya, Luuk has this piece of advice to future volunteers: "If you want to see how life is in a different country; travel as a volunteer and not as tourist, you will get to learn the local ways better and in your free time you can tour the country. It is an amazing experience."

We hope great stories like these inspire others to help Projects Abroad to make a difference, and by doing so, learn something themselves along the way.

### **Ruhrtal-Gymnasium graduate gains worthwhile experience in Kenya.**



17-year-old Judith Steinke had just finished high school back in her home town of Schwerte in Germany before travelling abroad. Judith's career path was already decided and all that was left before joining university for a teaching course was for her to gain some valuable experience abroad. Deciding to sign up for the Projects Abroad Care Project, Judith had the opportunity to experience a different culture and gain experience towards her future teaching career.

During her 2 month volunteering experience, Judith was placed at Hope Children's Ministry; a small orphanage tucked away in a huge slum in Nakuru. "It is a haven of hope for children



especially for orphans, giving them with the opportunity to gain an education and in addition the home provides breakfast and lunch.”

Due to lack of enough teachers Judith has been a great help to the children and staff of Hope. Among her daily tasks she has been teaching a class from 8am to 1pm, giving them individual attention, providing support and care as well as teaching them new games during break time.

Overall Judith believes that she has gained a lot from working at the Care Project: “This is a place with little learning material, I have learned how to prepare lessons on my own and I have come to know how to make most of what I have, because the children have shown me how to happy without many resources.”

Besides gaining some useful teaching experience, Judith is grateful for the opportunity to have travelled outside of Germany: “The people, food, music, transportation, and mentality of the Kenyan people are so different from Germany. I loved attending Sunday mass because of the joyful music; the people are open-minded and very friendly, staying with my host family was an experience that I will never forget since they helped me get integrated with the culture faster.”

On her return home Judith plans on enrolling to university to study teaching. After 2 months in Kenya, she has this piece of advice for future volunteers: “Be open-minded accept the differences and learn Swahili.”

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## **Dirty day Langa Langa**

In the recent past taking care of the environment has been the ‘in thing.’ Major companies and great leaders have sprung into action in an effort to help save the environment, though with little success in our part of the world. It is in this spirit that

Projects Abroad Kenya organised a second clean-up day at Langa Langa Township. As a small town with roughly 2000 residents, it was a perfect place to clean firstly, because of its size and, secondly, drawing attention from the residents was much easier hence more chances of them learning from us. We later planted trees at a local Primary School still as an effort of caring for Mother Nature. Most of our volunteers have never done such a thing as collecting garbage with only gloves and a facemask or handling soil with only their bare hands just like it is done locally. At the end of the day we hope some of the residents did learn from the exercise and they will safeguard Mother Nature.



## **Volleyball for the Disabled**

It is a unique project from the minute you step In the Afraha Stadium, you realize that several locally and roughly made wheelchairs are parked at the edge of the football pitch. Their owners are disabled. Some with amputated or totally paralysed legs and sad stories behind them; surprisingly, they are happily stretching in preparation for their volleyball practice, despite the many problems they face and the heavy load handed to them by nature: most of them unemployed and living in poverty. This pitch and game may be only place where they may momentarily forget their problems. Amongst them and standing out is Stinna, a Danish volunteer with Projects Abroad who is busy helping their coach teach and encourage them to hit the ball hard, move faster and in the process improve their volleyball skills.

Gathering every Tuesday and Thursday from 9am to 2pm, mostly under the hot and harsh sun or heavy rain, with a small piece of canvas that they use to slide on for the



purpose of easy movement and on which they can barely fit. The spirit of these determined men and women is on the highest level despite not having access to a proper indoor volleyball pitch and proper training material. “We started two months ago and we are happy with the progress and the shape the project is taking, we are hoping to encourage more people especially the women to come to join us. It is good for the disabled to exercise and socialize with each other,” says Stinna.

