

Since my childhood i have dreamed about going to Africa one day. As a child I was in contact with a Swiss lady called Margrit Fuchs, who has built up and managed orphanages in Rwanda for decades. But I was too young to go with her to Africa, so I was left at the airport when she departed, or I was there to pick her up, when she returned. And unfortunately, she died in 2007 at the age of 90 in Rwanda.

But for me the time has come to let myself in to the adventure of Africa. My school, where I work, allowed me an unpaid vacation for my trip. I didn't want to see many different countries, only 1-2 countries, whereby I could see more deeper into it. For this case I hoped to learn a lot about the country, life and culture by volunteering. Fortunately I have found the perfect organization and school with Forever Kids Kenya and Milele Education Centre. I was lucky that I was able to meet Nadja & Mark (president of the organization & founder of the school) in Switzerland for a general talk about the volunteering, before they went back to Kenya. They are very friendly and from the start I had a good feeling with them. My anticipation grew bigger every week. As they left for Kenya, we kept contact through Email, to answer some more questions of mine. This time of communicating with each other was very helpful for me.

In October, my time has finally come, after a week long stopover in Zanzibar, I was picked up on a Monday at the Mombasa Airport by Nadja & Mark. I was happy to spend my first night in Kenya with them and felt very welcoming. The next day was a public holiday so school was closed, but Nadja & Mark took time to show me the surrounding area. It was great to visit Old- and Newtown together with them, also the market, the local food and so on... I enjoyed their company and tried to get as much information as possible, as a few days later they would be going on a short trip. Even if they weren't around personally anymore, they made sure I was in good hands with Mr. Godfrey, and I felt I was.

On Wednesday was my first day in school. Already the way going there with the motorbikes and tuk tuks was new and exciting for me and during the ride I have seen many impressions. The contrast of rich and poor are very visible and the closer we got to school, the more we were surrounded by ironsheet houses. Of course I have seen pictures of slums or the school before, but seeing it in reality and being inside of it is more impressive.

Of course you can't compare the classrooms with ours in Switzerland. They are simply built and equipped, quite small and narrow, with a big number of children. For me it was impressive how the children and teachers can teach under such circumstances. As I was teaching I caught myself being distracted from the classes on the left and right.

During my first 2 days I was able to go from class to class and get some impressions. It was nice that they gave me the free choice of which class I wanted to teach. I thought I will automatically be teaching Kindergarten classes, because this is what I know already. So the first days I spent with the Kindergarten classes, and for the rest of the volunteering my curiosity brought me to class 3.

In the Kindergarten I was totally fascinated by the way the lovely Madam Racheal was teaching. The difference to my work as a Kindergarten teacher in Switzerland is very big, because we use a lot of toys and so the children have lots of time to play. Due to lack of materials in Kenya they concentrate on the blackboard. Through this the children have an early contact with numbers and letters. Madam Racheal motivated the children in a playful way and also with praise (for example through singing). For me she had the perfect mixture of being friendly but still being consequent. I didn't only appreciate her way of teaching, but

also appreciated her friendship privately. In this age the disciplinary work and upbringing is very important, same as with us in Switzerland, so it was also a nice change for me to go and teach the older children.

I have spent the longest time of my volunteering with class 3. There I felt that I was on the right spot, because the children were a bit older, spoke very good english and were very communicative. I harmonized well with the teacher Madam Rebeccah and we both profited from each other. We have shared the lessons and complemented each other. I think that the children felt it and this brought a happy atmosphere in class. At some days, when Madam Rebeccah was absent, I took over the class alone. This challenged me and brought me closer to the children. Most of the lessons aren't very diversified and are being held by repeating or writing from the blackboard, so the creation of my own lessons brought excitement to the class. It was a pleasure for me to transfer my knowledge to them, because they were very active in the lessons. I could tell you so much more about it... The children have touched me deeply and affected me with their joyful way and energy. We have often laughed together and they made me have goose bumps when I heard them singing for me or when they spoke to me with wise words. And I have learnt a lot from them. I already miss the happy faces, which welcomed me every morning with the words „Musungu-Musungu“ while waving at me.

All in all it was a wonderful time which I'll never forget. I'm endlessly thankful to Nadja & Mark that they made this possible for me. For me it is remarkable, what they both have built up with so much passion and what they perform day by day. I totally support the whole organization and will do it in the future too. I'm really looking forward to a reunion.

All the best for you, Asante Sana

Nadine

