

FINAL REPORT – VAVROUŠEK SCHOLARSHIP

NAME: Vojtěch Jochim

YEAR OF STUDY: 3rd year of bachelor degree programme

TOPIC OF THE INTERNSHIP: Volunteering on microfinance projects of Maendeleo

SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT: 15 000 CZK

COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION: Tanzania

PERIOD: 21/01/2020 - 3/03/2020

Brief description of the internship:

I spent six weeks in south-western Tanzania working for non-profit organisation Maendeleo. It runs several microfinance projects in rural areas of Utengule-Usangu with over a hundred clients recruited mostly from poor farmers. They formed partner organisation called Wakulima Maendeleo, which manages everyday stuff as no member of Czech Maendeleo is permanently present in Tanzania. Farmers of Wakulima are divided into self-help groups which are supposed to cultivate shared fields and are given micro-loans managed and distributed between members by designed persons. Elder clients are eligible to obtain individual loans. Newly, Wakulima distributes individual loans also among people who intend to start a business.

I was supposed to perform overall screening of how these projects are working which has to be done at least once a year by some Czech Maendeleo member. This included visiting clients, groups and shared fields, Wakulima leaders and supervisors. I was also collecting materials for use in fundraising, for example photos to interesting stories. As a person responsible for propagation and obtaining sponsors I was expected to use these materials after my return to enhance stagnating fundraising campaign. Finally, my presence and activities also strengthened relationship with our clients and local community.

Description of the activities:

The internship included many activities:

- Visiting clients who have been given microloans for agricultural and business activities. I was supposed to meet them at their homes and take semi-structured interviews about their life and participation in the projects. This had several purposes. First was to collect interesting stories of both recent and long-term clients, which would help Maendeleo to present its work to donors by illustrating concrete transformative effects of its projects. Second purpose was overall checking of how efficient the projects are in eradicating poverty among the clients, which problems are they facing inside and outside the project and obtaining more concrete pictures about them. Finally, visiting the clients helped to build closer relationships between the

Czech and Tanzanian comrades. This activity took more time than expected due to problems with communication and transport which then disabled me from working on some other less important planned activities, but was finally successfully completed.

- Visiting groups and checking its cooperation and problems. I was supposed to meet members of self-help groups on their shared fields and interview their representatives. However, this activity was not very successful as many farmers preferred working on their own fields and were unable or unwilling to collect themselves together. On the other hand, this fact combined with interviews of some group members concerning this topic gave us a clearer picture of troubles these groups are facing.
- Organising family day, every-year event that helps to build tighter relationship with local community. This year I, with a help of group of Czech travellers passing the area, have created game tournament for several hundreds of children from basic schools in Utengule and Mahango. This activity ended up with a big success.
- Taking photos, which can be used for a variety of different purposes, such as social media campaign, website of Maendeleo or presentations of our projects.
- Collecting other possibly useful materials from the area to promote Maendeleo in Czech media. As I have responsibility for propagation of Maendeleo, I was supposed to enhance its fundraising campaign, on which I am working nowadays.

Benefit of the internship for student and partner organization:

Student:

Taking part in development fieldwork presents rare opportunity for any Bachelor student. Experience like that can certainly open the doors to obtain additional experience of this kind as well as increase my future career opportunities in the field of development. But apart from these general conclusions, there are several specific points I would like to emphasize.

Living with the local family, I experienced life conditions of rural Tanzanians. This unusual opportunity gave me concrete ideas about daily life and troubles of local people. It was chance to study local culture and mentality and to immerse in the community. As cultural barriers and differences arguably present one of the most challenging obstacles for any development worker, this priceless experience made me able to understand specific features of life in Tanzania but also left me more able to deal with very different cultural environments generally.

It also improved my management skills as I was filling given tasks under the very challenging conditions. There were problems with the transport as road was flooded. Troubles with meeting arrangement arose as it was not possible to communicate via phones because of non-functional electricity site and lack of signal. There were cultural and language barriers. Farmers often suddenly changed their plans. But despite all these unfavourable circumstances, I was able to achieve the tasks I was sent with, which left me more able to deal with sudden complications, management under the pressure, or able to solve never experienced problems absolutely independently.

Last but not least, I developed some practical language skills in Swahili. I often found myself facing a language barriers as not many rural farmers speak English and I did not have always an interpreter with myself. Gradually I became able to talk about housing, directions, food and other basic daily necessities. I believe this provided me solid basis and motivation for further study of the language, which is undoubtedly useful for my future career in development as it presents lingua franca of Eastern Africa.

Maendeleo:

No member of Maendeleo is permanently present in Tanzania, hence it needs to send volunteers to Utengule-Usangu at least once a year to check that its projects are running smoothly. I have done this overall screening, visiting fair share of all the clients of all the participating groups and villages. Maendeleo thus certainly benefited from this activity.

Also, Family day increased general awareness of the organisation in the region and improved the reputation among local community. I also involved Czech travellers passing the area in the organising the event. By sharing the story to outside of our usual support bubble, they also increased awareness of the organisation.

Finally, Maendeleo's fundraising campaign has benefited from my work. I enhanced campaign on social media with short stories, most of which were undoubtedly more popular than usual contributions. As a reaction to previous research, Maendeleo website was recreated with collected materials, which help to show how its projects transform people's lives and will hopefully bring us more donors. These materials can be used for different kinds of presentations of our work. Moreover, my stay made me able to better understand and present organisation's work – and once I am responsible for the propagation, this will help me to do better in this way from which will Maendeleo benefit in the long term.

Presentation of the outcomes of the internship:

Any personal presentations of the internship to students or other interested people have not been possible yet as I have arrived back the Czech Republic just as Covid-19 lockdown was introduced, universities closed and people ordered to stay home. However, I expect that I will use the experience and obtained materials in the future for the presentations of Maendeleo's Tanzanian projects.

On the other hand, it is good to note that obtained materials from my stay were used multiple times for social media campaign and to recreate significant part of Maendeleo official website. Moreover, I wrote several articles about life in Utengule-Usangu for Prague based magazine Respekt, which presents one on the most established and renowned Czech newspapers with wide audience. As Sub-Saharan Africa remains seldom covered in the Czech media, this presents unique opportunity to bring quite unknown and often distortedly perceived picture of life and development of this region to the public.

FINAL BUDGET:

Budget	Total	My own expenditures	Contribution from Vavroušek Scholarship
3 months visa	1 150 CZK (50 USD)	1 150 CZK	
International transport	20 100 CZK	5 100 CZK	15 000 CZK
Local transport	2700 CZK	1000 CZK*	
Accommodation	1000 CZK	1000 CZK	
Food	2000 CZK	2000 CZK	
Interpreter	2630 CZK	0 CZK*	
Vaccination (typhoid fever)	1100 CZK	1100 CZK	
Insurance	2200 CZK	2200 CZK	
Other expenditures	1500 CZK	950 CZK*	
Total	34 380 CZK	14 500 CZK	15 000 CZK

* paid by Maendeleo