

**Country for the project**

Mozambique

**Degree programme**

Industrial Engineering and Management, specialisation in Computer Science

## MFS on Digital Literacy in a Rural Village in Mozambique

### Before departure

I heard about minor field studies from several different students in my course, and immediately knew it was something I wanted to do. I love travelling and exploring new places, so getting to do that as part of my studies is always a bonus.

My partner and I learnt about our organisation, Project Vita, at the MFS information lecture. We sent out emails to several different organisations in different countries, which I would recommend doing at the latest during August / September (if you are planning on going away during the spring semester). Just email as many places as possible! Project Vita was particularly easy to contact, as they have a contact field for volunteers and students on their website. We had a few meetings with the organisation to explain our thoughts on what we wanted to do and handed in our project description to KTH during the fall.

In preparation for the trip, the main things we had to do were get a visa and get vaccinated. Mozambique is actually in the process of making travel from Sweden visa-free, so if you have a Swedish passport, you might not have to worry about that part next year! Getting the visa was pretty easy, we contacted the Mozambican embassy in Stockholm and filled out a few forms. Make sure to do this around 1-2 months in advance before departure, as it can take a few weeks for the embassy to stamp your passport.

As for vaccines, VaccinDirekt has an option on their website specifically for travellers, where you can book a counselling appointment, so you don't have to worry about doing research of which vaccines you have to get. I got vaccinated against hepatitis A & B, cholera, yellow fever, and meningococci (I may be forgetting one or two, so take my words with a grain of salt). Whilst you're in Mozambique you will also have to take a daily pill against Malaria. Make sure to get vaccinated a few months in advance, as some of the vaccines require two doses to be effective. This step can get quite expensive, so make sure to budget for it. For me it was between 3000-4000kr.

Project Vita was incredibly helpful in taking care of housing for us, as well as helping us with filling out the forms for the visa application.

### Upon arrival

We went away quite a bit later than people usually do (April-May), which I actually recommend. This allowed us to finish all of our background research before departure, so we could just focus on conducting our study on sight.

Unfortunately, we missed our flights from Johannesburg to Vilanculos, so my advice is to check that you have plenty of layover time in Johannesburg, since there is a transit desk you'll have to go through. We had to book a new flight to Maputo, and took a taxi from there to Linga Linga the next day, which took around 8 hours. Michel had planned a welcome dinner the day of our planned arrival, as we were quite a large group of students staying (7 people), but since my partner and I missed our flight we didn't get to participate ☹.

## **Financials**

The cost of living in Mozambique is significantly lower than in Sweden. By far the most expensive were our flights (around 11 000kr there and back) and our housing (8 400kr per month). However, we lived in a very big house that we could've easily shared with more students to cut down on rent.

Since we lived in a small village where there weren't any restaurants, we mostly cooked at home with food we'd bought from the market, which was extremely affordable. When we did eat at restaurants, a meal and a drink would usually be around 100kr, depending on how fancy the restaurant was.

We travelled around the country a bit, which I recommend doing. Since there's no public transport, we travelled by taxi or with our supervisor in his car. In comparison to Sweden, the taxi ride we took from Maputo to Linga Linga was around 8h and cost a little over 1000kr per person.

## **Accommodation**

Project Vita booked our accommodation for us. The organisation actually has housing for students in their headquarters, but since we were four groups of students, some of us had to live at a different accommodation. I and three others lived at Pura Vida Lodge, which is about 3.8km from Project Vita. Since we were two separate groups, we lived in two different houses, but I would recommend sharing a house to cut down on the price, since they are quite big (one of them had 3 bedrooms). We had running water and electricity, as well as a 4G connection (no Wifi, we shared a hotspot from our phones instead). We did experience a few blackouts, but none of them lasted longer than a day.

The location was beautiful. The houses are quite secluded and are only around 10m from the beach, which makes it feel like being on a luxury vacation. However, this also means that, when our supervisor did not pick us up by car, we had to walk around 30-45min on the beach in the hot weather to get to Project Vita.

Another thing to be aware of is that the owner of the lodge, at least from a Swedish perspective, has some questionable political views. I want to be clear that he was never threatening or hateful towards us personally, and overall I did feel safe staying at the lodge. However, he did express hate towards several different groups of people, specifically trans people. If you are openly trans, I would recommend asking Michel, the head of Project Vita, if you could stay at the Project Vita headquarters instead.

## **Project**

My partner and I wrote about digital literacy. For this, we conducted research at the local school. Typically, we would spend our days planning workshops and creating our website, which was meant to help further children's digital literacy. We would then go to the school and work with seventh-graders to test the website.

Working with children was challenging, especially as we had to work with a translator, since they did not speak English, but it was equally as rewarding seeing how much fun they had playing around on the computers. There's still more to be done in terms of developing digital literacy in Linga Linga, so if you are a student of computer science I would recommend contacting Project Vita!

## **Country**

Mozambique is beautiful. It almost feels like being in the Caribbean, with its long beaches and palm tree forests. The people there are incredibly kind, and since we lived in a small village, we could walk around alone without having to worry about our safety. Even the cities felt quite safe, although I would recommend travelling in a group to avoid robbery and sexual harassment.

We travelled to three different destinations in our free time: Tofo, which is a touristy beach destination, Zinave National Park, and Vilanculos, which is a touristy city. I recommend going to all three of these places, but be aware that Zinave is about an 8-10h car ride from Linga Linga. Since Linga Linga is quite remote, Tofo and Vilanculos were great places to get to see urban life in Mozambique, and to experience things like going out to bars and restaurants. Both places are very tourist friendly and felt safe.

Mozambique is also a great place for outdoor activities such as diving, snorkelling, surfing and safari. I specifically recommend taking a tour of the Bazaruto islands in Vilanculos and going snorkelling there, as well as going to Zinave National Park for a laid-back camping safari. If you want to experience a more luxury safari, Kruger National Park is also accessible by car.

### **Leisure and social activities**

Leisure for us was a lot of just hanging around on the beach and relaxing. We also spent some time in Linga Linga with the locals, having a beer at the local bar, learning how to weave baskets and bake coconut buns, and just having a look around the village. On weekends we went on the longer trips described above, or day excursions such as going on a sailing boat, spending a day at the local hotel, or shopping in Maxixe.

### **Sustainability**

In a way, we lived more sustainably than in Sweden. We bought most of our food from local markets, which meant a low plastic consumption, as well as a low carbon footprint on our food. We also didn't use as much electricity since we spent most of our time outside and didn't enjoy commodities such as a laundry machine or a TV.

On the other hand, the infrastructure in Mozambique is not particularly sustainable. They do not have a good waste management system and travel is done via car or plane, since there are no trains. Of course, our journey there also had to be via plane.