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CARE: French actress explores the art of culture while volunteering abroad

As an actress, Jérôme Chassériaud (20) is accustomed to adapting to new people and situations so she decided to take her life experience to another level by volunteering abroad in Tanzania.

“I came in order to have a new experience in a country I didn’t know. I wanted to be helpful, work with children and have a different cultural experience.” Jérôme, who is also studying English and Spanish at Nanterre University, was assigned to an orphanage on the outskirts of Arusha by Projects Abroad.

“It is a really poor orphanage. They don’t have real infrastructure or have a lot to do after school.”

Every morning Jérôme would travel from her host family to the orphanage, where she would teach the preschool age children in the morning and assist the staff with cooking and cleaning. Jérôme went home for lunch and returned in the later afternoon help with homework and play with the older children who were coming back from primary school.

“When we are at the orphanage, the children are happy and know we are there for them. My culture and Tanzania’s culture is really different, but it was good because I could teach the children new things. Sometimes it was quite difficult because their way of thinking is not the same, but a new country is always useful for the mind.”

Aside from working with the children, Jérôme, along with two other volunteers, repainted the inside of one of the classrooms and raised money to repair the children’s bunk beds and the cement floor, which had been eroding.

When she was not at the orphanage, she met with other volunteers through the socials organized by the Projects Abroad office and took advantage of safaris and the many tourism opportunities available in the country such as Lake Natron.

“I’m planning to return to Paris and continue acting but I’d like to do another volunteering project. I learned to be patient and to have a new way of thinking through this experience. I love the culture, the country and the people of Tanzania.”

DIRTY DAY

Volunteers joined Projects Abroad in a monthly Dirty Day Social at Ngarenaro Hospital in Arusha. The hospital was in need of landscaping and gardening and the volunteers were more than willing to help by getting down and dirty, digging, planting, cutting and weeding the grounds of the hospital. Projects Abroad donated the flowers and plants as well as funded the repair of their water system.



MICROFINANCE



Chairwomen meeting

In April, we had a chairwomen meeting at Projects Abroad office. The women found it to be a success. The group was formally introduced to each other. Advice, stories of successes and failures, general information about the groups and contact information were all exchanged. Many of the women in attendance found the meeting very helpful and would like to continue to have meetings and would like other members of each group to meet with each other to further exchange ideas and help each other.

Problems faced

In the month of May we faced a couple of small problems. Literacy is still a problem. Some of the members of the groups are not able to read or write and do not speak any English, which makes it difficult to train them in bookkeeping and other things. Because of the people having difficulties with reading and writing, we try to go slow enough to prevent the women from not understanding what we are talking about. Some of the groups, for instance the CHE-group, don't have any problems with literacy. As a result, the training program goes a lot faster and the group can make faster improvements.

Another problem that we faced is people coming late, or not showing up at all for our weekly meetings. As a result, we have problems planning a training day for all members of a group. We try to prevent the women from coming late. We introduced a penalty in one of the groups. The women in the group have to pay a fine of 1000,-TSH for every time they show up too late. If we, as the volunteers, are late for our meeting, we have to pay the fine as well. But this penalty does not prevent the women from not showing up at all. It's one of the things we would like to improve within' the coming weeks and months.

Goals

Our main goal for the coming period is to take the project to the next level. The members of the CHE-group told us they would like to have more training about starting a business and on how to keep good track of your expenses, income and monthly profit. By training them about these subjects, we hope to help them to take their business to the next level and increase their monthly income and profit. We would also like to train all the women about the basics of business. We try to make them realize how important business is and how important it is to be independent.

Overall, the project is making progress each month and we wish to improve it even more within' the next month.

Volunteer profile: Justin A. Pressley

Justin was a volunteer with the microfinance project in Arusha, Tanzania. His task involved issuing, collecting and monitoring loans given to local businesswomen in the community. His passion however was providing training for the participants. He studied business while in school and found it rewarding to pass on the knowledge that he learned at his university to people who could really use it. He also found it useful for him because he was able to practice his public speaking skills, business acumen and his ability to work with others from different cultures.

STAFF CORNER

Staff Corner: Microfinance Coordinator, Eliza Makala welcomes a baby boy

Congratulations to Eliza Makala who welcomed a baby boy to her family on May 17. This is Eliza's second child. As Eliza will be on maternity leave for 3 months, we are pleased to introduce Diana Moses Ekayo to the Tanzania, who will serve as the temporary Microfinance Coordinator.

Diana is a holder of an advanced diploma from the Community Development Training Institute. She spent one year volunteering with the Clinton Foundation on a HIV/AIDS project and was previously employed as the Development Officer at Community Healthcare Project at Meru Diocese.

ALUMNI CORNER

We have many volunteers who enjoy their experience so much that they later return to the destination to start new projects or return to old ones. The Alumni Corner is a place to recognize the ongoing contribution of former volunteers.

Alumni Corner: New video released from former Microfinance volunteers

Sara Edmonds (Ireland) and David Powis (England), a husband and wife team joined Projects Abroad from late November 2012 until January 2013 volunteering with both the Building and Microfinance Projects.

Both are working professionals in the field of architecture and finance respectively, but decided to share their time and talent on a whirlwind adventure in Tanzania.



Sara and David were among the first three volunteers to participate in the Microfinance Project. Check out their video on [YouTube](#) as they talk about their experience.

We invite all volunteers to participate in part-time paid work as an Alumni Representative after leaving our destination. Alumni Representatives attend promotional events and fairs in their home country and share their experience living and volunteering with Projects Abroad. If you are interested in becoming an Alumni Representative, email alumni@projects-abroad.co.uk.

Supporting Your Project

We often get requests from previous volunteers who would like to financially support their former project. If you would like to make a general donation to support our international work or if you want to donate to your previous placement please visit the Reconstruction Project website and earmark your donation for a specific charitable purpose. It will always reach your intended target!

<http://www.justgiving.com/reconstructionproject> . You may also send a cheque to The Reconstruction Project, c/o Projects Abroad, Aldsworth Parade, Goring, Sussex, Great Britain, BN124TX