

**MFS REPORT****Name****Year and term for exchange**Elin WahlströmSpring 2023, Final term**Country for the project**Tanzania**Degree programme**Architectural and Civil Engineering

A once in a lifetime experience

Before departure

I was interested in writing my master's thesis abroad and was looking into different options on how that would have been possible. I kind of stumbled on the information meeting about MFS and started looking into different projects that would be interesting to do the master thesis within. We started looking into projects after the information meeting, straight after the meeting which meant we only had 4 weeks to do it before the application was due. We got in contact with Engineers Without Borders (EWB-SWE) and found a project in Tabora, Tanzania. An organization called Tumaini Open School was constructing a school, which we thought was a very interesting project. We had meetings with representatives from EWB, the organization in Tanzania, and with a potential supervisor at KTH, to be able to find a project that would be contributing to all and be approved by KTH. We also needed to do a pre-departure seminar hosted by EWB-SWE and fill in a risk assessment before we were approved to travel as EWB-SWE volunteers.

Before departure, we needed to get vaccinated and get Malaria profilax, which we needed to start eating before, during the whole stay, and after the stay. There are two different malaria pills. I started with the weekly pills three weeks before departure, because they were cheaper, but I got some side effects that made me change to the daily instead. We could apply for a visa upon arrival, but we applied online and got the visa before departure.

Upon arrival

When traveling I would recommend listening to the travel advice that's given by the organization that is hosting you, to choose the easiest and best alternative. When we first arrived in Tabora we took some days to try to adapt to the new environment and make a plan with the organization for the things we wanted to get done during the field study. The plan included both parts we needed for the thesis and things we could assist them with while we were there. The organization welcomed us well with multiple persons, and in the beginning, we always had a company that showed us around town, took us on adventures and informed us about important things. That really helped us with the adaption in the beginning, which was quite big. In total, we conducted the field study for 58 days.



Financials

In general, Tanzania is cheaper than Sweden and both food and accommodation can be cheap, but it depends on which standard you want. When it comes to food there is a big possibility to save money if eating more local food, such as beans, peas, and rice. Western food is more expensive and were more difficult for us to find in Tabora. We had someone that we paid to cook 3 meals a day for us, and it was mostly local food.



In Tanzania public transports are very cheap when it comes to buses, motorcycles, and bicycles. It is an experience of its own to use public transport and is recommended if you want to lower your costs for travel within Tanzania. Alternatives for buses in Tanzania are big, where you can catch the smaller buses called Daladala during most times of the day. That option is very cheap, but the buses do not leave on a time schedule, it leaves when the bus is full enough. For longer travel, I would recommend bigger buses where you can reserve a seat, and the bus leaves at 6 am in the morning to be sure it leaves on time. The bus doesn't stop many times and might not be a very comfortable alternative, but it is very cheap.



Accommodation

The organization Tumaini Open School assisted us with accommodation during our stay in Tabora. They had a rest house where we got a room each during our stay. In addition, they provided us with 3 meals a day for an additional cost. The accommodation was of a high standard compared to many other houses in Tabora, but a lower standard compared to what we are used to in Sweden. We felt very safe, because the house was enclosed, and all windows and doors had grills on them. We paid approximately 150 kr/day for accommodation and 100 kr/day for food.



Project

The master degree project is written under the division of Sustainable buildings at KTH in cooperation with Engineers Without Borders (EWB-SWE) and the organization Tumaini Open School. Tumaini Open School is constructing and starting a school for adolescent mothers that before November 2021 have been banned to continue their education. The field study has been investigating different technical solutions that would increase the sustainability of the construction both in the economical aspect and the environmental aspect as emissions.

During my stay in Tanzania, multiple interviews and field visits were conducted to collect the information necessary for the degree project. Due to both language barriers and lack of research permit all interviews and contacts went through our contact person in Tanzania. We helped the organization with things while we were away and will share our thesis with them as soon as it is finished.



Country

Tabora and Tanzania is a very beautiful country with very kind and helpful people. Even though there is a lot of tourists in some parts of Tanzania, Tabora is not one of those places. Not many white people live in and visit Tabora and that was a bit of a cultural shock for us. When walking down the streets in Tabora people often cheered us or yelled “Mzungo” to us, which means white person in Swahili. It was very nice that so many people said hi to us, but we had some difficulties with the language barrier. Not many people could speak English which made us very dependent on the people in the organization.

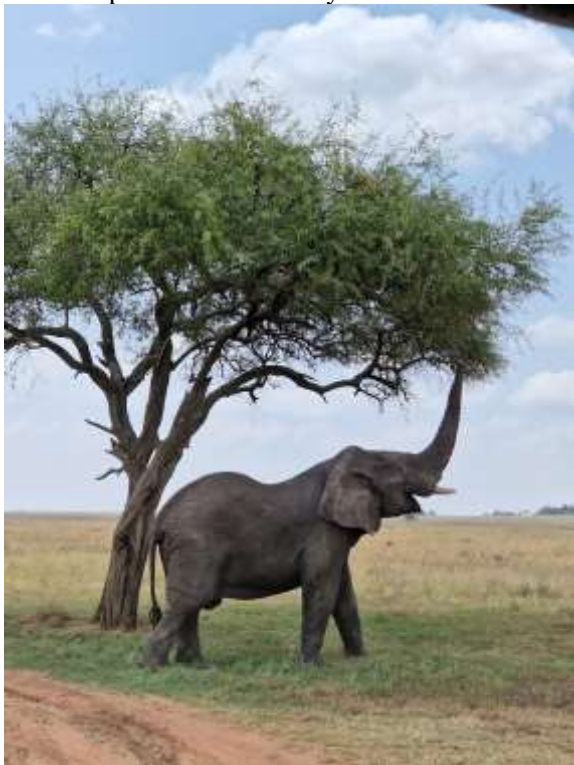
Almost everything we paid for was with cash, which required many withdrawals. If traveling to Tanzania, I would recommend bringing multiple cards, just in case, and having a card that does not charge so much for withdrawal.



Leisure and social activities

Tabora is not a very big town and there were not many activities to do there in our spare time. We went to a museum, went to church, did some hiking and walked around town as activities. As already mentioned, the language barriers made it difficult for us to get to know new people in town, and all social contacts we had was therefore through the organization.

We wanted to use our time and see more than just Tabora, so we also took a weekend in Mwanza, a week in Arusha connected to a field visit (including safari, Serengeti, and Ngorongoro), and a week in Zanzibar to finish the trip. There are a lot of beautiful places to see, and I greatly recommend doing as much as possible while away.



Sustainability

We had to fly to get to Tabora, Tanzania, which might not be the most sustainable way. We experienced that they live very much on the things they have available and the food that is grown locally in season, which made everyday life in Tabora very sustainable. You don't waste resources the same way as you do in Sweden. We also were able to travel more sustainably by bus during our stay, which contributed to a more sustainable trip.

We involved the Global Sustainable Development Goals in our project though looking at how the suggested solutions in the construction could be connected to the goals. We were focusing on more sustainable building materials and techniques and also saw a lack in water and waste management during the field visit which we could connect to the global SDGs.

Other recommendations and observations

To do the thesis as a Minor Field Study was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Focus on what you came there to do but travel as much as possible while away.



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