

SYLE-VOLUNTEER' - INTERNATIONAL SERVAS PROGRAMME - REPORT

**By Georg Fick & Nadine Le Gouguec. Sunday 18th August - Saturday 14th Sep 2013
USA to Blantyre, Malawi, Africa.**



Pre-SYLE Preparation:

We came across Servas Malawi last year while reading an article in the Servas International newsletter. When we decided to go on our world tour and spend 3 months in Africa – we kept in

mind Malawi for a longer stay if there was a possibility to volunteer on projects. Then, while in Buenos Aires talking to the national secretary she mentioned Demelza and gave us her email address. We contacted Demelza who right away expressed interest and sent us info on programs we could participate in. After a few e-mails and info exchanges the program was customized based on our skills, interests and length of stay.

Accommodation:

Stayed with 6 different hosts in South America before getting to Malawi – 'traveller experience'.

Travel and Arrival: Arrived in Blantyre on August 12 from Mozambique. Took a week to travel to the Lake before starting the program on August 19, 2013.

Food: We ate local food. Families went out of their way to make us enjoy Malawian dishes (grill fish, local chickens, green of all sorts, cabbage salad etc...). We tried as much as we could to cook or bake (banana bread, coco macaroons & peanut meal banana cake) but it was a challenge with time management and electricity shortages.

THE SYLE-VOLUNTEER PROGRAM – KEY GOALS/ACTIVITIES/ACHIEVEMENTS

● HOST/TRAVELLER TEACHER

The goal: To allow multiple hosts who never had the opportunity hosting a traveler/foreigner to have their first experience with experienced Servas travelers.

Why? There are not many Servas travelers coming to Malawi and most of the host don't have an opportunity to travel themselves.

How we did it: For 2 weeks we switched hosts every second day. We spent considerable time with them talking about any topics of interest, cooked together, went to social outings together and visited their work place. We also had prepared a presentation about us and our live at home which we showed to our hosts.

● PUBLIC TALK ON "SERVAS FOR PEACE" AT PECHA KUCHI NIGHT.

Thursday September 12th, 2013

The goal: To do a public presentation of Servas Malawi. Location: College of Medicine.

Why? To create greater awareness of the work of Servas Malawi in Blantyre.

How we did it:

On short notice we create a 6'40" speech and slide show about the purpose of Servas and our personal experience with Servas Malawi. Nadine presented it at a public event of Pecha Kuchi at the College of Medicine

● BLOOD TESTIMONIES (O'Dala Center / Malawi Blood Transfusion Services)

The goal: To collect a total of 20 statements and photos of blood donors and receivers

Why? They are to be printed and laminated and placed up on the walls of the Donation Centre for Blood Donors to see where there blood could possibly go to and the type of conditions it helps in.

How we did it:

- We promoted the campaign during dinners at our 6 host families.
- We took every opportunity to discuss the campaign and ask around if people knew donors or receivers.
- We attended blood donation day on Aug. 22nd. Georg donated blood. Nadine collected statements.
- We went to a blood drive organized by the O Dala center in downtown Blantyre and collected statements +donor photos.
- We made announcements about the campaign whenever possible.

● CHICHEWA AND CULTURAL CLASS

The goal: To learn some basic Chichewa and get to know Malawian culture.

Why? To break down cultural barriers.

How we did it:

We took only one class and learned Chichewa greetings. We decided that we would learn all about the Malawian culture through our hosts. The greetings helped us a lot to break the ice.

● PEACE MOSAIC and PEACE GARDEN (AYISE)

The goal: To design and lay out 1 floor and 1 wall mosaic inside the compound of the AYISE offices to create an area of peace and meditation. **Why?** To communicate the message of peace to the visitors of AYISE and create an area where staff and “volunteers in residence” can relax their souls.

How we did it:

We joined forces with volunteers from AYISE and Servas to transfer the selected designs to the surface and created 1 wall and 1 floor mosaic in the area of the peace garden as well as 1 wall mosaic as AYISE on the outside of the enclosure next to the gate

SUN 18/8	MON 19/8	TUE 20/8	WED 21/8	THU 22/8	FRI 23/8	SAT24/8
	Eternity + Sean Brady	Eternity + Sean Brady	Eternity + Sean Brady	Demelza + Ben Benbow	Demelza + Ben Benbow	Demelza + Ben Benbow
Meet Demelza and Eternity at Mangochi	To Blantyre with Eternity who gets high fever and Georg has to drive back to Blantyre.	Eternity ends up in hospital and we bake and cook for the family Discuss Malawi history with Sean	Sightseeing: Mandala Hse, downtown, St. Michaels Church. Discuss living in different African countries with hosts	Donate blood and collect blood donor testimonials at blood donation centre	Introduction to Servas Malawi and SYLE program Visit of Open Arms orphanage	Bake banana bread Servas social with our presentation and SKYPE calls to Servas Canada and Uruguay
SUN 25/8	MON26/8	TUE 27/8	WED 28/8	THU 29/8	FRI 30/8	SAT 31/8
Ian & Ellita Thawalle	Ian & Ellita Thawalle	Olive and Enoch Malomboza	Olive and Enoch Malomboza	Christopher & Natascha Masuku	Christopher & Natascha Masuku	Bobbex and Gloria Chinthu
Visit of Mulanje tea plantations Collect blood donor testimonials at Ian's home	Visit Ian's construction site at AMITOFO center Get tour of center Chichewa lesson	Visit transport museum and Heritage Centre Move to Olive and Enoch	Collect blood donor testimonials at blood drive downtown Show our presentation	Move to Christopher and Natascha Discuss politics over dinner	Observe certification of Vocational Skills program at AYISE Certificate Event	Visit Bobbex' church committee which feeds orphans once a week Move to Bobbex spend day cooking and talking.
SUN 1/9	MON 2/9	TUE 3/9	WED 4/9	THU 5/9	FRI 6/9	SAT 7/9
Bobbex and Gloria Chinthu	Rita Latifa	Rita Latifa	Demelza + Ben Benbow	Demelza + Ben Benbow	CCAP base camp, Likabula	CCAP hut
Visit AYISE with tiler to get instructions for how to do mosaics. Watch soccer.	Start mosaic work at AYISE Hash Run at 5pm. Move to Rita	Mosaic work at AYISE Show presentation at night	Mosaic work at AYISE Watch kids at night	Mosaic work at AYISE	Mosaic work at AYISE Leave for Mount Mulanje	Hike Mount Mulanje
SUN 8/9	MON 9/9	TUE 10/9	WED 11/9	THU 12/9	FRI 13/9	SAT 14/9
CCAP hut	Ramona and Gerald Bowler	Ramona and Gerald Bowler	Ramona and Gerald Bowler	Ramona and Gerald Bowler	Demelza + Ben Benbow	
Hike Mount Mulanje	Return from Mulanje Move to Ramona	Mosaic work at AYISE	Finalize mosaic work at AYISE Take pictures with volunteers	Press date at AYISE. Nation press release. Nadine's Pecha Kuchi talk "Servas for Peace" -	Visit Chibuku brewery. Servas good-bye Social Event	Departure to Mzuzu and on to Dar Es Salaam

PERSONAL VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES

Challenges & Difficulties

- Transport can be slow delaying our targeted goals.
- Electricity and water shortages. Cold showers are good for us! As for electricity...we learnt to do in the moment and not delay!!!
- The image of Whites being wealthy (kids and adults alike asking for money).
- Our differences: time and money management; anticipation, rhythm.
- We felt the economical challenges the host have experienced these past 2 years.
- Hard to mention change when the next election seems to be same all – same all.
- Keeping high hopes for the future of Malawi.
- Prayers with our hosts before each meal provided us time to reflect and meditate:

Rewards & Joys:

- The welcoming of all the families. Making us feel at home – even though none of the families knew us. We felt part of their families.

- The commitment and desire of the hosts to engage (perfect fit – we love conversing!).
- Sharing meals & activities with families was priceless.
- The many stimulating conversations whether about our life experiences or the next elections educated us and gave us a different perspective about Malawi. We really got a feel for Malawian's daily life and struggles.
- Understanding the collective culture of Africa vs. our individualist culture: discussing the pros and cons.
- Learn new skills such as creating mosaic.
- Practice public speaking.
- Were introduced to Chichewa. We practiced our greetings and thanks on a daily basis; it always provided a good laugh for the locals but also an appreciation for our efforts.
- Met strangers while collecting blood statements.
- Felt we had a community while away from home.
- By staying with different hosts in various areas we experienced the diversity amongst Malawians and expats community (age, family size, profession etc).

SUMMARY:

Overall more rewards than challenges. We anticipated the experience being challenging – AFRICA IS! We understand and acknowledge our cultural differences and feel richer in human experiences. Thanks to Demelza for putting this program together and for convincing the host families to host us. We leave Malawi with a sense of accomplishment. We hope the experience was valuable to all.

Zikomo Servas Malawi!