

Field study in Indonesia

“The minor program Sustainable Development in Developing Countries offers the opportunity to go abroad and work in a development project or organization in a developing country. As you are free to choose the subject and destination of your field study, I searched for a project which had to do with education as I wanted to include my study (Educational Design) in it. I ended up in Bali (Indonesia) where I worked from July till September 2013 at foundation Sjaki-Tari-Us. Sjaki-Tari-Us is a foundation for mentally disabled children and offers a combination of playing and learning to children who did not (yet) get accepted at a special education school. The mental disabilities of the children are often not officially diagnosed, but include at least Down syndrome, autism and ADHD.

During my field study my task was to assist the teachers during the lessons. The last three weeks of my stay I worked individually with one of the children whose behavior was very aggressive towards the other children. From day one you could see a change in his behavior and after a week also improvements in his performance due to the individual and positive attention he got. Seeing this was absolutely wonderful.

As there is no special education training for the teachers available in Bali, the teachers are depending on the knowledge of visiting volunteers. To contribute to this process, I did a research on how they can improve their reading lessons. I presented my results in a workshop to the teachers and saw them experiencing positive results when they tried some of the practical exercises in their lesson.

I had an amazing time, thanks to the interesting work, lovely children and staff at Sjaki-Tari-Us, the Balinese people and their beautiful country. An experience I will never forget and absolutely worth trying!”



Field Study in Mexico

Sonya went to Yucatan in Mexico to work with a company called Kuosol. Kuosol is planting *Jatropha curcas*, which is a plant maintaining oil in its fruits which can be used as biofuel. Her task was to create a method to collect data on the carbon capture of *Jatropha* (in order to establish an overview of the CO₂ content of this plant of different age groups for the case of Kuosol.) This can help to identify on what territory CO₂ savings can be optimized when producing bio-fuels from *Jatropha*.



The decision to go to Mexico was not that hard. The culture of the Mayas and the Aztecs have fascinated her since she was a child. In her spare time during the field study she was able to visit some of the many pyramids of the Mayas. The people are polite and very friendly. The country is beautiful and has to offer all kinds of nature, from desert, to mountains with snow, to Caribbean flair and rain forest. To sum up, she had a great time in Mexico!

Field Study in Rwanda

A diplomatic experience! Working at a Dutch Embassy in the heart of Africa

“The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ policy is currently subject to many alterations due to extensive societal changes, caused by factors such as digitization and Europe’s financial crisis. An advisory panel that was appointed by the government to offer advice on how to modernize Dutch diplomacy, has stated that communication and social media use should take central stage. Because this advice has proven to be challenging, the Embassy of the Netherlands in Rwanda appointed me as a communications intern for autumn 2013 and early 2014.

At the Embassy I worked on the website and social media policy of the Embassy, interpreted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ new mission and vision in a way that was workable for this Embassy, delivered brochure texts that showcased the work of the Embassy and its results, and took pictures and wrote press reports about project launches and contract signings.



Me and local Embassy staff enjoying Dutch treats at the opening of Dutch bakery “BBROOD” in Kigali on September 27, 2013

Looking back

My time in Rwanda has taught me a lot. I’m happy I did it, and proud of myself for sticking it out. It was great to learn so much about the country’s complicated recent history and its current state of affairs. I enjoyed talking to Rwandan citizens about both political and personal topics. I got to see the entire country: from the brand new skyscrapers in the country’s capital Kigali (built by the Chinese - quite a different style of support) to the basic clay huts in Rwanda’s remote villages. I also got to see up close what kinds of development projects the Netherlands supports in Rwanda, how the Dutch presence is manifested, to what extent an Embassy is dependent on the decision makers in The Hague, and I had the opportunity to see up close what the work of a diplomat in a developing country entails.

I now know what it means to live as an expat in a developing country. It’s an interesting life. The social circles of Dutch people in Rwanda are relatively small, it did not take me long to get to know most of the Dutch community there. But I also had two other lives in Rwanda. At home, my two Rwandan housemates showed me how some of the local population lives (no private chefs and WiFi connections there!). At the youth hostel, where I sometimes hung out with friends, I got to meet many travelers. These travelers had their own stories and experiences, and compared Rwanda to other East Africa countries. I was able to put these stories into perspective after visiting Uganda myself during Christmas time. With all the different types of people residing in Kigali, perceptions of Rwanda differ greatly. I’m so thankful to have caught glimpses of many lifestyles.”

Field study in South Africa

“For my field study of the minor “Sustainable Development in Developing Countries” I volunteered with Children of Fire. They help rehabilitate the most severely burnt young children from across Africa. Of course I was worried how I would react to see injured and scarred children, but within a day all my prejudices were gone.

The charity has a sister charity called "Johannesburg School for Blind, Low Vision and Multiple Disability Children". Therefore, the charity is able to offer a broad range of internships. For example, children of fire can accommodate future doctors, therapists, lawyers, journalists, teachers, or anyone who wants to find out ‘what they’re made of’.

During my field study I prepared meals, coached children, provided interactive creative technology lessons, accompanied children during hospital visits, provided after-school (educational) activities, assisted when slum fires occurred, and helped with an educational program for children that live in slum areas. My main focus was so construct technical toys together with young burns survivors, and evaluate these educational activities.

If you are looking for a relaxing, sit-on-the-beach kind of internship, you might want to consider to look for something else. But if you are looking for a life changing experience in which you will gather skills, experiences, insights and knowledge that will stay with you for the rest of your life, you should join the Children of Fire. I have seen the real Africa that tourists will never experience. No one, including my friends or family, will be able to comprehend the things I’ve done and seen without having done them themselves. I would not want to have missed this experience.”



Field Study in India

“As part of the minor ‘Sustainable development in developing countries’ I have been working on a bio-ethanol project in India for three months. This project is about the production of ethanol from cashew juice and about using the produced ethanol as cooking fuel. My task was technical and social, but this really depends on the things you like and the assignment you get from your company/association. The technical part was about the improvement of a small scale distillation column. The social part was very useful to put everything in perspective. My supervisors asked me to develop a questionnaire that could be used during an ethanol cookstove investigation. As part of the minor I have used this questionnaire to get an impression of the living situation of women in the villages around the campus where the office is located. It was very nice to go to these villages and talk with the women. They were very friendly and did not mind at all to answer my questions.

The Indian culture is very different from the culture we are used to in the Netherlands. There are many contradictions and there is always something to see, smell, hear, etcetera. When you are going to India, you need to be aware of the differences. However, the country study (which is a compulsory part of the field study) is a very useful tool to prepare yourself.”

