

HIMS

About HIMS (in short):

Health Integrated Multisectoral Services (HIMS) is a registered Non Governmental Organization working on charitable basis.

The organization seeks to work with marginalized groups in the areas of education, health and socio-economic empowerment with Gender Mainstreaming, HIV and AIDS Awareness Creation both medical and socio-cultural perspectives, and Environmental Conservation as crosscutting issues. Single parents specifically single mothers; women; children, specifically orphans; PLWHA and youth are priority target groups.

My trip to Tanzania

Last year i decided to go to Arusha in Tanzania to support HIMS.

I went up there from the 23rd of December till the 8th of January. It wasn't a long time, I know, but definitely a great experience and enough time to see that there's still a lot of work to do.

I'm going to write my experiences as a diary as I'm not very good in writing a proper article ☺ I hope that's fine.

23rd of December.

So i was flying from Cape Town to Johannesburg, from there to Nairobi in Kenya and than to Kilimanjaro Airport in Tanzania. When i got there it was already dark but when we were flying from Nairobi to Tanzania, I saw the top of Kilimanjaro, which was covered in snow. ...Very beautiful... So I landed, paid \$50 for my visa and went out to collect my bag – which came almost as the last one. I was really worried it got lost somewhere in Kenya ☺ I went outside and there was Mackrine waiting with a young guy. His name was Adam and he was our driver. We were driving for like 1,5 hours till we got to the house which was just outside of Arusha. On the way there, we were passing a lot of little villages all built next to the main street. People walking on the streets, driving bicycles and motorbikes without a light and plenty of taxi busses, which they call dalla dalla. Already now I could see that traffic here is crazy ☺ So we're turning into that dirt road, driving past a few shacks and houses, passing a bridge till we got to our house. I was very happy when I saw that I was staying in an actual house.

24th of December

It's Christmas day (at least for me in Germany it would be). Rose (another volunteer) and me took the Dalla Dalla (taxi bus) into Arusha town. It was 250 THS which is about 0,12 EUR or 1,15 Rand. So for us very cheap. We saw women carrying all different kind of stuff on their heads (from big plates full of bananas to kitchenware). Big wooden hanger full with pineapples, women sitting on the streets selling veggies or fruit, lots of colours, and a proper African city live. It looked like a big mess, but organised at the same time. I sorted out my phone, money and we got some groceries. Than we took the dalla dalla back to the house. Later in the day we started packing 110 presents as we were having a big Christmas party at our house the next day. Mackrine, our host mom, invited the Mama Agnes' orphanage, the street children (CCFT), the people from the HIV groups and some others. I was very glad that my friends from cape town (big thank u to them!) gave me so much stuff for Tanzania, cos now we definitely had enough presents for everyone. Mackrine was surprised when she saw all that stuff. So we packed pencils, drawing books, crayons, clothes, toys, and all different stuff. I felt a little bit homesick as I would have loved to be home for Christmas day but at the same time I felt really good doing this and I couldn't wait to give the presents to the people the next day.

25th of December

Mama Agnes and her orphans were the first ones to arrive. She came with around 20 kids. One girl was sitting in a wheelchair and an old woman was carrying this very little disabled girl. Just to look at her made me feel so sad. We had music playing in the garden and after a little while

we were dancing around the Christmas tree with the orphans. They were so happy, jumping around, big smiles. "Hari ya krismas" (means merry Christmas in Swahili). The kids knew a different dance to every song. More and more people arrived. Eventually it started raining, so we had to move all the people into the house. We moved around the people in the wheelchairs, it was like 5 of them (but all very happy and friendly). The kids were sitting inside on the tiles. Mackrine's husband (Novatus), started to bring lemonade, everyone got one. U could see how excited the kids were about the lemonade. Mackrine organised a catering for that day. They served white & brown rice, pork, kuku (chicken), beef, French fries, salad, cabbage, green bean salad and watermelon. A lot of the people who came don't have proper food every day, so they were very excited. Everyone was just eating with his or her hands while sitting on the floor. After lunch it was time to give them the presents. I walked around with a little bag and everyone was allowed to take out one number. I was surrounded by like 20 kids who just wanted to grab into the bag to get a number. Mackrine and Rose started to read the numbers. Who ever it number it was, came in front, made a little dance, I gave them the present, they unwrapped them immediately and whatever it was, they were all excited about it. Some of the kids came back to trade the presents with another one, but it was ok. There was this little disabled boy who was wearing a way to big suit jacket and he was dancing around with this other little boy, Jaron, who was wearing a shirt and red pants – they looked so happy. I was busy running around in the garden collecting all the wrapping paper, because (that was one bad thing) they just let it fell on the floor. Even the adults, they not used to throwing something in a bin. Some of the kids eventually came to help me, which was very sweet. I went inside and talked to the boys from the CCFT, it's about 15 boys, all from the street, between 8 and 18 years old. I was talking to this one boy, Michael Anderson, he told me about his boarding school and that he wants to be a big rapper one day like 50 Cent. He said he really believes in it and than he rapped for me. His English was very good. (I'm not so sure about 50 Cent being his idol, but as long as this boy has a dream and believes in it, I think it's a good thing, right?)

26th of December

It was a Sunday, so we had the day off. Mackrine runs a little Internet place (seven very old computers in a container). For half an hour we paid 500 THS, which is like 0,24 EUR. Very cheap but it took like half an hour to load a page. So I left it and walked home. For lunch we had rice and beef stew with cow's stomach (sounds delicious – I know), fried banana and potatoes (we had banana every day, either fried banana, baked banana, banana bread, banana soup, banana stew, banana cake...) that cow's stomach looked odd but as everyone ate it I also did and I'm still alive ☺ I learnt some Swahili and than in the evening I went for dinner with Rose and Fredrik (another volunteer). We went down the road to a little "restaurant". We sat down at one of the tables. Some guy sat down at our table, introduced himself as "Simon". He said he's a teacher for English (his English was ok, but not fantastic) and he said he would sit with us cos it would be more safe?! We felt pretty safe, I mean it was like a bar / restaurant thing and lot of guys there drinking beer (one guy was asleep on his chair), but we never felt unsafe. The owner, Dancan, eventually came to sit with us too and recommended us some food to order. Eventually a couple of guys walked over to the young man who was sleeping on the chair, they woke him up with a bucket of cold water. So he gets up and was falling around, the guys took him by his hands and towed him on the floor towards the street. He got up and they started a fight. Now we did feel unsafe, so we decided to go inside. Simon was following us. After eating we walked home in the dark. I used my good old Nokia phone as a torch (it does have an actually torch), but still, I fell and got my "tanzania – scar", the streets are just very bad. Tomorrow I'll start visiting the different groups ☺

27th of December

Monday morning, Mackrine and me left around 9:30 to go to the Street Children. We took a dalla dalla towards town and got off just before town. There was a guy, Gideon, waiting for us. They were talking something in Swahili and than Mackrine said to me that he would look after me and she's going into town to do some shopping. I felt kind of weird walking with a stranger

somewhere outside Arusha, but as Mackrine knows him I thought it'll be fine. Which it was ☺. We walked down the road and entered a backyard thru a blue and rusty gate. Some people were staying there, kids were running around. We walked thru laundry that was hanged up and as we got to another backyard, we were there. At the house of the street children. The boys were sitting outside on the stairs and seemed happy to see me (I met them at the Christmas party). I gave everyone a handshake and we walked into Gideon's "office" which was the first room in the half broken house. The room was around 8 m² big. It had a little couch, a chair and a little table, used as the desk. Gideon sat down behind the desk and offered me a chair. He told me that there are 16 boys at the moment. The boys are between 9 and 20 years old. They stay there till they finish form 4, which is when they are between 17 to 20 years old (depending how good they are in school). Most of them do go to school. Either boarding school (if they can afford it) or a normal one. They either eat lunch at school or at the house. They usually eat rice, ugali (maize porridge – tastes like nothing) and dagga (very small fish – usually dried and very salty – I tried it, its not to bad ☺) that's all they can afford (dagga is know as the food for very poor people). They cook on 2 small fire places / grills (which only fits 2 little pots) outside the house. The water they drink out of the tap (but as u might know the tap water in Tanzania is generally not safe to drink – but I guess as their body is used to it, its ok?!) however, the water had a slightly yellow / brownish colour and I always bought bottled water.

Gideon showed me the „house“. The walls were painted in yellow, but they were very dirty. There are 2 rooms with foam mattresses (not like proper mattresses as we know them), they all sleep together on those, no single beds. I also didn't see any blankets. There are 4 more rooms in the house but they can't use them as someone broke the windows out so its just big wholes in the wall. There are also 2 showers inside the house but they don't use those as there is no door to close it off. In one of the rooms there was a little graffiti painted in red which said „outburst gang – until the end of time“ than there was a scull in fire / flames and another writing which said „represent real Hip Hop 4ever“. I got told that the boys love hip-hop.

We walked back outside, clothes were hanging there to dry. There were 2 green doors. Behind one of them was the toilet (whole in the ground) and in the other one there was the shower (at least they have that). Than there's another room (no door), empty, just with the two grills. (they either cook inside in that room or outside). The boys were sitting on the stairs eating toast and marmalade.

I sat down with them and we talked about how old they are, where they come from (some of them are massai, some of them are from Arusha, or somewhere else, very mixed), what their hobby's are, if they like school etc. David, who was playing guitar, said that he doesn't like school so much cos of the teacher. He told me that he wants to be a professional soccer player one day. He plays every day after school (he was very tall and well trained). They all have a dream what they want to be one day. A lawyer, businessman, teacher... Enock (I think he's around 13 or 14) said that he wants to deal with drugs one day. I wasn't very happy when I heard that, so I tried to explain him that that's not a good thing and he should find something else what he wants to do later. (They see drug dealers on the street who have money and they want to be like them.... very sad). So we kept on talking, some of them were eating, Mussa was washing clothes and Ali got up cos it was his duty to cook today. Gideon gave him some money and he went to buy veggies. He's cooking ugali, dagga and veggies. Charles (who's massai) and Enock started to paint me a picture (remember he was the one who wants to be a drug dealer one day – but than on the other hand he's painting – very good!). Charles painted me one with an elephant (I secretly loooove elephants) and mountains in the background and Enock painted a woman at the market (his drawing was very good!)

The organisation for the street children is called CCFT – CHANGE FOR CHILDRENS FUTURE TRUST – its a NGO and they live only from the money or food they get from the locals. To get the Registration to be a proper organisation they would need to go to Dar es salaam and get

registered. The whole trip (bus, sleeping there, food etc) for 2 people would be around 400.000 THS, which is around 200 EUR.

I took the dalla dalla home to go for lunch. After lunch Mackrine, me and some other people drove to the HIMS centre past Arusha. The roads were really bad, big wholes, dust, children running around, women carrying water buckets or other stuff on their head (I still wonder how they do that?!). After like 1,5 hour drive we turned right into a dirt road till we past a dark red gate. The HIMS centre. It's a little hospital / health facility. There was a doctor, a nurse and a "receptionist". No patients. As patients can't stay there over night (cos HIMS cant afford the salary) people only go there during the day if they have a small injury. So that's why it's not busy. I looked around. There were very old wheelchairs, 2 rooms with hospital beds, a laboratory, and lots of old furniture, sponsored by different organisations. (One wheelchair had a sticker from the Red Cross in Bavaria (Bayerisches Rotes Kreuz, made me laugh (I'm from Bavaria, that's why.)) Mackrine was talking to the doctor and than we left. Mackrine, me and the receptionist (who drove back with us), got off at a little village. Mackrine told me that we're going to visit a priest who was working in "her" church before. We walked up a little mountain, dirt roads and lots of unfinished houses, lot of women and children walking around with colourful, plastic buckets for water or other stuff. We got lost (Mackrine couldn't remember the way), so we called the priest on the cell phone. As we arrived he, Joseph, was waiting outside already. The house had a gate and looked very modern (especially for that area!). We went inside and there were 2 men and women sitting, watching TV – on a flat screen with a Dolby surround system from LG - to my surprise?! They even had a DVD player from LG too! (I remember it so well, cos I found it so strange...that was the last thing I expected in a priest's house)

A young girl, she was probably 15 or sth brought us Coca Cola's and Fanta's to drink, peanuts to snack on. Shells from peanuts were lying on the floor, also caps of the Kilimanjaro beer. They were watching a music channel, African women and men singing sth about god (Mackrine told me).

So suddenly a phone starts ringing, it was like a hip-hop reggae party song as a ring tone. The young girl got the phone and gave it to the priest. He answered. So it was his phone, quiet funny with that ring tone, no? But what really freaked me out was the fact that it was an iPhone. Now really, I felt strange in there. U have that priest who has a Flat screen with Dolby surround and an iPhone... in the middle of nowhere outside Arusha! I wanted to leave; we had a long way back. Luckily the priest was so nice and gave us a lift back in his car. As we were waiting outside that other man, who stank of alcohol, actually asked Mackrine if I don't want to be his second wife. His first wife and his kids were there too. I mean, obviously that was a joke, but it's normal that they have more than just one wife. His wife didn't really look happy about that either...

28th of December

Today in the morning Dieter (a friend of the family, he's from Denmark) came at 9 and we drove to Mama Agnes' Orphanage, which is 10 minutes away from where we live. I took the big bag with toys (which I collected from my friends in Cape Town) with me.

We drove a bit on the main road, than onto a dirt road, uphill. Little shops, goats running around, cows and dogs. As we drove up the hill the kids started running towards us when they saw our car and that we were Mzungu's (white people).

We drove into the gateway; the kids took the big bag and carried it into Mama Agnes' "office". Mama Agnes told me about her work. She started in 1991 with one child. It was her niece, who lost her parents. Soon it became more and more kids. Right now she's looking after 97 children. 25 of them are orphans and they stay with Mama Agnes and her family. The rest comes only to eat and play during the day or on the weekends. The children are between 3 and 18 years old. Mama Agnes is 60 years old, lives with her husband who is retired, her youngest son (he's 17) and her mother in law, which is 106! Her husband is massai, and some of his family members also live there (but they stay in another little house next to them). They have 3 cows, chicken

and rabbits in the back of the house, but if they eat them than its only for the family, not really for the orphans. They also get some milk from the cows but it's not much. The orphan girls sleep with the grandma (the mother in law) in one room, the boys have their own room. 2 boys (they are around 14) live in another little building (more like a shack), opposite the house, cos Mama Agnes said that they are dirty. They don't like to wash themselves.

In her office she had a big board with photos from the children and their names. There was also a note on the wall that said:

"Ref.: Teresa Mariki

We as a registered NGO caring for orphans and disabled children, are presently taking care of the above named lady who was attacked by thugs on 12/02/2009 at Loliondo. The thugs happened to cut off her two hands as from the wrist and serious cuts on the neck and head as per attached photograph. We kindly please beg your honourable office to assist money for artificial hands as per attached invoice no. 4884 from KCMC hospital dated 03/04/2009" I asked Mackrine if that woman actually got her hands back by now, but she doesn't.

Mama Agnes called all the kids together. We started to give them the presents. First a big ball, than all the little balls (from Marcel, thank u). The kids went crazy. I was standing in the middle and I just saw a bunch of little hands all reaching towards me. I started handing out the little toy cars, they looooved them. After that I had those elastic bracelets in different colours (thank u Adam). I put them onto the children's hands to make sure that everyone got one. I think for them it must have been like Christmas and birthday in one day, if not even better. The girls also got necklaces. For the older kids I also had pencils and exercise books.

Mama Agnes said that a lot of kids also come who have single parents or parents who don't look after them. They come during the day to hang out there. A lot of the kids get beaten up at home, too.

For food Mama Agnes spends around 28.000 THS a day, which is around 20 EUR.

We played with the kids, they called me Mzungu, teacher, aunty or just Agnes. Mama Agnes asked us to stay for lunch and eat with the kids. They made some kind of porridge. Made out of maize, soy, sugar and water. One girl (around 15) was cooking it in a little shack opposite the main house. They cook on fire, so there was a lot of smoke in the room. Mama Agnes went into her office to get the crockery and cutlery. It was just plastic cups in different colours and some spoons (but not enough for everyone). Dieter and me also got a cup to try. It tasted ok.

Back at home we had dinner later. We got spinach, yellow noodles (it was nice for a change), soup and banana stew with unidentified pieces of meat (stomach and ...?) I ate it, as everyone did.

29th of December

Today is kind of quiet; I got up at 8, had breakfast and washed my clothes. They don't have a washing machine here (obviously) so we hand wash everything.

I want to bring food for the street children and mama Agnes, so I asked Mackrine to order it for me from her wholesaler.

I ordered 2 x 25 kg of rice, 5 kg of meat and cooking oil. One pack of the rice is for the street children. The 2 packs of rice were 59.000 THS, which is around 28 EUR.

In the afternoon, Dieter, Fred and me drove down to the street children. We took the rice, clothes (thanks to Jason), a soccer ball (thanks Marcel) and pencils with us.

The boys were very happy about the rice! 😊

Gideon went with us to the office to explain Dieter and Fred about his work. He also showed us his laptop and the logo of CCFT. As they don't have electricity in the house he goes to the neighbours when he wants to charge the laptop. They are using the laptop to listen to music in the evening.

The boys have a strict plan; they have to be back in the house by 7pm every day as they are all under 18.

We went outside to talk to them. In the beginning it's always a bit difficult, it takes time till they "open up". I sat down and started talking to Lampard about his school, Fredrik played soccer with Jumanne (the youngest one). Then Enock sat down and started to make a bracelet, his hands were so quick. I tried to follow how he's doing it but he was very fast. I said that I also want to try it. He was holding the one side of the bracelet and I was doing the work now. It was very difficult for me in the beginning, but I became better after a while. Then Lampard took over and he was super fast. He is talented when it comes to that 😊 he said he can finish one in an hour, it would take me a day thou... I asked him where he learned doing it and he told me that a man from Jamaica taught him.

Dieter was talking to Michael about flying (Dieter used to be a bush pilot). Michael would love to be a pilot one day. He told us that on the 10th of Jan he's going back to boarding school, but for now only the half of the year is paid. He doesn't know what's happening after. If he doesn't find someone who's paying for the 2nd half, then he has to leave the school.

Lampard went inside and got his schoolbooks. His favourite subject is history. They learn a lot about African history and the influence of Europe and the USA.

We left the boys around 6 pm and then drove around a bit. We ended up on a little hill where we could see Kilimanjaro in the far back. The top was still covered in snow. So beautiful.

31st of December

Today Dieter and me went to Mama Agnes to bring her the 25kg of rice, the 5l cooking oil and 5kg of meat (the 5kg were 17.000 THS which is around 8 EUR). She's going to cook it 2moro, as it's a Saturday and all the kids from the neighbourhood come Saturdays to eat in the orphanage. She said it's going to be almost 100 children.

The orphans were sitting on the floor with big packs of maize and beans and separating the good from the bad ones.

We went home for lunch and then drove to a massai village which was 1,5 hours from where we lived. We were very lucky on the drive, cos there was this truck loaded with big bricks and suddenly a whole pallet fell down as it was not secured but we didn't get hit.

We got to a little church and some of the Massai were awaiting us. The church was made out of wood, cow dung and ash. They gave us a hand shake and welcomed us in. The church was packed with massai, most of them dressed up in their traditional clothes. There was a little bench left, opposite from where they sat. An old Massai man (Nodh) got up and started singing and everyone followed his words. Everyone got up and started to "dance". They were teetering from one to the other side and shaking their shoulders up and down (looked kind of funny).

They sang very well like a choir. Some of the massai women did not get up as they were breastfeeding their babies. Most of the women were wearing big jewellerys; the traditional ones made out of lot of beads and some of them had very big earlobe piercing. After the singing part everyone started introducing himself. I'd say half of them were called Mary or Emanuel, seems like that's a popular name in the tribe. One of them was actually called Agnes. Some of the women started giggling. Then it was our turn. They were all rubbing their hands and open them up towards us (to welcome us). After the introduction we asked them questions. (Mackrine speaks massai, so she translated everything). I asked if it would be possible for me to become a massai if I wanted to. They started laughing and then one guy answered that a massai man would need to marry me and then it wouldn't be a problem.

Then they told us what's bothering them at the moment. Emmanuel said that 2 years ago they lost all their cattle and now they are very poor and have almost no money for school. Some Moslem group built a school very close to the massai village and they offer free education. So some of the massai send their kids to that school. Emmanuel said, that the Muslim teachers

indirectly force the kids to convert to the Islam. He told us a story about this massai girl that was sent off to a Muslim school in Dar es Salaam. When she came back for Christmas she was full with daemons and she doesn't want to go back there. The teachers converted her into a Muslim but she wants to get baptised again. The father doesn't know what to do as he is very poor and the school in Dar es Salaam, which is Muslim, is the only one where the daughter gets free education. But she can only go there if she is Muslim too.

-> I'm just repeating what this massai man told us. This is NOT my opinion on that and I don't want to offend anyone!!

So they are concerned that they have to give up their religion, or that it gets taken away....

The massai have a lot of traditions / customs

- They still do the rain dance thing if it's dry for long. When we arrived it was actually raining, so we brought the rain (which was a good thing in that case)
- When it comes to marriage, girls get married starting from an age of 13 years. The groom asks the father of the girl, the girl cannot choose who she wants to marry. If a girl refuses to marry a man (some of them are very old (up to 70) she gets tied against a tree and gets beaten up. A lot of them also run away.
- As more wife's a man has, as better it is. There is no such thing as "Love" (at least not the way we know it). Every woman has to get married. They all live in separated little huts (the women have to built them themselves). When the husband decides who can join him for the night, he takes his massai stick and puts it on the right shoulder of the elected woman.
- Children: a woman has to get pregnant as often until she gives birth to a boy. Girls are less valuable as boys, as the boys are the soldiers
- When a woman gets pregnant she's allowed to sleep with her husband for 3 more months. So from the 4th months she's not allowed to have sex – that goes until 3 years after she gave birth. The man can still sleep with his other wife's though. This is a big reason why HIV gets spread too, as obviously they just end up sleeping with someone else than.
- As girls are not as important as boys, some of them get sold. For 20 cows. As cattle is more important (for the massai) as a girl.
- Men and women have separate toilets (normal), but the reason is cos they believe that men don't need to go to the toilet?!
- It's traditional for the massai men to get circumcised. They choose certain days when the boys get circumcised. The boys who get circumcised at the same day automatically belong to one age group (doesn't matter if boy A was 14, boy B was 16, ..., in the end they belong into one age group from now on). Ok, you might think now, so what? This is not that bad. But now comes the crazy thing.
Example: 2 girls: Leila and Tam, and 2 boys: Jonas and Luca. Jonas and Luca got circumcised at the same day (so now they belong to one age group). So Jonas gets married to Leila and Luca gets married to Tam. As the boys belong to one group, Jonas is now also allowed to sleep with Luca's wife Leila and Luca is allowed to sleep with Jonas wife Tam. So the big problem now is, that we know that they are allowed to have more than one wife. So if Jonas has 5 wives and Luca has 6 wives, they are both allowed to sleep with all of them. So now if one of them has HIV, it gets spread to everyone. (HIV is a big problem up there). Pretty crazy, ha?
- And then another thing: let's say Leila (Jonas' wife) gets pregnant, she gives birth and you can obviously see that not Jonas is the father but Luca. It doesn't matter, cos as Jonas is Leila's husband he has to take care of the child and he has to be the father.

So this is all pretty weird and confusing for me. I guess the same for you.

...They showed us around their village, explained us that they have no electricity and they have to walk for like 2 hours to get water. The funny thing was, that some of them had cell phones. Hanging around their neck. I guess they have to go into town to charge them...

One woman also asked Mackrine how old I am and what I'm doing. When Mackrine told her that I'm 24, not married and travelling she couldn't believe it.

This people live in a totally different world than we do. To go to that village was like going 100 years back in time. Mackrine goes there as often as she can to talk to the women (if they have problems) and also to talk to the men; to change their point of view of their very old traditions.

1st of January

Heri ya maka mpya! Happy new year (in Swahili)

Today's Saturday and I promised Mackrine to come to the church with here. As we got there, we sat down in the 2nd row. I looked around and the church was all decorated in white and gold and they had a beautiful crib.

Mackrine told me that there would be 2 weddings today.

The priest and the ministrants were walking in from behind, followed by a choir (around 30 – 40 people).

The ceremony was pretty much the same as I know it from home, just that the priest was talking in Swahili ☺ but the choir was great. They sang really well and each time everyone got up, clapped their hands, almost dancing to the music. That was really nice.

In the afternoon, Fred and me went to Mama Agnes' orphanage. Mama Agnes told me that today there are 70 kids in total. She introduced me to the 4 women, which were cooking today (remember, we brought them rice, meat and cooking oil). They had 3 big pots standing in front of them. There was cabbage, rice with meat and than one full with beans. They made a plate for me to try. I really enjoyed it. (Honestly, I never liked beans before. But since Tanzania I love them, really got a fan of all that African food)

So I sat down and ate with the children.

We played with the kids, danced in a circle (Joran was dancing all the time – as usual), showed them a map of the world, where we come from and where they are, explained them the continents, draw pictures with them and played soccer.

There were so many children. There was an 8-year-old boy; his name was Barak, (he always said, "my name is Barak, like Barak Obama, but I'm not Obama). His English was really good. Most of the kids cant speak any English.

I played with a little girl, Anita. She has the biggest smile I've ever seen! She was touching my hair all the time and said "Mzungu hair" (hair from a white person – much softer than theirs...) there was another girl, she was 13 and she also spoke very good English. She draw pictures from Fred and me. Its so easy to get their attention, they just love it. Even if u only sit there. This time there were a lot of very small kids. One girl was only 4; she puked on Fred (shame). Joran was still dancing, making handstands; he could really be an entertainer one day. He is such a cool kid. No complaining, always happy, even thou he probably had a rough time before. He has a lot of scares in his little face. Everyone got tired and we all sat down to wait till Fred and me get picked up. Anita (who was always shy in the beginning) was lying down in my lap and than Joran also came to sit next to us, holding onto mo. I made a crown out of leaves for Anita. When I was making it, she didn't know what it would be, so she gave me that strange look like "what the hell are u doing?!". But than when I finished it and put it on her head she got so excited. She was so proud of it and showed it to everyone.

It was really hard to leave today; the kids are all so loving. I will never forget when Anita lied down on my lap and just put her arms around my hips. That was a very special moment for me. These kids have so much love, but no one to give it to.

3rd of January

In the morning I took a dalla dalla all by myself into town (I was always a bit scared – for no reason!) I went to shoprte to get some groceries and to draw money. After lunch (today we had

a small piece of fish, ugali, spinach and banana stew), Mackrine and me took a dalla dalla into town and than another one to get to the place where the HIV group works, which we wanted to visit. We got out of the taxi and there was rubbish lying around everywhere. There was this little "canal" running next to the street. The water was dark dark green and brown and it looked like your skin is going to burn if u would touch it. We walked down a side street and got to the house of the group. It's a group of 15 people, all with HIV. They used to cook food and sell it on the street, which went pretty well, until someone found out that they have HIV and than people stopped buying food from them, as they were scared to get infected. Most of the people don't know anything about HIV, that's why they act so scared. So when the group gave up the business in selling food they started tailoring and they also dyeing fabrics in batik.

I gave everyone my hand to introduce myself and said "heri ya maka mpya". U could see in her faces how surprised they were that I just give them my hand without being scared. They have 3 sewing machines in the little shop; fabric was hanging on the walls, over the tables, all very colourful. People come to the shop to get fabric or get a dress made. There were pages of a "catalogue" hanging on the wall, so the customers can choose which design they want. They also go into town and sell the fabric on the street. 1 piece of batik fabric, which is around 1,5 x 5 meters, is 10.000 THS, 4,75 EUR. The design they make (the batik) is very nice.

One of the women showed me how she makes it. Once she folded the fabric twice and put half of it in a bucket of colour. The second technique was to make the fabric wet first, than she rinsed it, put it on the floor and shuffled it together. Than she took a spoon and put the colour on different parts. She left it for 20 – 30 minutes and than she put it in cold water first, rinsed it and hang it up. Both of the fabrics looked really nice.

I bought one of the fabrics and told them to make pants out of it. It was 10.000 THS for the fabric and another 10.000 THS for the sewing. So in total, not even 10 EUR. They told me I could collect it in 3 days.

We took a dalla dalla back into town and walked to a street market. Lots of traffic, lots of people everywhere, tight walkways, women sitting on the floor selling different types of veggies and fruit. We went to a sheltered area and there were even more people selling stuff. From fruit to veggies, spices oil, stationery. Everything u can think of. We bought coconuts, massive eggfruits and ginger to make ginger water (that's what we used to drink every day).

4th of January

In the afternoon Mackrine and me took the dalla dalla down the main road to visit women who live with HIV. A woman was waiting for us at the main road. We walked up a hill, past a big soccer field (no grass, just dirt) and a school.

We walked thru dirt streets, little shacks. We visited the first woman, 38 years old who's renting a "room" for her and her baby that was 3 months old. The room is like 10 m2. The walls are grey and dirty, and she sleeps on a mattress, not a proper bed.

She also has a son who is 16, but he doesn't live with them as the room is too small and she can't afford a bigger one. So her son lives on the streets. Her husband –who passed her HIV- died when she was 6 months pregnant. Back than they were living in a nice house but as he didn't have any savings, left no money behind and forbid her to work, she was totally broke and had to move out from their house.

She used to be a tailor before but now she also had to sell her sewing machine to be able to pay the rent and 3 months of rent in advance. From what I remember she pays like 20.000 THS a months (which is around 10 EUR). We almost hat to whisper when we were talking to her, as her landlord is not allowed to know that she has HIV. He would throw her out of the place. She showed me her blue pass with which she gets the medicine for free. Luckily the baby doesn't have HIV. As she can't go to work with a 3 months old baby, she live's on the stuff which people bring her. Mackrine gave her a kg of sugar and a bar of soap. We said good-bye and walked to the next one.

That woman was 50 years old (her room looked much better than the one we saw before – there were a lot of soft toys standing around, she makes them herself). She spoke almost fluent English. She told us that she's sick today. She sat on her bad, talking very slowly, she was tired.

She showed me her blue medicine pass, the medicine she's taking and explained me that she had to change it several times cos she got very bad side effects. She used to work in a post office before but when she told her boss that she has HIV, he kicked her out. The woman told me, that she also got HIV from her husband. When she got tested and confronted him, he and her son left her behind. Even her own family doesn't want to deal with her. They reject her. Than the woman, Susan, who was walking with us told us her story. She also has HIV. When she got tested and told her husband and said that she got it from him he called her a liar. He left her and told the whole family that he doesn't have HIV. So he found himself a new girlfriend. Before Susan's ex husband got married, Susan told the new girlfriend that he has HIV. When he found out what Susan said to his fiancé, he walked up to her with a gun in his hand and forced her to apologize and to say that she's lying, otherwise he would kill her. So she did what he said. But as life sometimes plays a fair game, a few years later Susan's ex husband and his new wife died. Of HIV.

We went to the 3rd woman. She was renting 2 rooms and she has a garden where she grows her own vegetables (which she's selling on the markets) Laundry is hanging outside, she just did the washing. We walked inside the house. It was very clean and nicely decorated. There were a lot of pictures on the wall of Jesus, and also some posters of HIV awareness campaigns. She told us that she has 3 kids and that none of them has HIV. The father died already. Her children are all going to school. They are the ones who remind her every day to take her medicine at a certain time. She seemed very happy, even thou she has this disease. When we left Mackrine also gave her sugar and soap, as to the others.

The visits with the people who live there with HIV was very sad but interesting. There's still a lot of work to do. People have to learn more about HIV so that they know how to protect themselves, also that if someone of the family has it – not to reject them. It is obviously a very dangerous disease but u can't get infected thru normal contact (but they don't know that), so that's what the people need to learn and understand.

We left, and walked down to the dalla dalla. On the soccer field, which we past earlier, children were playing soccer now.

6th of January

I sms'd Emanuel, a guy who is working for Mackrine if he can come with me to the batik place to pick up my pants (as I couldn't really remember how we got there the first time and u need to take 2 dalla dallas and there's obviously no such sing like a bus map). So he came with me, we picked up the stuff. I gave the HIV group 4000 THS tip which is not even 2 EUR, but they were soooo happy about it.

In the afternoon I wanted to visit the street children again but as there were bad riots last night in town (bombs etc., heavy stuff) and they said it might happen again today, I decided to rather stay at home. So I started to make a bracelet for Mackrine as a present for when I leave (I used the technique the street kids taught me. But it took me the whole day, haha)

7th of January

today I went into town with Adam to order a cake for my farewell. On the way back we drove past the street children. Adam knows Gideon (the guy who looks after them) for a long time. We greeted each other with their traditional handshake. I brought them pencils and paper to write on. The boys were sitting around a little fire stove, making tea and sweet potatoes. I sat down and started talking to Enock, Ally and Aguradonesta. As it's the New Year I asked them what their plans are. Aguradonesta said school; he's waiting for the results from the last tests and than he can go to form 5. Enock and Ally the same. Ally has to walk to school, for 1,5 hours (1 way).

Gideon asked me to come into the office. He showed me stuff the boys made. Bracelets, necklaces, greeting cards (which they painted pictures on).

He gave me a necklace as a good bye present and a pictures Charles has painted for me (he wasn't here today, so he couldn't give it to me). I was touched; this was so nice and unexpected. He wrote "to Agnes from Charles, Nickname "NoNo"; "YesYes" ☺ " (NoNo was his nickname, so everyone always said NoNo, YesYes...)

I said goodbye to everyone, promised I'll come back some day and than we left. It was sad, cos just when I got to know them I had to leave.

So I had my farewell dinner at the house, everyone enjoyed the cake, we took a group photo as a memory and than went to bed. For my last night in Tanzania.
Usiku mwema! Good night.

So what can I say, this trip was amazing!

We, who have everything, forget how lucky we actually are.

For me it was a great experience to be there for the 2 weeks. To live from the food which is there at that moment, no TV, no internet (well there was an internet café, but to open a page took like half an hour, so I just left it), cold showers, reading with a candle light in the evening, cos the electricity got cut off again... actually I felt very relaxed up there. No one is rushing, I had time to read, to make a bracelet, and just sit on my bed for hours and thinking about stuff. I never really find that time in my normal life. When my cell phone is ringing non-stop, bbm and what's app messages coming in.

People in Tanzania, the ones I met, were not stressed, they were smiling and happy. Even thou they had nothing, they weren't complaining. They were happy for what they did have and not unhappy for what they didn't have.

It was one of the most beautiful things to see the joy in a little child's eyes when giving them a small plastic ball.

These children have to have to get a chance to do sth with their lives. But as they have to pay for school it's impossible for an orphan to attend it and without education it's difficult for everyone to do sth. So they need someone to support them.

We have to work together to help them. Also to create awareness of HIV. To educate the people.

And this is what Mackrine does. She goes to the Massai once a week to talk to the women. To talk to the man. Helping the people with HIV, supporting the orphans and the kids from CCFT.