

Report about my IAESTE-internship at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology  
in Nyeri, Kenya from 2<sup>nd</sup> Aug to 24<sup>th</sup> Sep 2021

**WORK – please share with us an outline about the work experience obtained during your internship**

The beginning of my internship turned out to be a little jungle through the unknown Kenyan systems because there had been a student strike at the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT) a few days before my arrival. Due to that, the government had closed the university, and my original workplace, the Medical Centre on campus, was left with significantly less work. So, my supervisor had the idea to attach me to different health facilities in Nyeri town. In Kenya, you need letters from an authority to be attached somewhere as an intern. Thus, I was sent to the Head of Department of Health Services of the County Government of Nyeri with a letter from DeKUT to introduce myself and get another letter for my attachments at the different public health facilities. With these letters, I could then independently introduce myself at the various health facilities.

I experienced this letter-principle quite positively on the one hand. Especially when you compare it with lengthy HR processes in Germany, where it's rather undesired to get an intern without knowing him before. It was a great experience that I could just show up at the facilities with my letters on Monday mornings. All the facilities always welcomed me with open arms, and everyone was happy about me joining their work. But on the other hand, I can't deny it also faced me with some challenges at first in finding my way through a new country full of unknown names of all the different institutions and contact persons I got sent to. – At this point, I also want to thank the IAESTE DeKUT-members and my student buddy very much for helping me through public transport and finding the right institutions in my first week! Also, it could be a little lengthy that I always started introducing myself at the chief office of each facility with my letters. I got then directed down the hierarchies until I reached the final persons who could fulfill my interests and objectives. Thus, at new sections of my internship, I spent Mondays, and occasionally Tuesdays walking from offices to offices, waiting for the next contact persons or being sent home after half a day because they were out of the office that day.

But after overcoming these challenges, I got rewarded with a gorgeous chance and experience of an extensive insight into the Kenyan health system. During my internship period, I have worked with the County Health Management Team and the Sub-County Health Management Team at the Department of Health Services of the County Government of Nyeri, with the Health Records and Information Department at the Nyeri Referral Hospital, and with the Accounting at Olive Hill Surgical Centre. During that, I gained lots of exciting insights into public health, prevention, health promotion, epidemiology, data collection, processing, and evaluation, and healthcare financing in Kenya. So, the at first chaotic (for me as a German) new cultural environment and working world enabled me an internship tailored to my interests and objectives at the end. Thus, in my IAESTE-internship, I got many new insights and perspectives into a completely new healthcare system beyond Germany and Europe.

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**EXPERIENCE – please tell us a bit about your internship (free time, travel, culture, accommodation, lifestyle, ...)**

I lived at the Kimathi Student Centre Hostels next to the DeKUT campus. The salary covered the accommodation costs. The room equipment included a bed, a desk, and a shelf, and latrine toilets and showers were available in a shared bathroom for the floor. At first, it took me some days to adjust to the new environment with no heater, a hard mattress, and cold shower water. But again, the IAESTE DeKUT-members and fellow students in the dormitory were very helpful, lent me additional blankets, and showed me how to use the water tank in the garden to get warm water for showering. So, I started feeling comfortable in my new home very soon. Kimathi Student Centre Hostels also include a small canteen for breakfast and warm food just downstairs from the dorm rooms. The only thing I was missing was not having a shared kitchen with a fridge for my own grocery food and cooking (I could just store small snacks in the dorm room).

During the week, I shared a lot of their lifestyle with the fellow Kenyan students and IAESTE DeKUT-members, who invited the IAESTE-interns over for cooking or movies. Also, I joined Swahili classes and outdoor training at the university's challenge course, which was both really fun!

At the weekends, I made many trips with the other IAESTE-interns and sometimes Kenyan students (mostly weekend trips to Kenyan sightseeing spots were unfortunately too expensive for the local student budget). During my stay, I went to Diani Beach in Mombasa, hiking in Mount Kenya national park, safari in Nairobi national park, Nairobi city, the Mau Mau caves, the equator, and Aberdare national park. It was just quite a little challenge that, unfortunately, the local IAESTE committee didn't organise activities or trips during my stay, probably because of the strike and the closed campus. But with the support of some helpful fellow students at the dormitory and especially DeKUT's awesome outdoor coordinator, we got to experience the incredible variety of Kenyan landscape, from sandy beaches over cool forests to impressive mountains.

**DISCOVER – please tell us a bit about cultural expression in the receiving country**

Food – after a short disappointment as a coffee lover about just finding instant coffee at most places (actually Kenya exports most of its coffee rather than drinking it), I soon discovered my new favour for chai (tea) with milk (combined with always great conversations with Kenyans). Next to Chapati, Githeri, and Mukimo, especially the fruits were something I'll really miss in Kenya.

Landscape – "*so a few desserts, huh?*" was a common reaction to my internship plan. I can confirm Kenya is definitely not that, but full of beaches, forests, mountains, savannahs, and incredible wildlife. I'd really recommend visiting this astonishing county!

People – I really got to appreciate the slowed down and less hectic Kenyan "Hakuna Matata"-mentality that no struggle is as bad as it seems. "There are no problems" in Kenya are always just a sit-down and cup of tea away. It was a great experience that no matter how busy some people were, I was always warmly welcomed and appreciated everywhere I got in Kenya.