

Travel diary ✈

MALAWI



Supporting Alliance for African Mobility

FROM: Spain, San Viator

TO: Malawi, Don Bosco Youth Technical Institute

12/10/2021 - 21/10/2021

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Travel diary

📍 **Malawi**

Let's discover our two mobility experts

*Alfredo Garmendia and Ainhoa de la Cruz are the perfect team! Their expertise in mobility projects and their enthusiasm make them great SAAM ambassadors in **Malawi**. Let's get to know them!*

ALFREDO GARMENDIA

Head of the International Affairs in San Viator

I am Alfredo Garmendia, Head of the International Affairs of Centro San Viator, where I have been working for the last 20 years. I have a bachelor's degree in Anglo-Germanic studies.

For the last 18 years I have combined my job as project manager with teaching to young students with fewer opportunities, so somehow I work mixing two of my passions.

From our department, we lead different initiatives into Erasmus+ - Youth, School, VET, adult and Higher Education - and others, such as AMIF, etc. Our long experience in EU projects has been determining to establish solid networks, especially in the Automotive and Third Sector.

We are currently involved in some "extraordinary" projects as the COVE on inclusion GIVE-Governance for Inclusive Vocational Excellence, MOVET-Mobility for VET in Europe (Second pilot VET mobility scheme for the Western Balkans) and SAAM.



AINHOA DE LA CRUZ

Head of the Social Inclusion Department in Centro San Viator

I am Ainhoa de la Cruz, Head of the Social Inclusion Department in Centro San Viator, where I have been working for the last 22 years.

I have a Bachelor's Degree in Pedagogy and a Master in Therapeutic Pedagogy. My job in San Viator has always been related to people with fewer opportunities, especially to people with intellectual disabilities and/or mental illness.

I lead different projects focused mainly in improving the employability of people by designing innovative training for people with special needs, based in individual study paths and WBL. I'm a passionate of education, especially when inclusion of diversity takes place.



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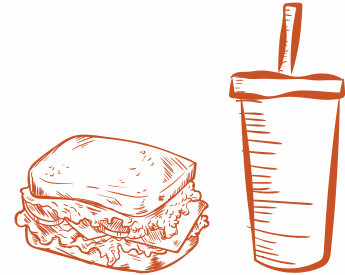
Travel diary

Arriving in Malawi

Tuesday, October 12th

Our trip was very long, **30 hours** and had **two complicated transfers**. We left our hometown to arrive in Paris at about 13:00h.

As we already knew Charles de Gaulle airport has a poor offer of restaurants, we took **some sandwiches** with us. There is a Relay where you can find cold drinks not very expensive. The safety control was easy and fast.



After a 7,5 hour-transfer we started embarking the Kenyan Airways aircraft. The flight was simply perfect. The crew was very friendly and the catering tasty.



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Travel diary

Lilongwe, Malawi

Wednesday, October 13th

The flight to **Nairobi** took us 7 hours so we arrived early in the morning of the 13th. Once we landed we had to pass a PCR and safety control.

After 7 hours, we got our last flight **from Nairobi to Lilongwe** (as we got down the plane continued to Mozambique) that took us 2 hours. Once we landed, we had to walk to a “**provisional-test-tent**” to check the PCR before officially entering the country. **The process is very fast and professional.** Then we had other controls such as the visa control.

Mr Precious Chilupsya - vice principal - and **Mr Joseph Phelatu** - Job Service Officer - were waiting for us at the airport's entrance. From there we went to visit an electrical company where we met the son of the owner and some of their employees. **Finally at about 18:00 we reached Don Bosco.**



Don Bosco Youth Technical School Lilongwe is located in area 23 a low-income neighbourhood. The campus and premises of Don Bosco are amazing and the house where the Salesians live and where we were accommodated are inside it. We lived with the **Salesian community** that was composed of **3 Fathers, one Brother and more than a dozen novices.**

Meals were very good and tasty! 

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Travel diary ➤

📍 **Lilongwe, Malawi**

Thursday, October 14th

We woke up with the daylight and the Salesians songs. At 7:45 we went to the **morning assembly** where they prayed and sang us a welcome song.



Then we moved to the principal's office, **Fr Michael's**, where we had a meeting with him, **Precious** and **Joseph**. They told us about the school's history, organisation and discussed the agenda.



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📍 **Lilongwe, Malawi**

Thursday, October 14th

Afterwards **we visited the school and met some students.** We had an interesting chat with students and teachers.



Don Bosco Youth Technical School Lilongwe has about 650 students (figures are lower because of COVID) in Electrical Engineering, Accountancy, Automobile Mechanics, Brick-Laying, Carpentry & Joinery, Fashion Arts & Beauty, Hospitality Management and Information & Communication Technology. Students enter after 16 and stay for 3 years. About one of them in a company.



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📍 **Lilongwe, Malawi**

Thursday, October 14th

One hour later we visited a second company, the **hotel River Side** where we met with the director as well as with some former students of Don Bosco.



We had lunch at 12:30 (the usual time) and at 14:30 we met **Ms Maria Angeles Soriano, the honorary consul of Spain in Malawi**. Spain's embassy is based in Harare, Zimbabwe.



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📍 **Lilongwe, Malawi**

Friday, October 15th



Mother's day in Malawi, bank holiday and a big party.

Women wear amazing clothes full of colour and nice patterns, some of them even with their children's pictures.

After a fast breakfast at about 7:30, at 8:00 we met with three managers from the school: **Electric engineering, Hospitality Management and Automobile Mechanics** to let them know about SAAM and start working on their mobility to Europe. We showed them first our premises (**Centro San Viator**) and equipments and then we went deeply into **SAAM**: aims, methodology, phases, etc. We learnt about their interest and **expectations** as well as their **fears**.

As soon as we finished, about 10:00 we set off towards **Salima**, a city next to Lake Malawi where there are many resorts that employ Don Bosco's former students but also actual ones (kind of dual system).



Lake Malawi is the natural border of 3 countries: **Mozambique, Tanzania and Malawi**. This beautiful place received many international tourists before COVID and is an important income of foreign currency.

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📍 **Lilongwe, Malawi**

Friday, October 15th

Upon arriving at the Lake, **we visited the Hotel Blue Resort**, a beautiful hotel near the lake where its manager showed us the facilities and explained his plans for the future. **After having lunch in front of the lake, we talked to some Don Bosco's students who explained to us what their job was at the hotel and why they had decided to leave the capital to go to work at the lake.** The main reason is that in the **tourism and hospitality sector job opportunities are greater.**

To conclude the day in Salima, **we visited another larger hotel**, with capacity for concerts and conferences, run by the same person. They offer us to taste typical Malawian coffee (really good) under a huge mango tree. **We took the moment to ask the hotel manager why he had hired so many Don Bosco students.** The answer did not surprise us after the days that we had been living with his team:

The professionalism of the students as well as the complete training they have makes them very good candidates to be hired, not only in their hotels but also in other hotels of different chains



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📍 **Lilongwe, Malawi**

Saturday, October 16th

Today was one of the most expected days for us so at 8 in the morning we were ready to, together with **Linda (Don Bosco's Head of Finance)** and **Joseph**, visit four **students and their families who have been shortlisted to travel to Europe** in the first flow.

All families welcomed us with special affection. **Their faces reflected the pride they feel for their children mixed with a certain expectation and nervousness.** Families in Malawi have the father as the head of the family and he is usually the one leading the conversation.



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📍 Lilongwe, Malawi

Saturday, October 16th

Some of the families explained to us that in order to meet Don Bosco's expenses, the children with the best grades receive a **TEVETA** scholarship that covers 85% of the expenses. The remaining 15% must be paid by the family and some of them face big problems to find the money.

The houses are very humble, three of them in very poor neighborhoods, with dirty floors or slightly covered by a layer of cement. They have two rooms, one for the parents and one for the children (no matter if 3 or 7). The bathroom is shared by several families and is outside the house. They cook on the street, making a fire with wood or charcoal.



Only one of the 4 families has a brick and concrete dwelling with a television and sofas. The father, currently unemployed, worked for years driving a truck on international African routes, which allowed the family to improve their quality of life. However, as a result of **COVID**, the company closed and he lost his job.

All the families have lovingly prepared their homes, cleaning and ordering every detail to make us feel our best. **We explained to each of them SAAM and the possibility that their daughters had to travel to Europe to improve their professional and soft skills and knowledge. The response of all of them was very positive, in some cases they even shed tears of emotion.**

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Travel diary

Lilongwe, Malawi

Saturday, October 16th

At the end of the visits, we went with **Joseph and Linda** to eat at a typical restaurant. Following the tradition, we ate with our hands, specifically with the right hand, leaving the left clean for any other task that we need to perform.

Linda and Joseph drop us off after lunch in **Old Town**, the commercial part of Lilongwe. It is a safe place, but sometimes the pressure from African habitant merchants trying to sell you their products can be a bit overwhelming. For about two hours we walk through its crowded streets, where the bustle of the people mixes with the street stalls where they sell prepared food, drinks and handicrafts.



In Malawi, tea and coffee are very typical, as well as their colored fabrics that they turn into skirts and dresses in a traditional way: they buy the fabric in the market and take it to a couturier so that they can make what they want. It is very cheap and the city is full of places where, with simple sewing machines, they make all kinds of clothes.

When we arrived at Don Bosco we found **the Campus full of young people practicing sports**. Football, basketball, handball and volleyball matches are mixed in all its facilities in the center. Fathers, Brothers and novices participate, playing with the youth of the neighborhood, being active members of the community.

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Travel diary

Lilongwe, Malawi

Sunday, October 17th

After a quick breakfast with the novices, **we got ready to go to mass**. On Sunday the Fathers did not join us for breakfast because from 6:00 in the morning they have mass in different parishes.

In the Don Bosco parish, **mass in English is at 6:00 a.m. and the next two at 08:00 and 10:00 a.m. are in their local language, Chichewa**. The families dress up, wearing their best clothes and they all go together. We decided to go to the youth mass which is at 10:00 in the morning. During it, we were able to see the **youth choirs** and the **kids dance groups** that dance in front of the altar.

At the end, we went to see the **neighborhood market**, where once again, mainly women are the ones who sell their products from around 4:30 in the morning.

Women are great entrepreneurs, opening small businesses to sell products, fruits, vegetables, cooked products, etc... to bring some money to the family. Working from sunrise to sunset and on weekends you can see the children helping them. The atmosphere in the market is cheerful and calm, very safe with no vendors pressing.

For lunch we went to the home of the vice-principal, **Precious**, who invited us to join him and his family for Sunday lunch. His wife prepared different typical **Malawian dishes** for us and we chatted with them about how they had met, their life there, etc. After lunch, we joined the games that were being played on the Campus. We were encouraging **Brother Cris** who participated with the neighborhood youth group in a basketball game.

At the end of the game we went again to walk around the neighborhood and we had dinner with **Father Martin**, of Vietnamese origin, about his life and how he got to Malawi. **Father Michael** also told us about their origins and they explained to us the long way they have traveled to become **Salesian Fathers**.

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📍 **Lilongwe, Malawi**

Monday, October 18th

Around 10:00 in the morning we met with **Daniele, Delegate of the European Union in the Social Sector and Bartelijne, head of the working group of the VETtoolbox Commission** as well as with two of her collaborators who were in Malawi from Brussels to supervise some projects that are being developed in the country. During the conversation **we presented SAAM and Don Bosco as a collaborating center in the country.** They presented us the work they do in Malawi and made many suggestions to facilitate visa procedures for both students and teachers.



After lunch, we met with **Father Michael, Precious and Joseph** to begin defining the content and material that we are going to generate for the staff traveling to Europe next year 2022. **First we confirmed the professional fields**, in the case of Don Bosco Malawi: **Electricity and Automotive.** In total, 7 teachers have to travel to Spain and 3 to Italy, including the teachers who will accompany the young people in their mobility.

After this meeting, **a health worker from a subsidized center went to Don Bosco to do the PCR right there.** They charged us **\$100 each** and requested a copy of the **passport** as well as a **personal telephone number** and an **email address.**

During dinner we celebrated Ainhua's birthday and the novices prepared a dance to celebrate the birthday, accompanied by a large cake. It was a very special moment that we all lived intensely!!

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📍 Lilongwe, Malawi

Tuesday, October 19th

After breakfast we went to the **Ministry of Labour** where we had a meeting with Richard Chirwa, Director of the Work Area and Aubrey Matamba, collaborator in the ministry. Currently, there is no person occupying the post of Minister of Labor because the previous one was dismissed in June and no one has been appointed yet.



Alfredo presented SAAM and a debate was opened where they asked us many questions, taking an interest in the project and the selection process that was followed to work with Don Bosco as the VET center of reference in Malawi. We also took the opportunity to **clarify doubts about the government's involvement** in the project for the future, opening the doors for collaboration.

After lunch, we went to **TEVETA, Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority**. We were welcomed by Elliot PW Mulanje, Director of Quality Assurance at TEVETA. He was accompanied by two collaborators from the Training Development Division, Penjani Nyirenda and Muti Chapuma, and Jürgen Henkel, a German who collaborates with them through a project with Koblenz Chamber of Skilled Crafts. After presenting our project they told us about the Reference Framework of **TVET in Malawi**.

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Travel diary ✈️

📍 **Lilongwe, Malawi**

Wednesday, October 20th

A very emotional day. As we were getting ready to leave, a lot of friends came to the house with presents. They made us cry more than once.

It is very difficult to describe with words our experience in Malawi because describing the feelings is complicated. We can only say that Africa knocks down once and again many of our prejudices. Prejudices that make us feel ashamed.



SEE YOU SOON!

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