



### **Fellow Report: 3-Month**

This report focuses on the specifics of your fellowship experience thus far. The following questions are meant to help you evaluate your first three months in Africa. Your comments will also be used to assess partner organizations, site placements, stipends, and overall logistics. The information you include may be shared with the Board of Directors and future Fellows. We may use your comments to give feedback to partner organizations as well. Please indicate when information is not to be shared outside of PiAf and rest assured that we will honor your request.

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#### **Your Personal Information**

Organization: Mpala Research Centre  
 City, Country: Nanyuki, Kenya

Fellowship start date: July 15 2013

Anticipated fellowship end date: July 2014

#### **Your Work**

1. What is your job title?

Assistant to the Director, Outreach Coordinator

2. What are your primary responsibilities? Please list your job duties as you would on a résumé.

- Coordinate and evaluate after-school conservation program at 11 rural public Kenyan schools
- Assist on the Mpala Live! project by coordinating information on wildlife species, developing lesson plans for school groups, and sketching a map of the studied region
- Facilitate reusable sanitary pad distribution pilot program for female students
- Implement “Mpala Girls Empowerment Project” including lecture series, shadowing opportunities and graduate internships to provide mentorship and conservation education
- Maintain relationships with researchers and donors
- Manage the Adopt-an-Elephant Program by monitoring elephants and writing updates
- Facilitate the activities of Alakara, Mpala’s women’s beading cooperative, to expand community empowerment
- Encourage community education of local research as the editor and a contributor of the Mpala Memos newsletter

3. Did you receive any sort of orientation, handover or “onboarding” when you started your fellowship? By whom?

Yes, the previous fellow has remained at Mpala under another project. She spent the first month training me for the position, and has been a huge help with any questions or concerns I have had thus far.

4. Describe a representative day at work.

My day to day varies greatly. Every morning begins with recording the temperature and rainfall. The rest of the day, however, can involve monitoring elephants in the field, creating lesson plans or surveys for the after-school conservation clubs, coordinating events with the Daraja Academy, putting together photos and donor information for the Mpala calendar, editing and compiling articles for the Mpala Memos newsletter, teaching or meeting with teachers at the local schools, creating elephant updates for Adopt-an-Elephant, or completing any other administrative task asked by the director (ex. putting together lists of student groups who have visited Mpala, creating a Facebook of Mpala staff, etc.).

5. Please describe in greater detail 1-2 specific projects you have undertaken or accomplishments you have made so far.

My main project for the year is to complete an M&E report for the Northern Kenya Conservation Clubs. I am focusing on three areas of impact: the teachers, the students, and the greater community. To begin, I am looking at the teachers, evaluating whether teachers in the clubs have become more effective educators as a result of the workshops we have held and the curriculum guide we have created. I started by delivering a self-evaluation checklist to each club teacher. The checklist asks teachers to record what they did for each lesson (ie. a game, a story, a project), and then to rate the lesson on how interactive it was, if it fully involved the students, etc. After one month, I returned with a survey for the teachers on their use of the checklist. So far, results have shown that teachers are using the checklists to vary their lessons and self-assess the success of the lesson. The hope is that with continued use, this simple tool will help teachers eventually progress away from rote teaching in not only their club lessons but in their school lessons as well. After three months, I will survey the teachers again, as well as their students, to evaluate if their teaching styles and methods have changed.

6. On average, how many hours per week do you work?  
45-50

7. What is your office environment like? Please comment on the size and structure of the office(s) where you do most of your work.

I work in a small office in one of the lab buildings on Mpala. The office is small but cozy, with plenty of room for what I need it for. One of the benefits of my office is that it locks, so I can keep valuables in it without worrying about their safety. The office is located on the Mpala Research Centre, which is a small, fenced-in region on the Mpala Ranch. It is in walking distance to my room, to the library, to the dining hall, etc.

8. To whom do you report? (Please specify name & title of all applicable persons.)

I report mainly to the Director of Mpala. However, I also work with the person who is in charge of the Northern Kenya Conservation Clubs, and the director of the Mpala Live! project.

9. Did your supervisor (or another person in your office) establish goals, objectives for your fellowship year?

Both of my supervisors have asked for a comprehensive report of the Northern Kenya Conservation Clubs as the main objective for my fellowship year. Otherwise, I have had the freedom to develop my own goals and objectives for the year.

10. Do you receive adequate direction/support to perform your job? How often do you check in with your supervisor?

Yes, my supervisor is very accessible, and provides excellent direction and support. As the previous fellow is still at Mpala, however, I often find it easiest to go to her for assistance when needed.

11. What opportunities for travel has your work included so far? Do you anticipate work-related opportunities to travel in the future? How does your organization handle the arrangements/costs/plans for your work-related travel?

My work schedule is very flexible, so I can easily fit in opportunities for travel. My work itself does not necessitate travel except to Nanyuki town to get supplies for the schools. I cover all travel costs on my own.

12. What goals do you have for your work in the next 6 months?

My first goal is to get more involved in the Adopt-an-Elephant program through the actual monitoring side. In general, I hope to gain not only more field experience, but also experience in the lab conducting research.

I also hope to complete the main part of the teacher evaluation for the NKCC M&E report, and to get the student study underway.

Finally, I aim to make both our programs with the Daraja school and with Alakara more productive and effective, and to increase collaboration with both.

## Your Arrival in Africa

13. How did you travel to your host country? Please be specific in terms of what airline(s) you flew, what cities you flew to/from, how much your plane tickets cost, and how you found/purchased your tickets. *For example: "I purchased my ticket from the Cape to Cairo travel agency based in Washington, DC. I flew on British Airways from JFK to London, London to Johannesburg, and Johannesburg to Maputo. I have also booked a return flight for next May to return through the same cities. The round trip ticket cost \$2,277."*  
I booked my flight on kayak.com with KLM airways. I traveled from JFK to Amsterdam to Dubai to Nairobi. My one-way ticket cost \$1000. I have booked a return round-trip flight on kayak.com with Turkish Airways from Nairobi to Turkey to JFK for \$1250.
14. Please describe your visa arrangements.
- i. What kind of visa/work permit do you have?  
I obtained a 3-month tourist visa upon arriving in Kenya, and then obtained a year-long pupil's pass
  - ii. How did you obtain it?  
I got the 3-month visa upon entering the country at the airport. For the pupil's pass, I obtained a research permit, submitted paperwork to Nyayo House, and then traveled to Nairobi to pick up the permit.
  - iii. What costs were associated with obtaining it?  
The tourist visa cost 50\$  
The pupil's pass cost 15,000 shillings (175\$)  
The round-trip to Nairobi cost 5,000 shillings (60\$)
  - iv. Did you pay these costs or were they covered by your organization?  
I paid these costs
  - v. Any suggestions to help future Fellows navigate this process?  
Get all of your paperwork in as soon as possible. I submitted most of my paperwork to the previous fellow before I arrived so that I could send it to Nairobi as soon as I got into the country.  
The cost for the pupil's pass has also increased tremendously this year, so it has put a large strain on my budget to cover it; I would ask for assistance in covering this cost.
15. What vaccinations were you required to obtain prior to your departure? How much did your vaccinations cost?  
Meningitis, typhoid – both were obtained through my university so I am not sure of the cost.
16. Comment on your arrival and first week in Africa. Any improvements that could streamline the assimilation process for future Fellows?  
Coming in to Kenya, my flight was very delayed, but the driver picking me up stayed at the airport until my arrival. Having his number ahead of time would have been useful for arriving.  
Fortunately, I have worked at Mpala before, so I was familiar with the culture and accommodations. It can be a bit intimidating coming in during the summer because the center is full of student groups, so I recommend getting to know the other long-term researchers who will be with you throughout your year.

## Your Housing & Local Transportation

17. Is housing provided by and/or paid for by your organization?  
Yes, housing and food is provided and paid for.
18. Please describe your living arrangements. Include the following details:
- i. Are you living in a house, apartment, guest room, etc.?  
I am living in a single room in the Princeton Dorms. It has a large bed, a desk, and two dressers.  
There is a communal bathroom next to my room.
  - ii. Are you living alone or with roommates?  
I am living alone, though there are other researchers in the dorms next to me.

- iii. How did you find your housing?  
Housing is provided by Mpala.
- iv. How do you travel between your home and your work?  
Walking!

19. Is your local transportation adequate? Please briefly describe your options and their related costs.  
Mpala is located about an hour outside of Nanyuki town. There is no public transport into town; a private taxi costs about 25\$ each way. On rare occasions I am able to catch a ride with another researcher into town.

### Your Surroundings

20. Do you live and work in safe areas?  
The Research Centre is surrounded by an elephant fence, so while some animals do get in, it is mostly safe. We have askaris (guards) who work day and night to ensure our safety on the center. As Mpala is located an hour outside of town, wild animals are the only real safety concern.
21. What has been your experience with crime so far?  
I have not had any experience with crime so far.
22. Describe the crime and general security situation within your city/town. Could you recommend specific areas future Fellows might consider for safe housing? What about areas that should be avoided?  
Traveling to or from Nanyuki town at night is not advised. During the day, Nanyuki is mostly safe.
23. Comment on the local languages, your proficiency in them (if any), and your subsequent ability to get by.  
The main language is Kiswahili, though most workers at Mpala speak English so it is entirely possible to get by without it. Many people in the region also speak tribal languages, such as Kikuyu or Kimaasai. That said, locals greatly appreciate any effort you make in communicating in Kiswahili (plus it is a very fun language to learn!)
24. Comment on appropriate clothing for work and outside of work.  
On the Research Centre, you can generally wear any type of clothing (jeans, shorts, etc.). Outside of the center, more modest clothing is necessary. Field clothes are useful for work in the field, and long skirts are good for visiting the schools.
25. How have you been spending your free time? What kinds of opportunities are available for socializing in your city/town?  
On the center, we watch a lot of movies, play games, or read. We also travel to town frequently, where we can shop or go out to a nice restaurant. There are a few bars in town, and occasionally we meet up with the PiAf fellow and other ex-pats residing in Nanyuki to spend the night out.

### Your Reflections

26. Any frustration with living arrangements or with work? Any frustrations outside of work?  
The living arrangements are great, although I would love to have a kitchen to cook for myself.
27. Has there been anything that you have needed but have not been able to locate or acquire?  
No, almost everything you could need is accessible in town.
28. How did you deal/are you dealing with “culture shock”?  
Because this is my third year in Kenya, and the Centre is rather isolated, I have not had much experience with ‘culture shock’. The biggest difficulty has been trying to work around ‘African Time’.
29. What about your experience thus far has been the most...

**Surprising?:**

The amount of time I spend off of Mpala. Going out to the schools, the field, or even to pick up supplies or run errands in town, I leave the center much more often than I had anticipated.

**Pleasant?:**

The flexibility of my schedule. As long as I get my tasks finished, I am free to assist on other projects, to take trips, and to work on my own objectives.

**Frustrating?:**

Getting access to cars. I do not have my own car here, so trips to town, or even into the field to complete an assignment, can be derailed because I am unable to find a free vehicle.

30. **So far, what would you consider to be your biggest success or proudest moment?**  
Completing my first Mpala Memos, including putting together an entirely new design for the newsletter, was a big success.
31. **What would you consider to be your greatest challenge or biggest learning opportunity so far?**  
The head of the elephant monitoring team went on leave for 3 weeks, and I was asked to take over his position. Learning how to not only drive to the many locations that he does, but to also successfully survey the elephants I find, has been incredibly challenging but an amazing opportunity for field work.
32. **What are the Top 3 things you miss the most from the US? (Can be food, amenities, movies, etc. Cannot be people—although we know you miss us in the PiAf office terribly, and we thank you! We miss you, too.)**  
My dog  
Bagels  
Reliable internet
33. **What are the Top 3 things about life in Africa that beat out the US?**  
The wildlife  
Cheap pirated movies  
Sunsets
34. **Please comment on your relationship with the Princeton in Africa office. Include the following details:**
- i. **Are you receiving sufficient support, materials, and information from us?**  
Yes, the Princeton in Africa office has been very available with support and information
  - ii. **What could we improve?**  
No improvements!

**Your Stipend & Budget**

35. **If you are receiving stipend monies directly from your partner organization, how are you being paid?**
- i. **Biweekly, monthly, etc?**  
It is a monthly stipend, though I received the full amount at the beginning of my fellowship
  - ii. **In US dollars or in another currency?**  
US dollars
  - iii. **In cash or deposited directly into a bank account? Local account or US account?**  
I received a check that I deposited into my US account
36. **Have you undertaken additional work to meet expenses?**  
No

37. Please provide a sample monthly budget of your average expenses (in US dollars).

Rent	\$0
Utilities	\$0
Phone	\$5
Internet	\$0
Transportation	\$100
Fitness	\$0
Entertainment	\$5
Food	\$50
Travel	\$50
Medications	\$0
Laundry	\$0
Other (specify)	\$

Other one-time or infrequent expenses not included in your monthly budget above (e.g. visa expenses)?

The incoming tourist visa cost 50\$

The pupil's pass cost 175\$

Travel to pick up the pupil's pass cost 60\$