

Report on the Trainer's Trip to Kilifi Town, Kilifi County

April 26 – May 13, 2024

This is Andreas's first trainer's trip to Kenya and Aran's second trip, having already visited Kenya in 2021, where he taught wildfire fighting among other things.

In addition to his role with the European Support Team (EST), Andreas, 37, from Pulheim, North Rhine-Westphalia, works as a civil engineer and project manager at Deutsche Bahn AG. Aran, 27, from Bad Vilbel, Hesse, is successfully employed as an engineer for fire protection systems at VdS Schadenverhütung GmbH. The project preparation was coordinated by Christian Hagedorn, the flights were booked by Stephan Wawrok, and the contact with the local Fire Chief Mr. Bacha was made by Aran. The trip was funded by the Bingo Umweltstiftung.

The outbound flight from Frankfurt to Mombasa was direct and lasted eight hours. The departure was on Friday evening at 8:10 PM, and we met in person for the first time at check-in.



1 Departure in FRA with Condor

After arriving in Mombasa on Saturday, April 27, early in the morning, we went through the mandatory passport and visa checks before being allowed to leave the terminal. We were greeted personally by the Fire Chief, who, along with the driver John, a government employee, warmly welcomed us and helped carry our luggage.



2 On the way to Kilifi

The journey led to Kilifi, a county on the east coast of Kenya with about 1.5 million inhabitants, comparable in size to Thuringia. After about an hour and a half drive, during which the Fire Chief provided useful information about his county, we arrived at the Baobab Sea Lodge, which had been pre-tested and approved by Christian and Stephan.

The purpose of the trip was to meet the new management of the Kilifi fire department, inspect the new fire station, review materials, further build relationships, and strengthen the presence of the EST. There was no specific plan, and an agenda had to be created "on-the-fly," which ultimately focused on practical training.

On the first day, after checking into the hotel, we visited the new station with Fire Chief Mr. Bacha and met the first firefighters. Subsequently, we drove with John, the driver, to the stations in Malindi and Watamu to inspect them and make an initial inventory. It quickly became apparent that



4 Neue Feuerwache in Kilifi

both the stations and the equipment were rudimentary. In Watamu, six firefighters shared a small room with bunk beds, which used to be a guardhouse, and there was a lack of material.

The fire truck in Watamu had been out of service for days due to a dead battery, which the Fire Chief immediately remedied. It should be noted that Watamu is to be rebuilt as a fire station, but currently, the truck still stands alone in a field.



3 l.t.r: Mr. Bacha (Fire Chief), Aran Tabandeh, Andreas Heinrichs (both EST)



5 Aran in front of the entrance to the fire station in Watamu with staff quarters in the background

In Malindi, the oldest station in the county, built in 1996, a similar picture emerged: the fire station, equipped with Chinese fire trucks, was in a dilapidated condition. There were not enough breathing apparatuses (BAs), fireproof gloves, shoes, or hoses (C and B with Storz couplings). Nine firefighters on shift shared the bunk beds. Highlights were the so-called "Water Bowser," two Chinese tanker trucks each with a capacity of 10,000 liters of water.



6 fire station Malindi; Chinese fire engine

The first day ended with another visit to the station in Kilifi, where a rough plan for the next two training weeks was developed. However, due to the inadequate equipment, comprehensive training was not readily possible.

The second day, Sunday, April 28, was free for us and was spent at the hotel and a restaurant visit at the nearby river mouth and the old port of Kilifi. The preferred mode of transportation: Boda Boda, a cheap, local motorcycle taxi available on every street corner.

On Monday, April 29, the actual training began at 8 AM, which, due to African punctuality, was delayed until 9 AM. A total of 18 motivated individuals attended the welcome session in the new, modern classroom, a number that remained constant throughout the training period.



7 Fire fighters with BA



8 assorted BAs for training

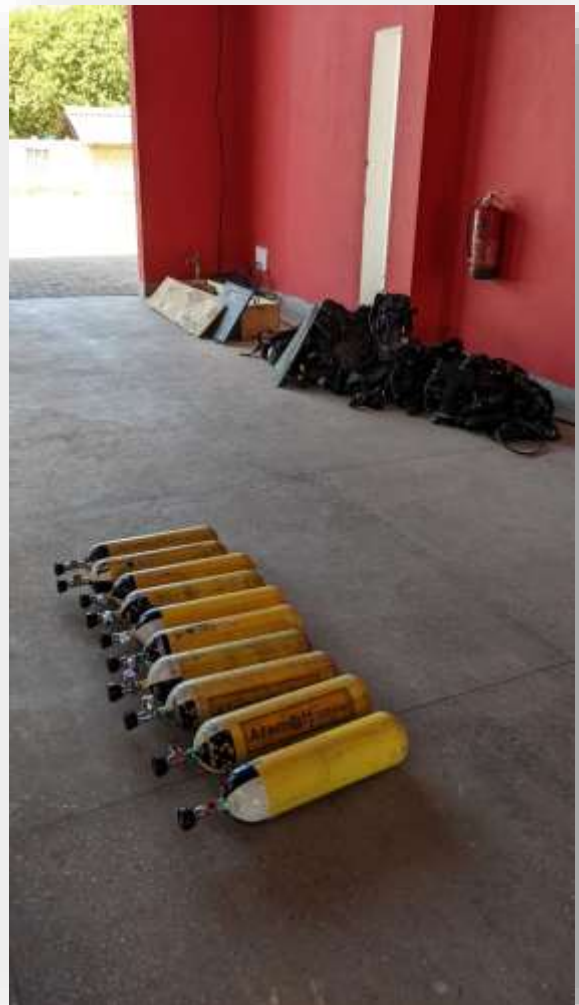
The Fire Fighter Crew consisted of six people: a machinist, an officer in charge, and four firefighters, plus a senior firefighter and the omnipresent Fire Chief Mr. Bacha at the station. The shifts lasted an entire week, during which the firefighters lived, ate, trained, and played billiards together. On Mondays at 9 AM, the shift change was carried out. So, a 24/7 station staffing! There is also a control center in the building, staffed by support staff.



9 Billiard table – common practice during off-time

During the first phase of training, the vehicles were inspected and deficiencies were discovered, such as a stuck equipment compartment, which was only opened and repaired through our intervention over the course of the week (notably, there were only two G compartments on this vehicle!). The inspection of the BAs, masks, and carrier plates revealed a mix of German, Chinese, and American materials and breathing air bottles that first had to be sorted for our training purposes. Empty bottles were set aside to be taken to Mombasa for refilling at the fire station. Unfortunately, this was not successful on the first attempt. A lack of full bottles remained a problem that could only be somewhat resolved in the second week.

A highlight of the first day was a real fire alarm, during which we trainers accompanied the firefighters to a deployment. The drive took about an hour



10 empty Bas sorted out for filling at Mombasa fire station



11 on mission call

(with the siren on), and it turned out that a reported building fire was just burning household goods. Due to a family feud, the fire department had been called, but upon arrival, they were not needed.

The journey was notable in that it first took 30 minutes on asphalt roads, then another 30 minutes on a dusty, unpaved road. At the end, we were met by a police escort to protect the firefighters from family members armed with AKs and machetes. It turned out that household goods were burning, which had already been extinguished/burned out before the fire department arrived, and we could turn around and make the long return journey.



12 drive to a fire call

Unfortunately, this was also the only deployment we participated in during the two weeks. Communication with the control center was interesting, as it was exclusively via mobile phone.

The following training days included BA refreshers and exercises according to FWDV3 with the goal of successfully conducting a firefighting attack with two lines and two teams under BA. This was successfully achieved by the end of the training period, with a film crew ordered by the governor recording the exercises in pouring rain (rainy season in Kenya).

A practical test at the end of the first week rewarded the firefighter who donned their PSA and BA the fastest and in the correct order with highly coveted Haribo gummy bears.



14 pump operator during training



13 special construction; divider with adaptor für connectin german and chinese couplings

The second week began with a new shift of six firefighters, some from the previous week. We conducted BA refreshers and exercises according to FWDV3. The morning roll call at 9 AM became noticeably more punctual, with only a 15-minute delay by the end of training. Push-ups as "punishment" for mistakes in exercises also became less frequent.



16 always lead from the front



15 training with technical rescue equipment

In the second week, training in technical assistance was added. The focus was on rescue from pits. The most common knots were demonstrated and practiced, as well as handling ladders. Although the procedure according to German FWDV10 was suggested, it was quickly dismissed in everyday practice.

We successfully rescued an injured person from a pit using a basket stretcher and fire ropes, which also had to be filmed by our own crew. Further rescue techniques, such as rappelling or rescue from great heights, could not be performed due to our lack of training and the absence of harnesses.

The last day was different than expected. Due to a night operation to recover a person missing in the floods, the shift team was not present. The fire engine had gotten stuck in the mud, so the crew had to spend the night on-site and could not see us off in person.

There were official words from the Minister of Environment and Infrastructure as well as the Fire Chief, and guest gifts alongside the obligatory group photo. Nevertheless, we were able to say goodbye satisfactorily and headed back to the hotel. The recovery of the crew was organized and accompanied personally by the minister.



17 Aran and Andreas in front of the whole fire crew

Unannounced visits from other ministers and an audience with Governor Mr. Gideon Mung'abo personally were also part of everyday life. It turned out that the governor has a German wife from near Trier and feels very connected to us as a German association. During the 15-minute photo session, general pleasantries were exchanged, the training was discussed, and the EST was introduced. He confirmed the good cooperation and promised to personally expedite the issue of imports and customs clearance of materials in containers in the future. The direct contact should be through Fire Chief Mr. Bacha.



*18 visiting the Governor of Kilifi County -
l.t.r. Mr. Gideon Mung`abo, Aran, Andreas*



Basically, the fire departments lack material, hoses, fire protection gloves, boots in men's sizes, and helmets. Where there was an urgent need, Mr. Bacha was constantly striving to find a solution, but firefighters are often tied up and have to improvise. Here, the Kenyan firefighters are professionals. Kilifi Town has the most modern fire station we saw during our trip and, according to some colleagues, even in all of eastern Kenya.

The goal should continue to be to support training with materials and trainers to build a functioning fire department and support system. Regular trips are necessary to ensure that the material reaches its intended destination.

After the training, we both wanted to add a week of recovery vacation, but unfortunately, the weather and the associated infrastructure damage thwarted our plans. Aran flew back to Frankfurt on Saturday, May 11, and Andreas's flight was the following Monday. The trip to the airport was also organized by the Fire Chief, and the opportunity was taken to deliver the empty breathing air bottles to the airport fire department in Mombasa for refilling.

Looking back, the training was successful despite the lack of material. The weather, with temperatures of up to 37 degrees in the shade and the rainy season, did not detract from this. The firefighters were highly motivated and would certainly have welcomed more training.

Overall, the trip was very educational and offered new perspectives for us, the association, and the Kenyan fire department.

Finally, a big thank you to the EST, chaired by Christian Hagedorn and Stephan Wawrok, as well as the Bingo Umweltstiftung, who made the organization and funding of the trip possible.

Some additional impressions from Kilifi:



20 Fire engine in Watamu



21 Fire truck at the entrance of Kilifi County most modern fire station



22 modern Gym



23 ropes and knots training



24 Pamoja Tujenge – let`s build together

"PAMOJA TUJENDE" - let's build together