



Not so idle after all

A former director of corporate communications, who risked being labelled a 'lazy bum' when he quit his job to join his wife in Mozambique, is now a homemaker and proud of it.

By STEPHEN NG

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SO, YOU are now a *tai-tai* husband?" asked a former colleague. To some, the thought of being a "house husband" may be mind-boggling but for me, the journey had started a year ago, when my good old buddy, Keong, had me thinking of possibilities.

We were chatting about my wife's future plan to travel and work in different countries after we got married.

"If I were in your shoes, I would give up my job and travel together with her!" he said.

I could not believe what I had heard.

Me? Resign? What about my career of 20 years? How can I abandon everything and travel to other parts of the world by merely "following my wife around"? By any Asian standard, I would be labelled a "lazy bum"!

Now that I'm into my fifth month in Mozambique, I look back with no regrets. My wife works as a consultant for a phone company which provides support service to a telecommunications company in Mozambique. We would travel together for the next two years to different countries around the globe.

Living here has given me invaluable insights into the African market for international students – especially since I had just resigned as director of corporate communications with a private college in Malaysia.

Knowing and understanding the culture in this part of Africa – not just Mozambique but Swaziland and South Africa – will be an advantage some day.

Mozambique and Swaziland, for example, are upcoming economies, which have potential for Malaysian companies seeking to venture into the African continent. The imageries of Africa – famine, war and AIDS – are but stereotypes created by the media.

I guess it's a matter of choice. Concerned friends are always asking: would I be able to get back into employment after two years? My answer: "Sure, why not?"

Having lived in different parts of the world, would I not be an additional bonus to my employers when I take up a senior management position?

American Evangeline Casqueiro, who is married to a white South African, tells me: "It is good for husband and wife to be together, instead of being separated geographically."

Another encouraging friend, Mario D'Offizi, who is assistant editor of *Sawubona* (South African Airway's inflight magazine), says he would gladly give up the corporate world to realise his own dreams, as I have.

"It takes courage to make changes and welcome new challenges after the comfort of the corporate zone," he adds.

After being a workaholic all these years though, it wasn't easy for me to quit and spend the whole day in a beach hotel in the capital city of Maputo.

But, from the first day that I arrived in Maputo, life has been really hectic. Being away from the hustle and bustle of corporate life meant that I could do all the things that I always wanted to.

To date, I have volunteered my services to a non-governmental agency involved in relief work. They have set up a factory to produce virgin coconut oil, which they call CocOleo Moz (Portuguese, for Coconut Oil of Mozambique).

Recently, I organised a picnic for a group of 15 orphans from Remar, a Christian agency for rehabilitation of marginalised children. We cleaned up the beach of Maputo and had games.

So, being a stay-home husband is really nothing like the image the word *tai tai* conjures. Although the beach facing the Mozambique Channel is just a stone's throw away, I'm often busy with my writing for various publications, and also providing content and maintaining an interactive website for a telecommunications company



House husband: Stephen Ng enjoys his new lifestyle in Mozambique.

in Malaysia.

I am as busy as when I was working in an office but I get to cook every evening, so that by the time my wife returns, we enjoy a hearty meal together.

Weekends are usually the only time we get to do our grocery shopping at one of three supermarkets in Maputo. Unlike back home, the supermarkets are open only until 5pm on Saturdays and until 3pm on Sundays.

Word of advice for other stay-home husbands: Household chores, I learnt, are for the whole family. Everyone has an area of responsibility, and it can be fun washing the dishes together!

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