

Volunteer Report



When I look back on my ten weeks at the UNCSO in Hakhaseb, it's quite hard for me to write down all the feelings and experiences in an order that makes sense. I don't want to talk about the daily program or the internal habits of the work in the center, because many of the other volunteers did so and you can ask either Marianne or Ingrid about it. I rather want to write down all my still unsorted memories like an essay. It might be a stream of consciousness, whoever likes well structured reports more, should read the ones of the other volunteers. Writing against oblivion helped a lot of people but now back in Germany so many details of my time in Namibia seem to fade away and just the shadow of this beautiful time with all its contents remains in my memory. Thereby there are so many things which are worth to be not forgotten. Even the smallest details which whisper every day silently to me that I was working indeed in that moment under the hot sun of Africa with wonderful children and that I better enjoy every day like it's my last one of the internship. These small details like Lukas' face impressions during prayer before lunch. Nothing could interrupt his thoughts to god. It's also Hopes thumb, which always disappears in her cheeky smiling mouth again, after one volunteer pulled it out. Bibi's style of swinging his hips, Selma's often appearing tears, Pomwene's smiles, Frieda's calm soul and Lolokie's ability to love her in the morning and hate her in the afternoon. I could go on like this forever and probably tell a little story about every child of the center, and this alone is of inestimable value for me. Likewise for me it was of inestimable value to live with Marianne and the other volunteers under one roof and make the best out of the time, that was given to us. Life with Marianne and her family was very uncomplicated for me. Especially the freedom to develop our own potential and the space for our own living habits was really comfortable and I would live in the Kroonprinzen street every time again. Drinking together with Marianne Coffee and having little chats in the afternoon was really helpful to understand the Namibian culture and the art of living in the location. With all her background knowledge and her passion to go to the limits of hard work you only understand how much energy Marianne daily summons to go

hand in hand with private life, the UNCSO and the Volunteers in her house. But with all the respect I have for Marianne for her daily performances, I would wish for her own sake that she takes some rest from time to time and just let the Volunteers do the work on their own. Giving her personal health and wellbeing the preferences I was glad to see, that during our term she trusted us volunteers in doing all the centerwork but this can happen more often. Really Marianne, try to take your time on your own, we can handle the most stuff 😊

The possibility to drive with Marianne's bakkie every day to the center was considering the temperatures during the day in Usakos a very comfortable fact, which showed, like all the other concessions, that there are only flat hierarchies. The chance to travel on the weekend was for me a great advantage, and even getting some Fridays off was a great opportunity to travel to the Etoshapan or Sossusvlei. I have to admit, that the travelling sometimes was a really welcome change from the life at the center to clear my own mind of all the impressions I collected during



the week. Especially after visiting the families in their houses I understood the habits and the behavior of the kids in the center better. These house visits were key experiences for me and will stay in my memories for a long time I guess. These experiences of the house visits became even clearer, when sitting in the evening in Mariannes house with a big meal, electrical light, a warm shower and thinking of all the center kids just a few kilometers away, which live in very narrowed spaces without my standards. Therefore it was even more important for me not to act as the omniscient teacher or the upholder of morals and bringing german education standards, but rather give the kids some nice experiences during my time. Once Marianne said that the word „thank you“ cannot show the true value of appreciation, but a smile can do that. Every day again it was shown to me, how true this statement was. Be it Davids smile when he gets more meat in his soup, Michaels smile, when he was told a story out of a book. The smiling of Agnes because she won again in playing memory against one of the volunteers, Rauna during dancing or Chamindas smile because she just wants to make the world shine: Every day there is something to smile about in the UNCSO and because of this every day is worth to be there.

Next to the well structured daily procedure in the Center the little personal chats I had with the kids were really important for me to understand them. What dreams do they have, how do they feel about their domestic situation, in what matter can I help them, what can I learn from them? These things were the most interesting and fascinating moments for me.



During study time I often recognized many things, which do not work well in the Namibian school system. How is a child supposed to look something up in the internet without having electricity at home? How is a child, which does not even have enough pens, supposed to build a working wind mill? Why are there during school time two first grades just killing time and sitting around without having a teacher but instead having a beating cleaning lady, who takes care of them. These things have nothing to do with cultural differences but they just make no sense to me at all. Therefore I wish that UNCSO and the primary school would work more together in the long term especially because they share the school yard.

Maybe future volunteers, who study to become a teacher, can work out some new concepts together with the teachers of the primary school. Furthermore the annual parents' event should definitely be continued. I think it's a great opportunity to help the needy families and show them at the same time, what their kids are able to perform with hard work. For the processes during the rehearsals I would have preferred a little more structure because sometimes the kids seemed a little bit confused about how they have to stand and how to move. I know that we and Marianne wanted to have a perfect evening, which worked out nearly as perfect but next time a little bit less movement on the stage can make things not so complicated. But these are just some remarks to improve the processes and I want to stress that I would do this internship every time again and would have loved to stay a longer time at Marianne in Usakos. Now back in Germany I sit here and miss so many things. I miss these mornings, when you wake up and hear Franzi bustling around inside the house and you can be sure that your clothes are sorted so neatly and tidily when you come back at the afternoon, no matter where you hide them. I miss the drive from the



house to the center on the back of the bakkie when the warm wind is blowing in your face and when you are waving to the passing children or try to prevent them from jumping on the car. I miss Marianne's powerful style of speaking Afrikaans to a child's parent and translating it afterwards in English for us volunteers. I miss small Usakos with its supermarket, the treehouse restaurant with its delicious burgers (in case there are buns), the butchery just around the corner with its great biltong. I miss the view to the old water tower and the steam engine in the city center, which seem to melt under the hot sun. I also miss our tour guide Hannelie and the kind Andrew, who both showed us some of the nicest places of Namibia. Thanks to Marianne we got to know these two outstanding persons. All these memories are irreplaceable and now when I look back at this essay it actually helped to freeze them in my mind. Thank you Marianne and thank you Agnes, Loloki, Elisabeth, Selma, Hope, Melody, Natasha, Sally, Bibi, Michael, Michelle X, Michelle E, Desi, Palomida, Markus, Margret, David, Steven, Jack, Denzel, Jenny, Chaminda, Cherolda, Frieda, Jakob, Chantel, Rejoice, Rauna, Jan, Frans, Stanley, Andreas, Amor, Martha, Andreas, Pomwene, Alison, Innocent, Taleni, Aletha, Glenda, Grace, Shoudin, Lukas. Thank you so so much – It was just amazing. For every one who considers visiting the UNCSO to collect a smile from so many special kids and a strong woman, I just can recommend to hit the road as soon as possible. It's worth it.