

Experience Report Kira Fella Term 3, 01.09. – 25.11.2015

On previous trips I have often seen poverty and people without the opportunity for a better future. Here, my desire has developed to see this completely different world at close quarters and to support children with a less sheltered childhood than I had.



Thanks to UNCSO it was possible for me to fulfil this wish and I am sure that I will never forget my three months in Namibia.

The work in the Center has always given me a lot of joy. After the question, what is there to eat today - maybe sweet Papp? Or the good bread? - the tables were set and we went to get water. I am sure that the prayer sung by the children before eating ("Thaaaank youu Looord for giving us food...") will never go out of my head. After toilette break and tooth brushing we usually sang a few songs with movements in exercise time, such as "Head, shoulders, knees and toes" before study time. Even though I had only three children of grade one to take care of, it was sometimes difficult to give the same attention to all of them, as they want to be constantly confirmed in what they do and often need help. With a lot of patience, however, one can reach a lot and it was a great feeling when the children laughed because they had understood something and were right. The great importance of little things, like such a true and proud smile, has become very clear to me in the recent months.

Activity Time we designed, each with a day of sports, singing and arts and craft in the week and on the other two days, for example, with a conversation day with topics such as "respect" or "self-confidence", a movie day or a cleaning day. Only the last two weeks before the Christmas event were almost exclusively filled with practicing the Christmas play, which was worthwhile! The celebration was a great success.

Of course, there were also very stressful days in the Center, especially when Marianne was not present, because then it was very difficult to gain respect and to keep the children in order. While the volunteers are mainly playmates for the children and give them love, Marianne is also a contact person that can be trusted for the parents. Thus she has the opportunity to work on deeper problems in the families, such as alcohol and violence that cannot be solved by financial improvement of living conditions. It was difficult to accept that we volunteers can sometimes do very little for the wellbeing of the children except allowing them a few hours of real childhood every day and making them happy with little things.

The house visits were shocking, but also life enhancing and have helped me in many situations to better understand the behaviour of some children.

After I've seen how little interest some parents show for their children, it made me even happier to see little progress in behaviour and academic skills of children as they do this by own will and mostly entirely without having any support from at home.

On the weekends we volunteers went on many trips and I am very grateful to have seen so much of the beautiful country alongside the work in the project. With Haneli we went to Etosha and Sossusvlei, the cars of Andrew, who lives around the corner, we were allowed to borrow for trips to the Waterberg and the Game Lodge in Omaruru and with the VW bus from Marianne we drove to Swakopmund and Windhoek. An international driver's license was not necessary for all of this, but I can only recommend getting one issued in Germany anyway.

Getting back to the Centre after weekends was often completely surreal. From exquisite Springbock at the Napolitaner in Swakopmund to papp and noodles in the Center and of elephants, giraffes and lions in Etosha between the shacks in the township. However, every Monday I was looking forward to seeing the children again.

Johanna running towards me laughing with outstretched arms. Hendrina silently handing me a Fatcookie with frosting. Fabianus asking me to bring him a ball out of the kitchen. Natasha, who wants to sleep on my lap. Cherley, who wants to carry a water canister. Lolo, who proudly presented her new, long braids. Cheminda waving at me with her big, cheerful smile... I'm sure that I will always ask from now on, what has become of this or any child and I hope that I will be able to come back in a few years.

I have taken both the children as well as the country to my heart and what I have seen and experienced in the three months, has truly life enhanced me.

I am very glad to have come here precisely, since I find the way the project is structured very convincing and Marianne is truly committed to the future of the children. The educational support of the children is of great importance, since it is their only chance to work themselves into a better life. Especially the younger children often don't really appreciate the project just yet, but it is of great importance to motivate and support these children in particular, since this is what is missing from at home.

About living together with Marianne and Zaakie I can only say that it ran smoothly and I felt very comfortable all the time. Marianne always had an open ear for us and all our little problems and we were able to cooperate very well with her. In many long conversations she shared her experience with us, enabling us to understand some things better. I'm sure that Marianne is the only one, who really knows how things are going here and I hope she can continue her work for the future of the children in the township for a long time on with the help of many other volunteers.

Thanks UNCSO for the unforgettable time!

Yours Kira