



Searching for a two-week practical work I found the possibility of an internship with UNCSO by accident – and the organization captured me immediately. UNCSO really seemed to care about the children in Usakos. There was a successful volunteer-program without strange organizations in between, but directly carried by Marianne and Ingrid. When I applied, I hoped to get to know a different culture and a different country. I expected to teach and play with some kids and was a little bit worried how to deal with them and the poverty in Usakos.



Arriving in the Project showed clearly, that all the worries were unnecessary: Marianne welcomed me warmly in her house and gave me an easy start in the center. The kids were not shy at all, from the first day on they jumped to my arms, climbed to my lap and tried to learn my name, which was very difficult for them. Some

kids just made up new names for all volunteers, so it was easier for them. Everyone was dancing, singing and laughing. Of course, it was not always that easy. In the first month the kids tested us a lot. How strict are we? Which rules do we have and how do we deal with crying, beating and screaming around? It was great to have a group of other volunteers, so we could talk about everyday experiences and reflect them. Every day there were Failures and Succeeds. Every day I felt like growing a little bit more into the project and the kids got a part in my heart. I liked the time before the normal centerday started, where we could talk and play with the little children. I

liked it, when the kids came to me to take my hand, wanted to be swirled around in my arms. I liked how some shy kids started to smile at me and greet me in the morning. And there was so much more!

Everyone of us was responsible for one grade and their Study Time. It was nice, to get to know a smaller group of kids very well and more privately. Although for me it was difficult in the beginning to understand the way the kids think and act and to motivate them for their studies, it was also a big responsibility to prepare new worksheets every day and plan the centerday for the kids. Luckily, Marianne was there to ask her questions and help to understand the different culture. There was even time for some nice and funny stories in long evenings. But there were also problems, because we lived and worked together all day, and sometimes Marianne - who is working very hard - lost her patience. But we worked out compromises and got along quite well with each other. After a time we even managed many centerdays on our own, even though it was hard in the beginning. I had the feeling, that Marianne sometimes asks a lot from you, to support the kids best. However she never asks something you cannot handle, so everything was possible to manage.



Marianne also helped to decide for some projects, which we could realize with our donations. It was hard to see so much poverty and I wondered sometimes how the kids can still smile every day. But I also learned to look at the great parts of life, to smile with the kids and give them love and attention to lighten their day. When we started our projects, it was wonderful to get great support from relatives and friends, who helped us to realize our projects for the kids. Impressive, that it only takes a week to build a shack! The smile in the faces of the kids showed us, that we really gave them something special in their lives and I am proud, that I had the chance to do a little part in this great project.

Altogether I had much fun on our centerdays, although there were also hard and difficult times. Especially when it came to Christmas, there was a lot of work to do, which could be both, frustrating and motivating. That's why it was a great opportunity to leave the Project after stressful weeks on weekends and see some touristic parts of Namibia. This total different experience of a beautiful country showed me another part of Namibia, which has two faces for me: The endless landscapes and animals on the one hand and on the other hand the kids in the center. Both faces are colorful, bright and wonderful to remember.

After my time in Usakos I think that I maybe learned more from the kids, than they learned from me. I am more self-confident in dealing with kids now. I learned that it is sometimes the only way to stay calm and patient. I learned to take live more easily and accept people the way they are, even if they react totally different than I expected. I experienced a great teamwork in Namibia with Marianne and with the other volunteers, who became really good friends. We became better and better in planning and acting together and support each other. Thanks to all of you! At least I am very happy, that we managed to realize our projects, so now I can leave something here for the kids. I for myself will take marvelous memories and experiences back to Germany.

