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Term 3/2016

INTERNSHIP REPORT



Last spring I decided to fulfil my long time dream and do volunteering after my graduation. I heard about UNCSO from a friend who had been part of the project four years ago. She told me about the organization's work and immediately I knew that this internship was something for me. In May, I graduated as a special education teacher, in summer I continued working my long time job at foster care home and when my friends went to "real jobs" as teachers, I flew to Namibia. I was scared but I knew that I had made the right decision.

At the beginning everything was new and confusing. There were many things that I had to adapt to: working and communicating in English, sharing a house with six other volunteers and the Izaaks family, living in really small Usakos with one shop, having so many kids in small classrooms and getting used to the African mentality. After a few weeks things started to settle down, after one month I felt that I can cope, after two months I felt that I could work on my own and now finally after three months I have started to understand what this is really about and have a feeling that I could develop things. Three months is actually a really short time, but luckily long enough to get some understanding.

This term was quite stressful with Deutsch-Namibische Gesellschaft's visit, building of two houses and the Christmas party. We could see that Marianne was really stressed and we tried to help her as much as we could. Sometimes it was hard to help Marianne because she didn't tell us how to help. We tried to say that it is better to talk things through and tell us what to do than being quiet and complaining afterwards. She said that it is sometimes hard, but I think we could see some progress with our communication during the term. In the future I really hope that Marianne can trust the volunteers because we can do a lot with her help.

The work at the center was sometimes really hard. Kids here seem to be so different than in Finland. On the other hand they are just the same, but the culture is different. The first thing that the kids asked me when they found out that I am a teacher was if I hit the children, I was shocked. It was really hard to get used to the use of violence from adults towards kids and from bigger kids to smaller ones in addition to have an order at the center. I had to go really deep in my mind when I tried to understand that, but in the end I still don't think that violence is the right way to raise children. Fifty years ago also in Finland teachers hit the kids, so I can only hope that this harmful way of educating the kids will end also here in near future.

When you sit at home in Europe and think about volunteering with children, you think only about small kids climbing on your lap. First I also thought that I would like to be with center's smaller kids. But because I had the education and experience, I got the seventh graders as my study group. Now I couldn't be happier about

that. With the seventh graders it was possible to form a real relationship, get to know them and hear about their dreams and goals. We had really interesting conversations for example about God, different skin colors, the importance of schooling, violence and differences between Namibia and Finland.

Some of the children have been at the center many years and they have met so many new volunteers every three months. For the seventh graders I was the last volunteer they will have from the project. I am really worried what will happen to some of the kids when they grow up. I am sad that it is not possible to be here with them in the difficult times of their lives. I know that Marianne will do her best to support them also after center time, but it is natural that after some time kids don't come to see Marianne anymore. I will try to stay in contact with the kids even after I am back in Finland. I made e-mail addresses to all of my seventh graders and I really hope that they will have time to write me. Maybe I can help them with their problems a little bit from home.

This time here taught me also in other ways than professionally. Living as only non-German with six German girls seemed to be a really hard thing at the beginning, especially when I had already lived so many years on my own and over half of the girls were still living at home. After beginning's few disagreements we could work, live and spend our free time together quite easily. Quickly we became a really hardworking team and good friends. A big reason why we could do the center work so well was that we were spending our weekends away from Usakos in order to let our brains rest. It is important to have free time and really get to know the other volunteers outside the project. It was nice to work with these girls and I couldn't have hoped for a better group!

This experience was one of the best things that have happened in my life. With UNCISO's internship it was possible to see really how the children live, get near them and really help. I felt useful and needed. I fell in love with these kids and I will carry them in my heart the rest of my life. Namibia and especially small Usakos helped me to see my own life and problems in better perspective. Tears in my eyes I write this report, I wouldn't like to leave these kids, this country, and this project behind. But it is time to move forward and I believe that I will be a better teacher after this time here.

I wish all the best to Marianne and the Izaaks family, UNCISO's project here in Usakos, and especially I wish nothing but the best to all the kids I had the privilege to get to know during my time here. I will miss you all!

Best wishes,

Ansku

Unsku / Ansu / Unsko / Unskupe / Anskul / Annso / Ansko / Unsku / Hansku / volunteer

