

Experience Report Namibia Volunteering at UN-CSO

For a period of two months, I had the opportunity to work as a volunteer in Namibia with the organization UN-CSO. This experience was very special to me and had a strong impact on me both personally and emotionally. In addition to working with children, I was able to experience a new culture and gain insight into a way of life that is very different from what I am used to.

My journey began together with Steffi at the airport in Frankfurt, from where we started our trip to Windhoek. As soon as we arrived, it became clear that we were facing completely different climatic conditions. The heat was intense, especially during midday, and the dry air felt unfamiliar at first. During the first few days, we needed some time to adjust to our new surroundings. Many things were different from home, whether it was the climate, the environment, or everyday routines. At the same time, we were welcomed very warmly, which made it much easier to settle in.

During our stay, we lived with our host parents Sakkie and Marianne, who founded and still run UN-CSO. From the very beginning, we felt that we were not just guests but part of their family. The accommodation was well equipped and provided everything we needed for daily life. We had our own room and could move freely around the house. What stood out the most, however, was the warm and welcoming atmosphere. Sakkie and Marianne were always there to support us, gave us helpful advice, and assisted us with organizational matters. Living with them allowed us to gain insights into life in Namibia that go far beyond what a typical tourist would experience.

Our daily routine followed a clear structure. In the mornings, Steffi and I prepared for the day ahead. We researched topics, created learning materials, and planned activities for the children. In the early afternoon, we made our way to the Centre, which is the central place where the organization's activities take place.

At the Centre, we were greeted every day by Petra. She plays an important role in the daily routine and is responsible, among other things, for preparing the meals. Her friendly and caring personality made her an important figure for both the children and us volunteers. Having lunch together was a fixed part of the day. The meals were simple but served an important purpose: they were filling and, for many children, one of the most important meals of the day.

After lunch, the children began working on their homework. They came to the Centre after school, and our task was to support them, answer their questions, and help them understand their assignments. This work was often challenging because many children needed help at the same time, and each of them had different strengths and

weaknesses. Nevertheless, it was incredibly rewarding to see their progress over time. What impressed me the most was their positive attitude. Despite the difficulties many of them face in their daily lives, they were always open, curious, and full of energy. It often took only a few seconds to make them smile.

Over time, I became more aware of the challenges the children face outside of school. Many of them have additional responsibilities, such as walking long distances to get home, helping their families, or even working on weekends. These circumstances make it difficult for them to fully focus on school. This is exactly where UN-CSO makes a difference by providing support, structure, and a safe place where the children can concentrate on their education.

In addition to helping with homework, we also had the opportunity to organize our own projects. Together with Steffi, I developed different ideas to keep the children engaged and encourage their creativity. The enthusiasm with which the children participated in these activities was truly impressive. Even simple projects brought them great joy and strengthened the sense of community.

One of the most impactful experiences during my stay were the visits to some of the children's homes. These visits gave me a deeper understanding of their living conditions and showed me how different life can be depending on one's circumstances. It made me realize how many things I had previously taken for granted. At the same time, I learned to appreciate even the small things much more.

My time in Namibia had a lasting influence on me. I learned to adapt to new situations and face challenges with an open mind. I also realized how important support, understanding, and human connection are. My perspective on life has changed, and I now see many things more consciously and with greater appreciation.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who made this experience possible. My special thanks go to Sakkie and Marianne, who welcomed us into their home and treated us like their own children. I would also like to thank Petra for her daily support and her kind and warm-hearted nature. A big thank you goes to Steffi, with whom I was able to share this unforgettable experience. Most of all, I would like to thank the children. Their openness, strength, and joy made this time truly unique and showed me what really matters in life.