

## Projectreview from Petrina Handiya

Aussenkehr in Namibia | Q1/2021

### I will come back one day

Aussenkehr is a small remote private farm down the South of Namibia, across the Orange river. It is a multi-cultural unique place to easily adapt regarding of the weather conditions. During the past months in Aussenkehr, I would really say I have experienced an amazing and an incredible journey. The very first day till the last day, I experienced so much love from the people around me. There was an incredible welcome from teachers and the community. **Volunteer work is not common in Namibia and it is only seen or considered as “the white saviors” work. Therefore, this report is aiming for Namibian people across the country to not only see volunteering as a foreign job, but rather to stand up, experience, share knowledge and give back to the community.**

The school project was introduced by the foundation <Kinder fördern- Zukunft stiften> by the city of Stuttgart, Germany. The project already existed in Paternoster. With the help of that , the first volunteers that arrived in Aussenkehr were able to start with the mission to “equip the youth for their future and to maintain the local heritage”. We, the second volunteers continued with the project in January 2021. By “we” I mean six German students and two Namibian students. During this time, I also completed my “school-based studies” for my studies. This was a privilege and honor to be one of the students of Namibia to be part of this project. We didn’t have a clear briefing from the start , as I was not deeply informed about the project . We just got to learn about the main objectives of the project at a later stage. The main objective of the project is to provide support for the teachers in classrooms, assist with reading and writing and provide educational support for children in the afternoons. I faced many challenges at first , because I didn’t get a brief overview about what to expect in Aussenkehr. I expected more of just assisting in classes, but then I learned I had to do a lot. **It was very difficult working with the Germans volunteers at first, because of our cultural differences and how we Namibians do things differs from those of Germans.** It is such a pity that Namibians still have that mentality of whites being superior to African people. It took me time to open up, to bring new ideas to the table. It mostly felt like “we are just here to listen and do what they say”. This was just my first impression until weeks passed by . **We started working together, learned about our differences and similarities. I faced struggles working with the German volunteers at first, but they made me comfortable and showed that we all matter.**

Nevertheless, this project taught me the importance of communication skill, importance of putting differences aside, importance of group work etc. It is very important to have good communication skills when working with a large group, because at the end of the day we all have opinions and problems that needs to be solved and its only through communication that problems can be solved. Despite all that, I was really interested and excited to work with the German set. I was aware of the knowledge and experiences I will gain throughout the project. I was excited to learn new teaching methods and strategies, how to go from a teacher to a learner centered environment. Teachers should understand that we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and therefore its important to use ICT tools in the classroom. Aussenkehr is a remote area where learners are not exposed to different resources that’s why teachers should try closing this gap at school by using IT devices. Create a friendly learning environment for the learners, because those children need support and love from teachers. For some school is the only place where they get the necessary attention , so why not give this to them .

**Being part of the project as a Namibian student, I realized that the foundation works closely with the Directorate of Education, Arts and culture in the //Kharas Regional Council in Namibia and the department of Education of University of Namibia. The foundation is trying to recruit as many local students as volunteers. This will help change the mind sets of the Namibian people.** It will indeed

motivate the country at large, the importance and ways of giving back to the community. This project will help promote and empower young youth. Keeping young children out of the streets will better the country. The project also offers life skills workshops to the learners, thus help learners to identify their strengths and what they do best. It is important to understand that not all children are 'A' performing students, but what are we doing to meet all learners' abilities. Learners should not be forced to perform like others but rather find the learners abilities. **With the second stakeholders held, I learned that Namibians are working hard together with the foundation to help Aussenkehr Primary school. Ideas like, building of a new library are brought down to the table etc. The remote area is about to turn in a more reading-literacy environment.** The school is really in need of a special classroom for learners with learning difficulties. It is difficult to keep these learners in the same class as others, because the working space and understanding differs. The school don't have enough teaching resources and this made me to create learning materials with the sparse material the school had available. I had to become more creative in the classroom, made use of ICT tools to meet the learners ability. The entire project with all its goals, visions and tasks was developed and still developed in cooperation with local institutions.

Our work on-site consisted of teaching, assisting with lessons in the morning and organizing workshops for the afternoon program. I mostly teach every day, to complete the University work, which included 60 lessons to be presented. A total number of 800 students go to the school. The classes accommodated a total number of 40+ students, but due to covid-19 the total number of learners in class are divided into two groups. The groups attend every second day. This made it easier to identify those learners with learning difficulties and volunteers worked close with these learners. We helped out in the classroom by providing individual support for learners. I mostly worked with the pre and lower primary classes, grade 0-3 and assisted few times in grade 5-6 classes. Many of our afternoons were spent conducting workshops. Four days a week, grade 1-3 coming back to school in the afternoon and could choose to join a workshop of their choice. We offered arts and crafts, music, upcycling, board games, sports and reading and writing. The children really enjoyed these activities and patiently waited for the workshops to begin.

Upon our arrival the principal Mrs. Kadhikwa and the entire teaching staff welcomed us and seemed excited to have the second volunteer team. **The 4 months I spent in this remote place was filled with great excitement. I found myself away from home, but yet I felt like at home with the wonderful approach and experience.** Indeed, I'll come back one day. The principal and the entire staff have a good relationship with each other. They work so closely together and they have good communication skills and they create a friendly working environment. I have learned great things from the teachers and principle and as I am at the edge of completing my studies, I am willing to evaluate myself to teach at Aussenkehr Primary school.

