

Emmanuel Advice Care Centre – March/April 2010

Well, 6 weeks ago it was all in the future and now it's all over for this spring. Whether I have achieved any long term benefit for the young people I'm unsure. The youngsters' enthusiasm says yes and I hope participative input continues with the lesson plans I left behind. But those plans are very different from the usual 'teaching methods' used on children until now.

Having visited townships in South Africa previously, I had some notion of what to expect. I was also quite aware of the size of the HIV/aids situation in Africa; as a whole. Preparatory wise it was mainly planning to minimize any other tasks and unnecessary baggage. Not knowing exactly how my role would pan out, I could not do any firm planning. Although I did have the problem of how to pack and transport 5 doz baseball caps (acquired on Spirit of Adventure in Saigon)

Our welcome and orientation to the city and its environs was well organized and was our introduction to Nelson from Calabash. This was followed by our initial meeting with Paul from Calabash. A very worthwhile exercise. This was followed by an introductory meeting with the Emmanuel team I had more of an idea on what my input could be.

The tasks I was asked to tackle happened 'to a fashion....'

1. I had been asked to look into the nutritional value, stock control and possible theft in relation to the daily 'lunch' to the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs). Also, purchasing policy.

In the light of the budget of 5000r per month for 90 plates per day and the actual through put of 260+ on must days, stock control is biblical. In January the figures gave a result of less than 90 cents (9p) per child per day. There isn't any food available for theft.

It was suggested before I went; that friends of the former manager had access to the kitchen, but said person has not been seen in the area for some time.

Nutritionally during the course of the week the children get a mix of most essential vitamins and minerals. With protein in the form of chicken beans, fish & carbs in rice, potatoes and mealie/pap. Because of the dry conditions a lot of fresh vegetables have tripled in price meaning a reliance on some frozen veg. Portions obviously are not large. Perhaps enough for the toddlers but hardly adequate for the older teenagers.

The only food that didn't reach the youngsters was on days that the turn out was low, example 1st of the month and benefit day. The staff taking advantage of a freebee and on 600r (c. £53 at the current exchange rate) a month is that wrong?

There is some question as to the entitlement of some of the kids as to them being OVCs, But monitoring this is not easy. Identification by the areas Carers', but they are rarely on site at meal time. Also there seems to be some staffing problems with Carers' leaving, but this was being underplayed.

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Went shopping for a couple of things; much needed chopping boards and potato peelers. This meant that Veronica and Nbuco the two cooks, could prepare the food quicker and in my opinion, much safer. It was worth it just for the looks on their faces.

2. Getting a firm plan for bringing water nearer the kitchen was another experience I won't forget in a hurry. The plans changed on a daily basis and it was still being installed as Maggie and I left on the 12th April. Ideally in the future a supply into the kitchen would be wonderful, but a supply, with two sinks, by the door is an improvement. Probably the best option when you have up to four (not small) persons inside the kitchen.



the first sink

3. After school club for the OVC's began without a great deal of notice, with the expectation of instant input. Thank goodness for forethought in taking pencils and water colours.... . That evening and several following nights were used in preparing a series of teaching aids. From pictures of carrots, cigarettes, cabbages and body parts to identify what's good and what's bad for which bits. Session plans for Drug education. Self empowerment and motivation were also cobbled together. In addition acquired educational books covering, drugs, sexual health, adolescence and religious tolerance. These have become the start of a library. (The first three of these were read by several of the regular Emmanuel team and Portia sent me on an errand to get copies so that she could use them with her daughter).



Portia & Anits with book on sex education

The input grew with the arrival of the Easter Hols when after school club became holiday club.

Where possible I used a game strategy, trying to encourage the older youngsters to lead, primarily to encourage health and evaluation topics and also team games of a fun nature, so that it wasn't all teach.

I felt really pleased on an extremely busy day, I was running out of ideas when one of the older teens asked if he could take over and run a couple games.....success.

One of the messages that I promoted, was to cover the big fear of the dangers of the coming World Cup. South Africa is taking over from the Far East in respect of child sex and with all the visitors expected and the temptation of 'treats' mean large worries.

Reused the old UK message of STRANGER DANGER. Don't go. Say NO.

I used this as another plan with some of the teenagers and asked them to put the message into their word, again good response

4. Then the surprise of a camp..... But with the aid of a facilitator. Similar input from me: drugs, self promotion (breaking through the Townships glass ceiling) in addition to team building games, brain storms, newspaper, bridge building etc. Good job I took lots with me. No facilitator arrived, he had cried off, pity I wasn't told before hand.



brainstorming

5. On one of the Sundays off, attended a free exhibition at the local conference centre. During a conversation with one of the stall holders, namely Kuzuko Lodge, mentioned I was doing Voluntary work in a Township. Bingo! The Lodge has started a trust offering a free day for Township children if they can get there.

Probably an extravagance but blew my contribution, plus some of Maggie's, hiring two mini bus taxis. In typical African style we were late arriving, but 28 youngsters experienced two hours in the wild, seeing Lions, Cheetah, buffalo etc., learning about conservation, nature and life outside. Kuzuko then organized a picture competition with prizes; bbq; ice-cream plus a parting gift of a goody bag. Kuzuko means Place of Glory. The looks on the faces of all there brought lumps to the throat. I sent a press release to two local newspapers.



on safari

6 There is quite an element of spontaneity in the running of Emmanuel, this can mean rapid plan changing and can affect lots of people. I've left them with a wall planner in an attempt to stop clashes and avoid arranging things on days that are already planned. With luck it will stop the expectation that someone can be in two places at once.

7 Another Africa Way activity that took place during my time there was the broken down fridge. It hadn't worked since around December. It took me, ringing numbers from yellow pages, before two of the team said 'we know somebody'. It still took a week, but is working.

What else can I say, To a great degree it was what I expected, that is apart from the large element of The Africa Way, which became very frustrating at times. Example; the late departure to Kuzulo. It isn't the example that adults should give to the next generation when we are trying to get them out of the township culture. I'm afraid that in my parting words I said it was a lost opportunity and there's no room for those and they must try for A New Africa Way.

David Dolman 19-4-10

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