

Note from *people and places*: this volunteer's placement was designed specifically for them – they went through our full matching process, as we've been doing with you. The placement report indicates their particular skills and experience – yours may be similar or completely different – your own placement will make best use of **your** experience and skills. Every volunteer is different – in what they give and what they gain. Reports from previous volunteers serve to give you as good a picture as possible about the project. If you have any questions about any of the detail in this report please do not hesitate to contact me at kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

Jane-Elizabeth Richardson: placement report

Placement dates and project

The Emmanuel project, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Monday 16th June – Friday 12th July 2013.

Pre departure preparation

This placement was a first for me and I was pretty nervous. The pre-departure preparation was excellent, really thorough. Firstly, Kate at people and places checked my skills, my experience and what I wanted to get out of the placement. Then we discussed suitable placements before agreeing on Emmanuel and beginning the form filling (CRBs, doctor's letter, checking I had insurance and the like).

I was supported throughout this process. Kate and I communicated predominantly using email, though I always felt comfortable to call her. I was fully informed and guided throughout my preparation. Though People and Places don't organise flights and insurance, I found the information they provided useful when finding these.

Once everything was arranged I was put in contact with Paul at Calabash Tours, the company that organises the placement in Port Elizabeth. He was happy to answer my questions and provided useful, timely responses to my emails.

Orientation and preparation at the start of the placement

I arrived on the Sunday prior to the start of my placement. The Monday was a national holiday. The following day I had an orientation with Paul which was really informative. I was then taken to the placement and introduced to the team at Emmanuel and shown around the care centre.



1 Naboth's Nursery, Canterbury Road, Faversham, Kent ME13 8AX
tel +44 (0) 8700 460 479 | email info@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

What did we do well?

I felt that I was matched to an appropriate placement, guided and supported through the preparation process and whilst on placement, both during placement hours and with free time activities.

What could we do better? – and PLEASE don't hold back: surely there's something we can improve on

I really can't think of anything that could have been done better. I know that isn't helpful in terms of giving you something to develop, but it's better than making something up.

Your experience and work – including what resources you may have left behind and with whom – please include any written resources you may have left behind as well as any other resources

It is a requirement of my Dietetics degree that I do something non-clinical, so I was there in relation to nutrition. I worked 9:00am – 2:00pm Monday to Friday. I mostly helped Mamma Ach to cook and serve food the children – an average of 200 a day – for many of whom that meal would be their only one of the day. I gave a presentation to the orphans and vulnerable children about general nutrition, went out with the carers to the community and to the clinic to experience what kind of issues the community dealt with, and I helped out in the office.



Jane with carers and staff



Thoko (foreground) & Mama Ach

Other volunteers' reports indicate that there seemed to be more to get involved with than when I was at Emmanuel. I think this is because:

- I went in South Africa's winter, and over the children's winter holidays, which mean fewer children are attending crèche, and fewer clients visit the centre because of the 'cold' weather. I was informed by Paul and Kate that the project would be quieter during this period, but this was the only time I could go.
- Staff at Emmanuel were pretty despondent, having not been paid for around 6 months.
- The project has shrunk in size due to funding issues and it seems that it is getting harder to find funding, leaving the project in a constant limbo as regards whether they can continue and how much they can do.

I felt that I couldn't do much – I couldn't produce the funding to cement the project's future, pay the staff, keep the nutrition project going. However, I felt that I learnt so much from them. For me it was an enriching experience. That sounds quite one-sided, but the feeling that I got was that this was really important to them, and to all South Africans that I spoke to, that people go to South Africa and see understand the situation in the country better.

I left behind numerous spread sheets and some presentations, some 'how to' guides for using computer programmes and a draft fundraising letter for the nutrition project.

Note from people and places: all of which is of real practical help for the project team, and are contributions to be built on by future volunteers.

Your recommendations for the input of future volunteers – a particular area of your work which could be continued by others and how would you suggest this could be done?

I feel that the project is in desperate need of management, admin and fundraising skills. I feel like training and support in these areas are paramount if the project is to continue.

Note: our local partners at Calabash will continue to liaise and work with the team at Emmanuel – as well as with people and places – to build appropriately supportive placements to assist in these areas, as well as with any 'in the field' nursing and community care needs, with appropriate volunteers.

Successes and disappointments of your placement

I think that making a spread sheet for the nutrition project and (hopefully) ensuring that better records of what is used each day is my biggest success.

Disappointments, I don't have any, more frustrations. For example I thought the nutrition spread sheet could be used to generate average number fed, cost of each food used could be inputted and total cost per meal could be generated, the data could be used to project how many people would be fed, what meal was most appropriate, how much of each food stuff would be required, the data could be used to fundraise, maybe some kind of a graph could be generated...then I realised the office staff were still learning to type, and couldn't see the point of costing meals when funding had run out already. I had days when I'd be excited with lots of ideas for things I could help put in place. Then I'd realise that the groundwork in terms of skills just wasn't there, through no fault of the people, but because of they haven't had the kind of training that make things like a filing system obvious and easy to implement. Some things that I thought about doing would have been pointless because, though I have the skills to do them, I don't have the skills or the time to teach the skills to others.

Note: see notes above



Shade for the office and for the crèche – thanks in part to the work of previous volunteers!

What was the highlight of your volunteer experience?

The people. They are amazing.



people ... of all ages

Would you recommend volunteering to other people or not? please tell us why!

Yes definitely. I've been lucky because this was my first time and it worked out well. I think that was because I spent a lot of time looking for the right agency through which to organise it. I'd do it again because it was a good learning experience, really enjoyable and I met some great people.

How did you spend your leisure time?

I went to the Calabash office to use the internet, jogged in town and around the township I was staying, read, socialised, shopped, did safari, and went for a weekend excursion to Grahamstown Arts Festival. Most nights I sat and watched Big Brother Africa/rolling news with Mickey and friends. They are great company. I felt safe walking and jogging around the township on my own, and soon learnt to use the taxi service.

How was your accommodation?

My accommodation was wonderful. Mickey is a really good cook, providing a hot evening meal plus whatever lunch and breakfast options you need. She is laid back, helpful, informative and great company.

Please note – this report is supplied by a former volunteer and the contents are intended solely for your information and personal use.

people and places has permission to publish this information to you as a future volunteer.

Please check with us if you would like to publish it beyond your own circle of friends and family.

Thank you.