

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 dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

Cecilia Eggleston

Placement dates and project

6th February to 2nd April 2017

All Out Africa, working with Neighbourhood Care Point teachers and NCP Co-ordinator, fundraising for the All Out Africa Foundation and a little bit of building work

Pre departure preparation

This was all fine. (Note from 'people and places' – this was Cecilia's second placement with All Out Africa, so she was already familiar with the area, partners and projects)

Experience and Work

Sarah, from All Out Africa, was very flexible concerning the work that I wanted to do during my placement. I developed my own timetable – Monday to Wednesday working on the NCP curriculum with Eunice the NCP Co-ordinator; Thursday fundraising with Yuko, the Foundation manager; Fridays, building with Michael.

This did not go entirely to plan for a couple of reasons. When I arrived, the curriculum for the first term was in its final stages of development and proofreading, which I participated in. There were quite a lot of logistics to sort out once the curriculum and all the worksheets returned from the printers. Eunice and I spent hours counting out piles of worksheets for the different NCPs. There were also resources to produce. Getting out the first part of the curriculum to the teachers became the priority, which meant I did not work on the fundraising as much as I had planned.

The weather was awful for a least a fortnight, which meant no building work for anyone. I asked the volunteers who were not occupied if they would help to create the resources for the curriculum and they were very obliging in drawing, colouring, cutting and laminating a variety of different cards – producing two versions of the alphabet for six different NCPs plus a spare is a lot of cards! Not to mention the other set of cards that they developed.

After the first couple of weeks, things settled into more of a rhythm. I did some research for Tjengisa on good practice in homework clubs and wrote some simple guidelines for volunteers on how to help the children with their reading, spelling and maths. I don't think Tjengisa has been giving this document to new volunteers to homework club, but he used part of it in a successful grant bid to buy educational games, so that was pleasing.

Note: Sarah at All Out Africa & Tsengisa will share the document that Cecilia mentions.

Eunice and I have worked well and productively on the curriculum for term 2. We have written eight topics using materials developed by Dianne and Sarah ([Dianne Ashman, people and places volunteer programme advisor](#)), as well as our own ideas. We had one meeting with the teachers and heard their concerns about some of the materials. We have been able to make adjustments and most teachers seem to be using the

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

curriculum at least some of the time. I was hoping that we would have a second meeting with the teachers before I left, but Eunice has been unwell, so I think it is unlikely. I have been out to Ekuzukekeni NCP twice (where I did one of my placements last year) and have visited a couple of the other NCPS. It was gratifying to hear the teachers singing one of the songs I taught them last year.

I helped Yuko with an online fundraising campaign by developing the content of the web page and selecting appropriate photographs. I also proofread and amended the Foundation main document. I had started work on the layout for an online newsletter, but the wifi in the office has been so erratic, it is difficult to tell if this will be a viable way of keeping in touch with donors. I helped out a little with sending emails out to sponsors.

I have only actually been out twice with Michael and the building team. We constructed a couple of compost bins from pallets and filled them with cut grass. On the other occasion, we went back to the kitchen where I did my bricklaying last time. It was so great to see how much has been done. I supplied breeze blocks to the two guys up on the scaffolding. This week the roof is going on.

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?

Any volunteers with preschool teaching experience would greatly enhance the curriculum and give the teachers more ideas for how to engage, encourage and where necessary, discipline children in a positive way. The NCPs take children from 3 to 8, so there is a wide range of abilities in every group. Helping the teachers to manage this diversity would also be a great benefit. There is one more term of the curriculum left to develop. The structure and the rhythm is now clear, so it will be a much more straightforward task to write the last few topics.

There is also a need for basic resources to be produced for every NCP. Any volunteer who has a flair for art could do these – posters showing different parts of the body, local animals (Swazi cows don't look like European cows) and so on.

Anyone who could spend time offering some basic IT training to some of the staff would be good. Eunice does not have very good computer skills and even Tjengisa struggles at times.

There is a definite need for fundraising for the Foundation – which actually is responsible for funding the NCPS and other projects. Anyone with a passion for children, sport or conservation and a flair for fundraising would be welcome.

Successes and disappointments of placement

The biggest success was knowing that it was absolutely the right thing to do to come back to Swaziland. There was a part of me that wondered if coming back was wise. Although I was much more aware of the dynamics and challenges within the organisation, I still felt at home and felt that my contribution to AOA and its aims was a valuable one. It was hard work getting the term's curriculum written, but I am pleased with the work that we have done.

When I was working on building the kitchen, I could see Teacher Mgazi and her volunteer coming down the lane with the children, who were singing. Mgazi had taken the children to see animals in the local field – one of the activities in the curriculum. I am not sure that Mgazi would have done that six months ago. A staff member commented that Teacher Zodwa's teaching has much improved. She is the person that I have worked most closely with. These are examples of great successes!

Not doing more building and not doing more training with the teachers are both minor disappointments. One of the things that I had hoped to do was to get the children from the NCPs to visit House on Fire – a fantastic local arts venue, and do some simple drama there. Right at the beginning of my placement, I

talked about this idea with Menzi, one of the AOA staff, who has a background in theatre and seemed incredibly enthusiastic. Despite attempts by me and Eunice to engage him in conversations to work with us on this project, nothing has come of it. I did not want to take the lead as I wanted it to be something sustainable and led by a Swazi person. A couple of times, Menzi asked when I was leaving and intimated that he was going to set up a meeting with contacts before my placement finished. He has not followed through on this and seemed almost hostile when Eunice was explaining the topics we were covering in the curriculum, inviting him to choose the ones that might be best suited to include some drama work. I am disappointed and saddened by this outcome.

Note: this apparent lack of self-confidence and pro-activity can be enhanced as Menzi works with more volunteers!)

What was the highlight of your volunteer experience?

Seeing the teachers again

Would you recommend volunteering to other people or not? Please tell us why.

Yes definitely. For the mature volunteer, it is a chance to take stock, to try something different. Even to *be* someone different for a while. This time around, I have learned new computer skills whilst formatting the curriculum and finding online resources. It has been interesting to learn more about Swaziland and its culture.

How did you spend your leisure time?

I had quite a decent social life this time around – meals out and cinema with different members of AOA staff. One weekend I hired a car with another guest at Lidwala. It was great to explore more of the country. Next to the AOA there is a hairdresser's and other beauty treatments. I had a massage there and had hoped for another one, but she hasn't been around. I went on a rhino drive in Llane Game Reserve in Swaziland and took the five day Kruger safari trip, which was just amazing. It was a real regret not doing this last time and it was an excellent and exhilarating experience. I had lunch out most weekends, enjoyed walking around the Lidwala grounds and bird spotting. I also got in more pool time and sunbathing this time.

How was your accommodation?

I stayed at Lidwala Lodge for my two months. I reclaimed my kettle from my previous visit and felt very at home. I chose to clean my own room and change my own bedding, which added to a feeling of homeliness, rather than being a guest in someone else's space.

The thing that I disliked the most last time was the kitchen. Nothing much has changed. It is too small for the number of people who use it. Food you buy and label sometimes goes missing. Some people are messy and don't clear up. The pans are mass catering size and many have lost their handles. I bought more of my own food to bring more variety into my diet. I bought hand wash for the kitchen, so I didn't have to wash my hands in detergent (I get eczema) and a plug for the kitchen sink. It would have taken too long to get the staff to buy them and they were low cost. There are a couple of new members of staff who are good cooks, so the quality and variety of meals has improved.

Note: the self-catering kitchen is used by all volunteers / guests at the lodge. We have raised with our local partners the points made here by Cecilia, and they will take appropriate action.

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.