



Environmental education in South African townships

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GLEN home organisation: **INEX-SDA**

Number of the internship: **C300105023**

Title of the internship: **Community Work in Early Childhood Education**

Place of the internship: **Cape Town, South Africa**

Duration of the internship: **24. 8 – 19. 11. 2011**

Hosting organisation: **SAEP (South African Education and Environment Project)**

Summary

The GLEN internship took place in Cape Town, Western Cape province, South Africa. Cape Town is one of the biggest cities in South Africa, which is still growing due to the urbanization. One of the negative consequences of this phenomenon is appearance of so called townships – shanty towns – where most of the incoming people settle down. Townships are very poor areas, where people often live under the income poverty line. The GLEN participants were working at SAEP – South African Education and Environment Project, which is a non-governmental organisation focusing on education of children and young people living in townships in Cape Town. The organisation is providing several programs aimed on children in kindergartens, students at primary and secondary schools and on university students. These programs give to the children and students the possibility to gain and broaden their skills and knowledge, which they will need in their future life. Within some programs SAEP also cooperate with adults and offer them different kinds of workshops. On this internship, there were three participants – German, Slovenian and Czech. The main tasks of the participants were to teach the children and pupils in the townships and prepare the particular lessons. German and Slovenian worked in the program of early childhood development, they taught children about ocean and hygiene. The Czech participant worked as an environmental coordinator of environmental activities within all the programs. All three participants with their colleagues also organised an art festival, where the pupils of art seminars performed their work.

Shrnutí

Stáž GLEN se konala v Kapském Městě, které se nachází v jihozápadní části Jihoafrické republiky. Kapské Město je jedno z největších v Jihoafrické republice a díky urbanizaci se stále rozrůstá. Jedním z negativních jevů spojených s urbanizací je tvorba tzv. townshipů – chudinských čtvrtí – kde se nakonec ocitne většina venkovských přistěhovalců. Velká část lidí žijících v townshipech žije pod hranicí příjmové chudoby. Účastnice stáže GLEN zde pracovali u neziskové organizace SAEP – South African Education and Environment Project, která se zaměřuje na vzdělávání dětí a mládeže v chudinských čtvrtích Kapského Města. Organizace nabízí různé vzdělávací programy pro děti ve školkách, žáky základních a středních škol i pro vysokoškolské studenty. Tyto programy jim umožňují získávat a rozšiřovat jejich schopnosti a znalosti, které potom využijí v budoucím životě. V rámci některých programů spolupracuje SAEP i s dospělými a umožňuje jim účastnit se různých tematických seminářů. Této stáži se účastnily tři dobrovolnice - z Německa, Slovinska a České republiky. Hlavní náplní práce dobrovolnic byla výuka dětí a studentů v chudinských čtvrtích a příprava konkrétních výukových lekcí. Němka a Slovinka pracovaly s dětmi ve školkách, kde učily děti o oceánu a hygieně. Česká účastnice zde pracovala jako koordinátorka environmentálních aktivit napříč všemi programy. V průběhu stáže se všechny tři dobrovolnice podíleli na organizaci uměleckého festivalu, na kterém představili svou práci žáci uměleckých seminářů.

South Africa and Cape Town

The overall political situation in South Africa is stable, there is a democratic system of government and the current president is Jacob Zuma. South Africa has the biggest economy in Africa and according to the World Bank¹ its economy is growing and developing. However South Africa is also a country with one of the widest income gap between the wealthiest and poorest citizens in the world and the number of unemployed people is high, about one quarter of economic active citizens. The biggest problem of South Africa and especially of the big cities is high criminality rate. This is most probably caused by high levels of inequality, poverty, social exclusion and unemployment, but also by a common normalisation of violence and inefficiency of the justice system.² Concerning the health issues, about 14 % (about 7 millions) of citizens are HIV/AIDS positive; the most affected are poor people. This has many negative social and economical impacts.

On the other hand, in South Africa you can find wonderful natural richness in species, landscapes and biomes. The species variety is one of the highest in the world (especially in the region around Cape Town and the Table Mountain); it can compete with the variety in the rainforest. In South Africa, there is also many national parks and reserves, where tourist can observe so called big five – elephant, rhino, buffalo, lions and leopard – and many other animals and plants.

In South Africa, there are about 50 million citizens of different origins, cultures, languages and religions. About 80 % of all citizens are black, major ethnic groups are Zulu, Xhosa and Basotho. All the black people speak one of the Bantu languages. About 9 % citizens are white and 9 % are coloured, these people speak mainly English or Afrikaans. Concerning the religion, 80 % are Christians, 1,5 % Muslims, 1 % Hindus.³ South Africans are very proud of their cultural and natural heritage.

Cape Town is one of the biggest cities in South Africa (est. 4 – 6 mill. people), which is still growing due to the urbanization. It means that people from rural areas are moving into the bigger towns and cities. This trend is evident mainly in developing countries. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has negative social, environmental and also political consequences. In Cape Town you can find so called townships – shanty towns – where most of the incoming people settle down. Part of the townships was built during the apartheid era in order to move all the non-white people from the inner city outside the city to avoid contact between particular ethnic groups. In the old townships there is electricity, basic sanitation, some blacktop roads, schools, shops etc. However, there are also new rising townships, which are lacking any basic facilities and the situation there is miserable. Townships are very poor areas, where people often live under the income poverty line.

¹ <http://data.worldbank.org/country/south-africa>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime_in_South_Africa#Rape_Capital_of_the_World

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa

Most people in townships in Cape Town are from Xhosa ethnic group, who come here from Eastern Cape. They have their own language Xhosa, which is using clicks. Therefore it is hard to learn it. In townships, there also live immigrants, who are not really accepted by South Africans. South Africans see them as competitors, who can take their jobs.

Personal background and motivation

Since 2008 I have been studying International Development Studies⁴ in Olomouc, Czech Republic. For last four years I have participated in many projects connected to development cooperation, multicultural dialog, environmental and global education. For example, in the years 2009 and 2010 I volunteered in the project called Soccer for Development⁵, where 10 youngsters from Mathare slum in Nairobi, Kenya came to the Czech Republic to share their experiences and opinions with Czech high school students and off course also to play football and show their culture. From 2008 till 2011 I was a member of fair trade organisation NaZemi⁶, where I focused on promotion of the concept of fair trade and fair trade products, which I was selling. In 2010 I organised with my colleagues a project called Global Volunteer Partnerships focused on building long-term partnerships between NGOs from Southern and Eastern Europe and Caucasus. From 2009 I have been working at the Ecological Centre Slunakov⁷ as a lecturer of environmental and global education.

I am personally interested in development on the level person-to-person. Therefore I specialize on education, especially on environmental and global education, which is using informal and innovative educational methods and is concerning important issues of today's world.

Before I got in GLEN, I had wide theoretical knowledge about development, global problems, environmental issues etc.; but I also wanted to experience this knowledge, gain some practical skills and share my opinions with people from different countries and cultures. I also wanted to try, if I am able to work in developing countries, in different environment and culture and GLEN was the best opportunity to try it.

Before the internship started

First I was chosen for the project in Zambia called Teach and live in Zambian boarding school. But I had a problem with the German tandem partner, about two months before the internship was suppose to start, she decided not to go to Zambia. So I had to find another GLEN project, where they would need one more person. Luckily the SAEP from South Africa needed an environmental coordinator for their programs and my experiences fit to this job. So I joined the Slovenian-German tandem and on 20th of August I went to South Africa.

⁴ http://www.development.upol.cz/en_US/home

⁵ <http://fotbalprorozvoi.org>

⁶ <http://www.fairtrade.cz/en/onearth-society-for-fair-trade>

⁷ <http://www.slunakov.cz/eng>

GLEN internship at SAEP

The GLEN participants were working at SAEP – South African Education and Environment Project⁸ which is a non-governmental organisation focusing on education of children and young people living in townships in Cape Town. The organisation is providing several programs aimed on children in kindergartens, students at primary and secondary schools and on university students. These programs give the children and students the opportunity to gain and broaden their skills, knowledge and competencies. It enhances them to find a better job, study a university, break out of the circle of poverty. SAEP also cooperates with teachers and headmasters from kindergartens and offers them various workshops on related topics.

On this internship, there were three participants – Ina from Germany, Neža from Slovenia and Veronika from Czech Republic. Ina and Neža were working in the program called Early Childhood Development, which is focused on education of children in kindergartens in the township Philippi. The main tasks of girls were to prepare lessons and then do these lessons with children. They prepared lessons about ocean and hygiene and they did some art lessons with children too.

I was a coordinator of environmental activities throughout the programs. But this I realized on the very first day of my internship. Before I thought, I would also work in kindergartens with focus on environmental education. In the end of the day, I really liked my job, because it was close to what I do in my home country.

My main task was to teach environmental education twice a week (Monday, Wednesday) at two high schools in townships Philippi and Samora Machel. The rest of the week I was preparing the lessons and teaching materials. Because I had no assigned budget I had to think a lot about material and tools I could use. For one lesson, where we were planting herbs (chives, basil), I used empty plastic bottles to prepare the flower pots, seeds and soil I had from the workshop I did on the Art festival (see below). Apart from the lessons at high schools, every second weekend we organised together with local mountain clubs hikes for my students. We visited the Table Mountain, Lion's Head and beaches at Muizenberg. Moreover, the last weekend I was in Cape Town, I organized for one group of my students a visit of an environmental centre called Intaka Island.⁹ I think this was very important experience for my students, because they saw concrete projects, watched the birds (Intaka means bird) and they finally realized they could really work in the field of environment and environmental education; also our guide was Xhosa, so students got really in touch with him.

Me and Ina, we also created an environmental free time activities for the overnight hike on the Table Mountain, we made with the students from Bridging Year Program. These students already finished high school, but they don't have enough good results to get to the

⁸ www.saep.org

⁹ <http://www.intaka.co.za>

university. So, they attend the BY Program for one year and then they do final exams and ideally go to the university. The success rate is quite high, about fifty percent of BY students go to the university and the rest find a good job.

Besides teaching at high schools, I also intended to do two or three workshops on environmental education – topics and methods – for teachers and headmasters from kindergartens. I started to work on methodical materials, but unfortunately we had some communicational problems with teachers and the workshops didn't occur.

Last thing, all three of us took part in, was organising of an art festival, where the pupils of art seminars of SAEP performed their work. We prepared workshops – gardening (planting herbs), face painting, beading and musical instruments making – for children who came to the festival. The festival took place in township Philippi and the pupils performed in dancing, singing, playing marimba music, drama and reading their poems. Other pupils showed their work on the walls – paintings, drawings, photos, poems and posters. It was really successful event, there came about 500 people!

Communication and cooperation

The working environment in the organisation was quite pleasant; our colleagues were kind and open to the new comers. In the beginning it is always hard to adjust to totally new conditions, but people in SAEP helped us a lot with this, especially the coordinator of Early Childhood Development Program, Elise. She was the contact person for Ina and Neža. The cooperation with my official contact person didn't work at all, so I discussed all important issues with Elise or with the coordinator of arts programs.

What takes in Europe few minutes, in South Africa, it can take days. People here even distinguish between so called "africa time" and "normal time". The cooperation within SAEP worked good, just little bit slowly. The cooperation with the people living in townships was ok, but super super slowly. To set up a date for workshop was really difficult, because either everybody came late, or nobody came. I have to say, that many people from townships I met are not reliable in terms of time and attendance on meetings. This was the main reason, why no workshops for kindergarten teachers took place.

South Africa has eleven official languages, with English on the first place. However, in many places in SA you would need another language to speak. In Cape Town, in the tourist and rich areas, English is enough, but in townships you can easily get lost. Most of the people there speak Xhosa, which is quite hard language to learn, because of so called clicks. All three of us often contend with the language barrier. Girls working with small children, who can speak only Xhosa, necessarily needed the help of teachers with translation. But it sometimes happened that the teachers couldn't speak English at all.

I was a bit more lucky. I worked with pupils at high schools, where they have to speak English, because they have all the subjects and books in this language. So, all of them could

speak some English, but they were very shy, so it took ages to convince them not to be shy and speak. Moreover, if they were suppose to work on something, they spoke Xhosa most of the time – because it is more comfortable for them and it is also strange to speak with your Xhosa friends in different language. During the internship the cooperation with students get much better, they got to use to me and stopped to be shy to speak English.

The reason, why many older Xhosa people in Cape Town can't speak English is that they couldn't go to school during the apartheid era and they couldn't learn English. They also didn't need it much that time, because they were in contact only with people from their community. But this is changing now.

Joys and sorrows of our trinom

In the beginning of our internship all three of us agreed on living together in a rented flat. After five days of staying in hostel we found a prefect flat for us. Ten minutes by walk away from our office, with two room, kitchen and bathroom, in a safety quarter with supermarket and ATM machine across the street. Moreover, our landlord became our friend and he show us many interesting parts of Cape Town, he even drove us to Nieuvoordville (about 500 kilometres from Cape Town) to visit our GLEN friends and to see so called blooming desert.

We had a lot of fun in our trinom, we visited many interesting places around Cape Town (the Table Mountain, Cape of Good Hope, Cederberg mountains...), we rented a car together to travel around a bit, we also went surfing. All three of us had many things in common, especially the passion for travelling and exploring.

However, of course we had a lot of problems and disagreements. In the very first days, me and Ina realized, that Neža always has to have the last word. After few weeks, me and Neža realised, that Ina is quite unstable while she is stressed. And, I would say, after few days, girls realized, that I am rather upset inside, than to talk about anything with anybody. So, we had some arguments coming from our different personalities.

Our living in the trinom gave me lot of interesting experience. I learned a lot about different people behaviour, that something which is self-evident for me is not self-evident for the others. I became more respectful but also more self-confident and I got to know myself much better.

I can definitely say we were really great trinom and we are good friends now. We are still in contact and planning some stuff for the RENew seminar.

Problems and challenges

The main problem we were facing was the issue of safety. Cape Town and whole South Africa has high criminality rate and you as a "white rich European" are obvious target. This was what we thought in the beginning. The first weeks were quite hard for us; it was not easy to keep our common sense and do not panic. Many people told us different stories

about what had happened in townships or even in the quarter, where was our office. A year ago, there were some murders on the streets. In Cape Town there you also can't go anywhere by walk when it is dark, especially after midnight. You have to take a cap or drive with your own car.

After few weeks we got used to the new environment, we got in touch with local people and we lost a bit of our fear. We realized, it is important to keep our mind clear and be cautious and the possibility of troubles decreased to minimum. We were really lucky, nothing happened to us, we were not robbed, mugged or anything else.

One of the biggest challenges for us was also to deal with the enormous differences between rich and poor areas. We lived in the area where people from the middle income group live, then we worked in very poor areas – townships, and we spent a lot of our free time in the tourist and rich areas in the city centre. All of these areas are just next to each other, but separated like they were from different realities. I have never come to terms with this; I just learned to ignore it.

Concerning some practical problems, I had to deal with the different educational system they are using at township schools. The students are not used to some informal educational methods, neither to learn outside the school. Students are used to learn everything by heart; therefore it was quite hard to make them think by their own. On the other hand, after few weeks I could see their progress and their pleasure from new educational methods I used and games we played. Another challenge for me was to convince them to use their knowledge. They knew a lot about pollution, litter and its consequences, they knew they shouldn't litter and keep their environment clean, but it was really hard for them to behave like this.

Global education practise

I have a blog about my African experience called Verca is going to Africa¹⁰, where I wrote several articles about the internship, everyday life in Cape Town, about townships, after-return cultural shock etc. Unfortunately it is only in Czech, but I have in mind to translate it in English.

Since I returned to Czech Republic I did several global education activities. In the beginning of December I did a presentation about GLEN and my internship focused on potential future GLENNies in Olomouc. Naturally I did many presentations for all members of my family, friends and colleagues with very interesting discussions after it. I did an interview about my internship in the radio Wave (part of the Czech Radio), which will be on air on 4th March at 11:00 in the morning and later it will be available on the website of the radio Wave.¹¹

¹⁰ <http://www.vercajededoafriky.blogspot.com>

¹¹ <http://www.rozhlas.cz/radiowave/casablanca>

Apart from GLEN I am in the organizational team of the project "Sailing for Sustainability"¹², which came up from the ideas of GLEN-alumni. Since December I am working on methodical book for teachers about sustainability and sustainable development, which is aimed on pupils from 13 to 18 years.

On 29th February I will have a presentation about GLEN in Prague at INEX-SDA office¹³, and on 24th April I will have so called Development Evening in Olomouc organized by ARPOK¹⁴, organization focusing on global education in Olomouc region.

We as the Czech GLEN team (composed from Czech GLENNies 2011, Lydi – German-Czech GLENNie and Romana – Czech coordinator of GLEN) are planning a big global education action aimed on people living in the Czech countryside. Right now we are in the planning phase, but the action should go on in July 2012.

Conclusion

As I mentioned before I found out a lot about the interpersonal relations, I realised many things about myself. For me the coexistence in our trinom was a bit more challenging than the internship (work, environment) itself.

I learned a lot about the South African culture, I got to know people from different social classes. I made my opinion about South Africa and Cape Town especially, which I will represent during my presentations and following discussions.

The GLEN internship in Cape Town was one of the greatest experiences in my life. I finally got the practical background so important for me and my future activity in the field of development and global education. The project was a challenge for me and I think I succeeded. I am pretty satisfied with the results of my internship and with myself. Experiences and skills I gained are priceless, I am really glad I got the second GLEN chance to go to Cape Town.

The only thing I really didn't like on my internship was the short duration of it. I realized that in three months you can't do so much. After the first month I finally started to understand the situation in the townships and my students got more open. In the end our cooperation was great and there were a lot of potential to evolve further. I was a bit sad, I had to go back home. But next time, I would go to South Africa or anywhere else, I would definitely stay there longer.

¹² <http://www.efte.org/forum>

¹³ http://inexsda.cz/cs/kukatko_do_sveta

¹⁴ <http://www.arpok.cz/en>