

## Introduction

From the 5<sup>th</sup> of September until the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, I lived in the rural area of the Eastern Cape in South Africa. In these three months I lived in the Mdumbi village working for the local NPO called TransCape. I came here to do my internship, which is part of my two-year master's degree in International Humanitarian Action. My experience has been life changing, in this report I will focus not only on the actual experience but also on the process of preparation and planning before the arrival.

## Before the internship

I started planning this internship as soon as I got the Work Placement Contract signed (18<sup>th</sup> February 2022). This allowed me to have a strong background which, as far as I am concerned, made my experience easier and also more complete. I used that months to get stronger knowledge not only about how to implement my task best, but also about the organisation and its action. I did not need to apply to any Visa because the touristic one last three months, which was the exact amount I was needing.

## During the internship

### Accommodation and financial aspects

Life here is not extremely expensive. Therefore, the amount provided from the scholarship was balanced enough to cover my accommodation and my grocery shopping. Life here is not that easy, having an accommodation here means live in a hut, with no other water than the rain one and with no other toilet than a compost one. Although, all this is worthy when it comes to live in the middle of the nature, surrounded only by trees and by the ocean.

### Host organisation

TransCape NPO was registered in 2004 and since then it has been operating in rural Eastern Cape, Ngqeleni District, one of the poorest areas in South Africa (Anon, n.d.). Their vision is to be an "interconnected community of holistic, healthy and empowered individuals" (Anon, n.d.). They have been working towards their vision by responding to community concerns through the sustainable development of local resources (Anon, n.d.). Their mission is to be an "informed, monitored, open and accessible" resource to the community (Anon, n.d.).

Their work is underpinned by the idea that aid should be provided firstly through listening and then through providing access to knowledge, examples, and resources (Anon, n.d.). Keeping this as a start, they have been developing programs that embrace four interconnected sectors: health, skill development laboratory, livelihood, and education (Anon, n.d.).

### Daily routine

During these three months, I have been working full time from 8 to 16 from Monday to Friday. Following TransCape's approach to providing aid, my work here also embraced many different fields of humanitarianism. Indeed, through my internship I had the opportunity not only to collaborate with TransCape in their fieldwork but also in most managerial tasks, such as programming, evaluating, monitoring and communication.

Regarding the former, I was involved in all the projects they provide in the Mankosi village. I worked at the pre-school everyday from 8 to 12, providing early childhood education and development to the 60 kids enrolled. Every day I was helping the teacher with the daily learning schedule which include awareness through songs and table activities and maths and writing skills lessons. On Mondays, Wednesdays and

Friday's afternoons I worked on another educational project focused on older students (from grade 5 to 9). This project aims providing them intellectual and emotional opportunities they would otherwise lack. Practically speaking this translates into afternoon English and math classes and collective sharing time. This project is linked with the "scholarship" one, which provide scholarship to the most diligent student of the After School and allows them to study in Umtata, the closest city nearby. My task in this project was to draft all the budget plans needed.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, instead, I focused on the health and social projects. These ones involved door-to-door HIV counselling, sex education for Grade 9 students and the project called "children in need". This last one is a door-to-door project which aim to support the poorest families by providing essential goods for kids. The other two consisted in teaching about what HIV is, how to get test for it and how to prevent it and in providing sanitary pads to girls and condoms.

Last but not least, I worked also for the skills development centre, specifically for the computer laboratory. For this project I gave an intensive course of basic computer and CV and motivation letter, which lasted the first 10 days of October. I followed both young students and adults, and I had the possibility to use the knowledges I was getting from the Career Development Module.

In all the projects, slowly I was given space to work independently. This allowed me to deploy into practice all the skills I have been leaning and grasping from the example and the supervision of my colleagues.

Regarding the managerial responsibilities, instead, I worked on programming, communication, and monitoring tasks. I was part of the programming staff of a next agricultural project which will be launched soon. This meant participating where we questioned the aim of the project and the means, and the steps needed to achieve it. It also meant considering the financial aspects by drafting the budgets and the possible ways of fundraising, including drafting a future crowdfunding strategy. Despite the work that has been done, this project will still require a lot of time and planning, so my tasks will continue even from far away.

Moreover, I was responsible of the communication part through working on social media and on helping the writing process of the reports. I started a new profile on Instagram and kept on growing the Facebook one, in order to use them both to show donors our improvement and to get a stronger and international support. To conclude, I also had the opportunity to join the monitoring and evaluation team. In this regard, I had a schedule weekly meeting on Wednesdays with my supervisor to share the steps achieved and not achieved by the various projects. However, the moment when I worked the most for this position was the end of the placement. In fact, the last three weeks the focus on monitoring and evaluation was higher in view of the annual meeting.



Figure 1 and 2:

Preschool

Beside the internship, I had the opportunity to fully integrated into the village and experience the Xhosa culture which opened my mind and my heart as never before. Indeed, by the end of the internship I was fully integrated in the village and the local community named me “Noncedo” which means the one who likes to help.

## Conclusion

My experience at Mdumbi has been life changing, but of course it has its ups and downs. The best part was that it was not just an internship experience but one that introduced me to and integrated me into a culture. The hardest part, on the other hand, was that the lifestyle is completely different from what I have always been used to, and getting used to it was so hard at first.

Considering all the above, there are some tips I would like to give to possible future interns. Firstly, do not rush, things in the village happen slowly but surely. Secondly, use this opportunity to learn about the culture. The Xhosa culture is amazing and getting to know it and learning the language will make you completely feel a part of the community. Lastly, ask for help whenever you need it, either in work or in daily life, there is a whole village ready to help you.



Figure 3: Preschool



Figure 4: HIV Door to Door