

Capacity Building in Cape Town

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LOCATION: CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

- South Africa is the most southern country on the African continent. The city of Cape Town lies on the most southern tip with the Indian and Atlantic Oceans lining either side. South Africa is a nation of diversity, with 51.77 million people and a variety of cultures, languages and religious beliefs. South Africa recognizes 11 official languages, the top three being isiZulu, isiXhosa, and Afrikaans.

VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA:

- According to UNICEF, there are an estimated 3.7 million orphans in South Africa, 150,000 of which are believed to be living in child-headed households (2010).
- About half of the 3.7 million orphans have lost one or both parents to AIDS (2010).
- Data from the South Africa Social Security Agency showed that close to half a million children were in formal, court-ordered foster care (2008).



GLOBAL FIELD AGENCY

My global field experience was with Home from Home in Cape Town. Home from Home's mission is to provide supported and supervised community-based foster care for orphaned, abused, neglected and vulnerable children through a network of small, family homes in ten disadvantaged communities in South Africa. Over half of the children enrolled in the program are HIV positive. My work primarily consisted of assisting at a day care/pre-school center created for the foster children in the township community of Khyelitsha.

OUTCOMES

In the course of my twelve week global field placement, I had the opportunity to build capacity with the three teachers employed at the Home from Home community day care/pre-school center by implementing individual psycho-social support sessions.

My major accomplishments include:

- Implementing 30 psycho-social support sessions in a span of three months that resulted in the teachers experiencing lower levels of anxiety and stress as well as increased levels of confidence, empowerment, and well-being.
- Bridging the communication barrier as a liaison between the teachers and the upper management Home from Home staff.

CONNECTIONS

Classroom:

SW 521: Interpersonal Practice with Individuals, Families, and Small Groups

- This course gave me foundation knowledge and skills essential to interpersonal practice with individuals, families and small groups in social contexts. It integrated content on multiculturalism, diversity, and social justice issues. I learned how to perform various social work roles (i.e. counselor/clinical social worker, group facilitator, mediator, and advocate), recognizing that these roles must adhere to social work values and ethics.

SW 648: Issues in Global Social Work Practice

- This course better prepared me for professional Social Work practice during my global social work experience. I was able to explore how national context (economics, political environment, culture, traditions, etc.) impacts how social problems are identified, understood, and addressed cross-culturally.

Career

- As a community organization student, implementing psycho-social support sessions with the teachers at Home from Home allowed me to expand my professional scope of practice and gave me an in-depth, hands-on level of learning experience that I will carry with me into my future career.

SKILLS DEVELOPED

From the global field experience, I increased my ability to:

- Expand my professional scope of practice by working in an interpersonal practice/therapy setting
- Develop and build positive, cross-cultural relationships
- Build capacity within an organization
- Communicate with community partners

LESSONS LEARNED

- The importance of active listening and allowing space for problem-solving
- The importance of utilizing the individual strengths and skills of the teachers to benefit the organization
- The importance of building relationship and trust in order to effectively work in a cross-cultural setting

ADVICE

- Always enter communities with cultural humility, knowing that there is ALWAYS something to learn.
- The key to working successfully in any setting is in the relationships built. Take the time and effort to do so and to understand the history and context of the community you are serving.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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