

# Gender Equality in South Africa

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**African Impact**  
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## Destination: Cape Town, South Africa

*The Rainbow Nation*

South Africa is arguably one of the most diverse countries in the world, with a population of about 55 million, nine geographical provinces, and 11 official languages, with the most common being Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, & English. About 80% of South Africans are of Sub-Saharan African descent, while the remaining population consists of Africa's largest communities of European, Asian & multiracial individuals.

### Some relevant facts:

- The population is largely made up of youth, with 66% of citizens being under age 35.
- South Africa has the highest number of people living with HIV in the world (7 million), but also has the largest antiretroviral treatment program available globally.
- Ranked in the top ten countries in the world for income inequality, with an unemployment rate of 27.7%.

### Cape Town



## Agency/Community Partner: African Impact

African Impact is an international volunteer organization that coordinates different types of volunteer trips throughout the continent of Africa. They partner with The Happy Africa Foundation, an NGO that manages the donations received by African Impact and utilizes these funds to support the volunteer projects and community partners.

## Project Information & Choice

My global independent study was a volunteer trip focused on working with the Girl Impact Initiative, a project focused on supporting and educating African girls to help them make more informed decisions as they move towards womanhood. My work was based in the township of Khayelitsha and largely consisted of facilitating after school programs for boys and girls developed by us volunteers with a focus on the six pillars of the Girl Impact. My desire to work with the project came from the fact that I'm extremely passionate about global feminism and I believe that starting in youth is the best way to evoke gender equality. Additionally, I worked in two pre grade R & grade R classrooms by assisting in the development and implementation of structured play and educational activities.

## Outcomes

My learning product consists of a research paper examining gender in South Africa, including a description of my work in Cape Town, a discussion of South African gender norms and the ways in which South African women and girls are affected in terms of the six pillars of the Girl Impact.

## Skills Utilized/Developed

- Leadership and assertiveness
- Working effectively with youth
- Engagement and teamwork in a multicultural setting
- Planning and coordinating educational activities

## Lessons Learned

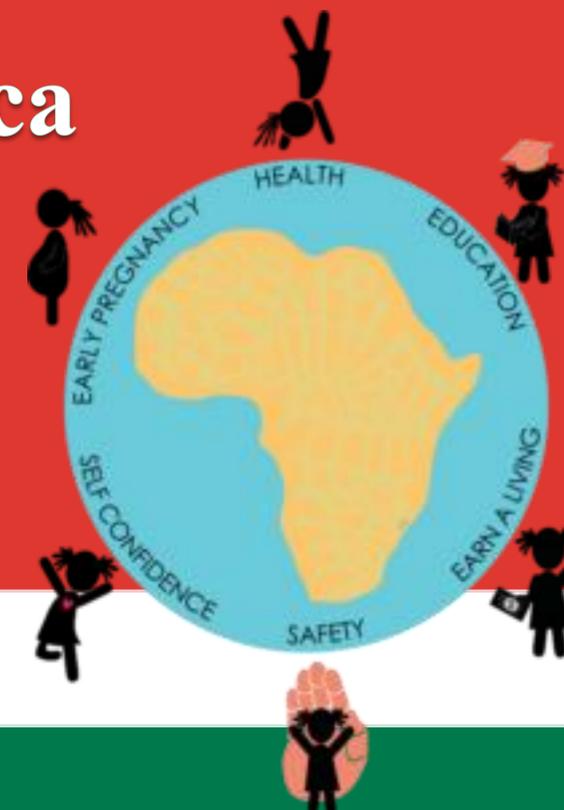
- Working in Khayelitsha helped me to remember the importance of having a strong sense of community and the strength that comes with that.
- Although female empowerment is important, when trying to promote gender equality it's extremely important to engage both girls & boys simultaneously.
- The after effects of apartheid are still very present, and I think it's important to challenge and make these inequalities more visible in order for South Africa to be as united in its diversity as it aims to be, just as we should continue to do in the U.S.

## Advice

- Do your research about the area you'll be staying in and working in (I had some fellow volunteers that virtually knew nothing about South African history), and definitely try to learn some key terms in the language you'll be encountering the most.
- Plan out what activities you'd like to do in your free time and make sure you set a solid budget for yourself because it's easy to get lost in the money conversion.

## Acknowledgments

A huge thank you to the Office of Global Activities for providing me with the global independent study grant- without it this trip would have been impossible. I'd also like to thank Beth Glover Reed for being my faculty sponsor and Katie Lopez for encouraging me to apply for the grant in the first place. And of course, I want to acknowledge African Impact for coordinating my trip and making me feel so comfortable during my first time abroad.



## Connections

*From the classroom:*

**SW625** – IP with Children & Youth:  
This class helped me build my engagement skills for working with youth, which is the population I spent most of my time with during my trip.

**SW658** – Women & Community Organizing:  
This class not only strengthened my interest in global gender equality, it helped me understand the principles of feminism which provided me with a solid foundation to guide my work with the Girl Impact.

*For my future career:*

My work in South Africa helped me realize how important working for gender equality is to me, and I hope to have the opportunity to continue driving female empowerment with my future clients. It also helped me build confidence in the leadership role, which is something I normally shy away from but had no choice but to take on while volunteering.