

# PROJECTS ABROAD SOUTH AFRICA

Newsletter Vol. XII

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**Volunteer Natasha Pesaren hosting a Play Day at the Youngsfield Refugee Camp**



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# Projects Abroad Human Rights Office

It has been a busy month at the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHRO), with the case load nearly doubling and most days fully booked with meetings. The majority of the work has revolved around the refugee crisis in Cape Town following last year's xenophobic attacks.

## Visits to Youngsfield Military Base Refugee Camp

PAHRO has continued to carry out regular visits to the refugee camp at Youngsfield Military Base. The government has officially closed the site down; there is currently no warm water or electricity supply. It is estimated that there are only around sixty people remaining at the site. Those who remain are perhaps the most disillusioned with South Africa and are adamant that they want to be allowed to return to their home countries. The interns have experienced difficulties with some of those still there as they are angry with the fact that nothing has been done to help them leave South Africa by either the South African Government or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

## Fundraiser

PAHRO interns were joined by other Projects Abroad volunteers in a fundraiser at the Waterfront for the refugees at Youngsfield. They collected over 1000 ZAR which it is hoped will allow us to provide the women and children of Youngsfield with some basic living essentials. Most of the money will go towards food.

## Applications for third country resettlement

The majority of the work with regards to the refugees has involved the preparation of their applications for third country resettlement to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). PAHRO is receiving ever increasing numbers of refugees who have heard that we have previously referred a number of cases to the UNHCR. PAHRO have been advised by the UNHCR to prepare applications for interview by the middle of February. This process although offering the refugees some hope is proving worryingly slow. There are serious issues regarding the treatment of refugees in South Africa. Many refugees have fled war torn areas of the Great Lakes region of Africa including the eastern area of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Somalia. In addition, traumatized refugees have faced growing xenophobia in South African communities including serious criminal violence and discrimination. The interns have attempted to give the refugees immediate assistance in finding jobs and accommodation in safe areas. PAHRO are also starting to look for private organizations that might provide assistance to these people.

## Identification papers

Many refugees are still experiencing difficulties in getting their identification papers renewed by the Department of Home Affairs. Virtually all the refugees report that they are forced to queue up for days on end and are even forced to pay bribes to actually get past security and into the building. The serious nature of this issue was highlighted when one of PAHRO clients was arrested for not having the correct identification papers on him. This situation was made all the more troubling when you consider that he was in fact trying to go to the Nyanga Refugee Reception Office (NRRO) at the time to get these papers renewed. PAHRO interns and the project manager, Theodore Kamwimbi, were forced to visit court with a letter sent from the UNHCR explaining the situation and the fact that the refugee concerned had proof that he had made repeated attempts to get those papers renewed.

# Projects Abroad Human Rights Office

PAHRO interns, led by Theodore Kamwimbi, also went on a visit to the NRRO. The aim of this exercise was to get a better understanding of why so many refugees are struggling to have their papers renewed or even gain entry to the building. The proximity of the office to the Nyanga Township is of particular concern. The area is generally unsafe but it is particularly dangerous for foreign nationals, who have repeatedly been subjected to xenophobic attacks in the area. The interns posed as foreign research students and were allowed access to the building. Those inside reported that there had been a lot of fighting in the morning and at one point the police had fired rubber bullets into the crowd. These refugees said that even once they had gained access to the building, it was unlikely that they would have their papers looked at and many described widespread corruption throughout the department. PAHRO hopes to meet with Mr. Richard Sikakane (the head of the NRRO) to discuss the matter further.

## South African Human Rights Commission cases

PAHRO has continued to deal with those cases referred to it from the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and can happily report that a number of these cases have been closed over the last month. The SAHRC recently referred a case to PAHRO concerning the evidence one man had collected with regards to a website containing child pornography. It is hoped that this evidence can be used to have the website closed down.

## Weekly visits

PAHRO has also started to run its weekly visits to Bonnytoun House and St Anne's Home. These institutions house young people awaiting trial and women suffering from domestic abuse, respectively. These initiatives involve teaching the children and women about their rights, along with important life skills such as CV writing, sex education and parenting skills. We believe we have a responsibility as a human rights organization, to advocate the rights of the most vulnerable groups in society, including advocating women's rights and speaking out against sexual and domestic abuse. In addition, the children at Bonnytoun (pre-trial detainees) are in a vulnerable position. It is the responsibility of human rights organizations to ensure they are not detained pre-trial for too long and they are supervised and rehabilitated in a humane manner.

## Research and Reports

The interns are also busy writing reports on human rights issues in South Africa that are relevant to the work we undertake. This includes issues surrounding prison conditions in South Africa, child abuse and problems facing refugees, particularly with relation to reintegration and refugee camp conditions. In addition, Theodore Kamwimbi gave a valuable seminar on the post-independence history and politics of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

# New Business Project Wine Industry



Projects Abroad South Africa is proud to announce a brand new Business Project working in the Cape Wine Industry. Volunteers will work on a South African winery outside of Cape Town in the region of Paarl. Volunteers will be involved in grape harvesting, marketing, bottling, labeling, learning the art of viticulture, history of wine making in South Africa and much more! Anyone interested in this exciting new project is encouraged to apply! South Africa is famous for its wine making and in recent years has started to really gain an international reputation for its delicious products!

# Volunteer Donations

**A Big Thank You to Volunteers who  
made donations to their projects!**

**THANK YOU to...**

**Noelle Nazha – Hyde Park Primary  
Tiffany Dove - Hyde Park Primary  
Sofia Tacchella – Sea Winds Educare  
Jackie Edelman – Fairview Primary  
Johnlyn Tromp – Various Projects**

**Your donations mean so much to the  
schools, teachers and children! We  
really appreciate your support!**

# Socials and Weekend Trips

## Blokrans Bungee Jump, Storm's River



The Volunteers had an Adrenaline Rushed Weekend packing in as much fun as possible! They spent the weekend wine tasting, zip lining through the Tsisikama Forest, walking with elephants and jumping from a 216 METER bridge! They drove from Cape Town down the Garden Route, stopping at an Ostrich Farm and the Cango Caves in Outdshoorn on their way home! What a great trip!

# Recipe Corner

## FISH BREYANI

50 ml oil  
1 large onion, sliced into rings  
4 cardamom seeds  
4 whole cloves  
2 pieces stick cinnamon  
5 ml chopped fresh ginger  
4 cloves garlic, crushed  
5 ml barishap  
5 ml cumin seeds (jeera)  
5 ml ground coriander  
5 ml leaf masala  
5 ml breyani masala  
1 kg fresh fish, cubed  
salt  
5 ml fish masala  
6 small potatoes, peeled  
200g (500 ml) uncooked rice  
5 ml turmeric  
125 ml lentils (masoor)  
4 hard-boiled eggs



Heat the oil in a pan and fry the onion, cardamom seeds, cloves, cinnamon, ginger and garlic until the onion is tender and all the flavours have blended together. Add the barishap, cumin seeds, coriander, leaf masala, breyani masala and a little water. Simmer until an aromatic paste is formed.

Season the fish with salt and fish masala and add together with potatoes to the paste. Fry until the mixture acquires a nice yellow colour. Cover and braise until cooked. The potatoes should be soft but still intact. Add extra water if necessary.

Add the rice to boiling salted water along with the turmeric and boil until tender. Drain and set aside. Cook the lentils in boiling water until soft and drain.

Combine the rice and lentils and arrange layers of the breyani mixture and rice in a saucepan. Add a little water, cover with a piece of waxed paper and lid, and steam for about half an hour.

Slice the eggs into quarters and place on top of the breyani just before serving.

Serves 6 - 8.

# Volunteer Stories

Written by : Sean McEwen Sports/Teaching Volunteer at Hillside Primary School, Lavender Hill

Cape Town is one of the most stunning cities in the world. Not just the weather or the scenic views but the human spirit and the warmth of strangers is what makes it so special.

I came to Cape Town not sure what really to expect. The host family I had is one of the greatest host families anyone could ever ask for. I know all volunteers will tell you they had the best, but mine is the real deal. Instantly from the moment I arrived, I was welcomed with open arms and most importantly, an open heart. I became family within seconds. They instantly felt like old relatives you haven't seen in years, but you just connect instantly. And like any good relatives, they give you the best cooking you can ask for. I do not think I have ever eaten so well in my life! Something new, delicious and traditional every night. And if I ever needed help, I knew they would be there for me.

During my first month I was a volunteer at Hillwood Primary School. Hillwood sadly is severely underfunded in the community of Lavender Hill. This is the reason why Projects Abroad is involved. For one solid month, I was the physical education teacher and I would not trade that month for anything. I was able to teach grades 3-6 new sports and new games. Being a patriotic Canadian, I just had to bring hockey. I am so glad I did. I have never seen such amazing and beautiful smiles as when they saw the equipment: hockey sticks, nets, goalie masks and jerseys. Nor have I ever had such an amazing and fun street hockey experience.

Amongst those amazing experiences, are the experiences you make with the other volunteers, who I can honestly say, are some of the greatest friends you will ever make. Not only that, but you instantly connect with everyone. The times you spend together at Muizenberg Beach, Camps Bay, Long Street, Observatory, watching a Cricket match live in Newlands, the socials and weekend trips Projects Abroad organizes, going to Table Mountain or where ever you can imagine, you have a blast. Cape Town has so much to offer. Take it all in. And be sure to do it with your new best friends!

Because of these of friends, you never really do get home sick. As odd as that may sound. You are with them a good majority of your time so you never think about it. Because of this reason you always feel like you are at home no matter where you are in Cape Town.

My second month in South Africa was supposed to be one of traveling and seeing the country. Oddly, I never did it. For that, I thank two of the greatest friends I have ever made, who were also volunteering with Projects Abroad. They were at Westlake Worship Centre helping run a kids program during summer break. Any day you get to goof around, sing songs, dance, play games outside and do crafts with kids, is a great day!

The team they have in Cape Town was more than I ever expected. If you need anything, anything at all, any time of day or night, they are there for you. Not only are they there for you, but they go the extra mile every single time. The drive they have for helping to make a change is just amazing. And it inspires you to be that much better a volunteer.

My second month ended, and I was not ready to come home. I had found a new home. So after several hours of pleading, the Bank of Mom and Dad allowed me to stay for 3 more weeks. Now I thought I will travel. Again, didn't do it. I couldn't leave the kids I grew to love. I spent my last three weeks at Westlake.

I do not regret a single moment of my two and a half months. If you were to give me a ticket to go back tomorrow, I wouldn't think twice about it. I have every intention of heading back. Cape Town has a very special place in my heart. And it opened my eyes to not only a new world, but to what life is all about.

On that note I would like to leave you saying this:

Life is never about what car you drive, how big your house is, or the size of your bank account. It is about who you are, and what you do to make the lives around you better