

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad South Africa



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ProjectsAbroad

International Mandela Day



Projects Abroad staff and volunteers who took part in the fun day.

The Projects Abroad staff and volunteers took part in a number of activities where they spent their time doing something meaningful for the communities around Cape Town. Our Operations and Global Information Office, alongside volunteers, visited a nursery school in Capricorn where they were met with a beautiful, lively group of children.

Our volunteers didn't waste any time to interact with the children; they started off the day with games and face-paints which brought out all kinds of excitement from the children.

The area outside of the school was neglected and full of litter from the community. A sandbox which is the only play area that the children had was in a bad condition. As Projects Abroad, we decided to lend a hand by repainting and refurbishing that area. The volunteers who came to the event were eager to help as they understood that even a little effort goes a long way for the school.

Little Shine Nursery relies on only three teachers that take care of up to 120 children from the surrounding community who are between the ages two to six-years-old. Dealing with such a big group of children with only three teachers, results in not all the children receiving the necessary attention to their education that requires them to qualify for primary school and the Projects Abroad volunteers that come to work at the school help to fill this gap.

Some of our staff members brought along some educational material which had the children occupied during the refurbishing of their play area. We ended the day off by serving some homemade soup to the children and the community.

One really does get a sense of the difference days like these make in our communities. We should learn to care for our fellow citizens not only on this day but every day. There is always someone that could use and appreciate an act of good will.

We would like to thank our staff, volunteers and other projects that hosted a Mandela Day. We appreciate you taking the time to help make someone's day. Remember to make every day a Mandela Day.

Human Rights Programme with Polsmoor prison

Projects Abroad Human Rights Organisation (PAHRO) deals with a number of projects that are dedicated to creating awareness and defending human rights in South Africa. With as many as 40 volunteers joining the project every month, the Human Rights project began to work closely with Polsmoor prison in the hopes of alleviating the long-standing issue of overcrowding in the prisons.



It was reported that in November 2012, South Africa's prison overcrowding reached an overwhelming 279%, which made it the 9th highest inmate population in the world and the highest in Africa.

The high number of detainees in the prison has resulted in the violation of the prisoners basic human rights. Prisoners have no privacy because they live as a big group in a small space that was designed to host less people than what there are.

The unfortunate part is that majority of the inmates have not been convicted of any crimes,

Maria Mulindi (Front), PAHRO Program Manager, Miriam MacDonald, Volunteer Supervisor and Sherwin Daniels, Legal Service Coordinator

the backlog of inmate's trials not being attended to timeously means that they are forced to live under these poor conditions; whilst many of them cannot afford to pay the bail amount.

PAHRO steps in not only to help Polsmoor in reducing the overcrowding of cells by providing the inmates with the necessary legal representation in court so that their cases are dealt with more speedily as well as ensuring that their right to a fair trial is adhered to.

Polsmoor prison provides PAHRO with a list of prisoners who have been admitted into the prison. These include prisoners who can't afford any legal representation and those who choose not to take up their right to legal aid. PAHRO then exclusively deals with individuals who have been arrested for petty offences, such as trespassing and shoplifting.

After meeting with a client and hearing their side of the story, the client is required to give PAHRO the power of attorney, which means that any court representation from then on will be done by PAHRO attorney, Sherwin Daniels.

PAHRO provides their clients with the best representation necessary in order for them to ensure that their right to a fair and speedy trial is adhered to, as enshrined in South Africa's constitution. Clients must either plead, guilty or not guilty for their alleged crime. Depending on the nature of the crime the client is advised on which plea to take.

Because trials differ with every client and circumstance, PAHRO with the help of its volunteers has to research and make sure that they are able to build a formidable argument or mitigation if the client pleads guilty. For example, a guilty client with an existing criminal record is less likely to receive a lighter sentence, as opposed to a first time offender.

But even with that chance, PAHRO has been able to achieve a 100% trial success rate with all the cases that they have handled from Polsmoor prison. The clients that they have represented were either acquitted or had the charges withdrawn.

The participation of volunteers in the Human Rights Project is really important for the success of the Pollsmoor programme. With only five staff members working at PAHRO, and only one attending to court appearances, the project relies highly on volunteers in order to tend to as many cases as possible. Volunteers receive the opportunity to consult, research and help build cases that will serve the interests of the client.

Many of the volunteers that come to work at PAHRO always find the experience very useful as they get first-hand experience of working in Law. Volunteers are involved just as much as the staff is, which often helps the volunteers who are law students. They are given an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the field they wish to work in.

Twenty-year-old Joshua Jackson from the UK found the project to be very insightful because he was able to experience the difference that the organisation (with the help of volunteers) makes to the lives of others. "Working at PAHRO showed me that I can keep on learning new things every day. The majority of my days are spent working with the legal services and dealing with clients that need our help. Working on these cases and learning more about social justice services will be very useful considering that I'll be doing my law degree to become a human rights lawyer," he said.

The exceptional work done by PAHRO has gained some popularity amongst inmates, with word spreading about their success; they now receive requests from other prisoners who are seeking for a reliable and committed legal service. PAHRO is now a trusted and popular organisation amongst inmates. The overall goal of this initiative is to someday be able to guarantee that our prisons function proficiently whilst adhering to human rights laws.

Given the tremendous growth in support and constant participation of volunteers in the programme, one could say that the Projects Abroad Human Rights organisation is well on its way to achieving its goal.



(Left) South Africa country Director, Gisela Madden with the second group of two week specials who joined PAHRO.



Kabir Badiani from India.

Animal Care Project visit: SANCCOB



Volunteers from SANCCOB bath one of the penguins that was rescued by the organization.

SANCCOB is a non-profit organisation that saves and rehabilitates African penguins and other kinds of threatened seabirds. As one of our Animal Care Projects, SANCCOB gives regular tours to volunteers, educating them on the work that they do at the centre.

Since its establishment in 1968, SANCCOB has treated over 90 000 oiled, ill, injured or abandoned African penguins and other threatened seabirds. Its main objective is to conserve our seabird population and provide the necessary veterinary care for the distressed birds.

SANCCOB gave some of our volunteers a tour of their rescue and rehabilitation centre in Tableview. Here are some pictures of the adorable penguins we came across.



The penguins from SANCCOB Animal Care Project.

Two Week Volunteers “Tweaker’s”.

This month we officially started with our 2 Week Specials, and were presented with a lively group of Human Rights volunteers who were always keen to learn and lend a hand.

During their stay with us the group also had the great opportunity of meeting Projects Abroad founder, Peter Slowe.

Peter was on a visit to our Projects Abroad head office, when he also attended a presentation at our Human Rights office done by the 2 Week Special volunteers.



Projects Abroad founder, Peter Slowe (left) with volunteers: Kabir Badiani (India), Robyn Wells (United Kingdom), Preeya Sheth (United States), Chae Chun (United States), Valerie Pui (Hong Kong), Hilary Leung (United Kingdom) and Volunteer Coordinator Ricardo Van De Merwe

Hosting our first group of Tweakers has been an equally memorable experience for Volunteer Coordinator, Ricardo van de Merwe, who had quickly formed a brotherly bond with the group of youngsters.

Mandela Day Gallery: Building Project

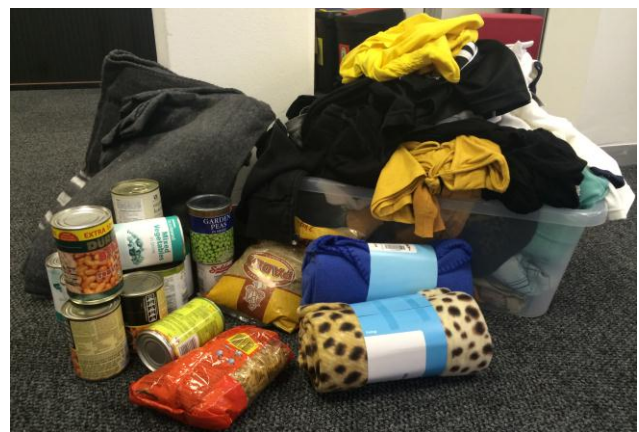


Our Building Project also hosted a Mandela Day celebration, where volunteers and staff planted trees and re-painted the community halls in the township of Village Heights in Wynberg. Visit our [Facebook page](#) to view more pictures from the day.

Winter Drive Donations

A big thank you to all the volunteers and staff members who contributed to our Winter Drive for the Haven Night Shelter in Wynberg.

Your donations will assist the shelter in helping more people who are in need this winter. Our Operations Office cannot wait to handover the donations to the shelter.



Editors Note

The month of July was a very insightful one. It was interesting to find out how our groups of 2 Week Specials felt about the many experiences that our projects offer. Some enjoyed their stay so much that they ended up staying with us longer than they had planned.

What stood out for me though were all the Mandela Day celebrations that our different Projects Abroad offices had organised in their respective communities. The act of giving and doing something good for others was something that our volunteers truly loved doing, with many of them returning to their project communities to donate food and other essentials.

Our offices in other destinations also held various events for the day, which goes to prove how one man's act of kindness can inspire and encourage others to also make a change in the world they live in.

I can therefore say that these past couple of months with Projects Abroad have been a pleasant experience for me. Meeting new faces every day and learning new things about our volunteers and the projects they are involved in always gives me something to look forward to every day.



Kay Kekana, Communications Officer