

"Do what your heart tells you to do"



HOW WAS YOUR PROJECT IN AFRICA?

Vicky. Our work in Africa was quite open and our project leader told us from the beginning: "Do what your heart tells you to do". We started visiting the communities and checking their needs and the different things we could work on. We were also lucky to have a previous team that had put on the table the different possibilities that there were to do in the area. We were the ones who decided our project and our work.

HOW WAS A DAY A DAY IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

José. Making plans in Africa is a little difficult and we did not have something concrete or a definite plan since the culture is very different. Every day was different and our job was to support the school, get materials, teach, go to investigate in the communities the needs they had ...

We started to raise money with the team and we were able to fix five water pumps, we built sewers so they could have water nearby and they did not have to walk too much, since unfortunately, for going to pick up the water, most of the time, the responsables are small children and women.



We did a fundraiser to help in the reconstruction of a suitable place to install a machine to make shima (daily food in Zambia), we talked with the government to know the programs and we dealt with all the necessary entities to get the money for the communities.



WHAT HAS BEEN THE BEST OF YOUR EXPERIENCE?

Vicky. The best experience was working with the children. In my case I chose to work with them and did creative workshops with the idea of developing their creativity freely. We also did games, dances, sports and, above all, painting. And the most beautiful experience has been to work with them because they give you a lot of affection, they are very open to doing things because they need to eliminate the stress generated by the poverty in which they live. They live in communities where there is no water, electricity, lack of hygiene and their parents can not dedicate a lot of time to them because families have many children. You can see this clearly and the children need to take out that stress and negativity through art.

José. My best experience was having met and worked with so many people. With the project that we did on the construction of a school, we had a meeting with the government and the community and they told us that we had given them the energy and courage necessary to continue with the project and to face the projects in a different way. Because they had been trying to do this project for 14 years and thanks to our help they learned that by involving more people it is possible to do things. You have to lose the laziness and fear of asking for help and you have to work together. They thanked us for what we had done and for me it was the best experience.

¿AND THE WORST?

Vicky. It is not easy to work in Africa for many reasons. It is a big culture change although they are always willing to open the doors of their houses. The main problems are the weather because it is very hot and we are not used to 40 degrees of temperature. We felt tired, we sweated a lot...

Another problem was that I was sick many times because when working with children who had a lot of lack of hygiene and many diseases I almost always got a virus. We also had some problem of coexistence with the team but the important thing is that we managed to find solutions and not forget that we had to work for the communities and be prepared for anything that could happen.

José. In my case it was sometimes the negative energy that is accumulating in the body, it is eating little by little and the spirit is decaying. I neglected myself a little and I lost almost 14 kilos. It was the hardest part of my time in Zambia.

"The biggest lesson is that the more you give, the more you receive"



WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON YOU HAVE LEARNED AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS THERE?

Vicky. I have learned many things but perhaps the biggest lesson is that the more you give the more you receive. I sensed that it was like that but I had never seen it so clearly. When your motivation is to help others you receive much more than you give and that was very clear on this trip. I have learned to adapt to a new culture, to leave behind your prejudices and learn to be open to new ways of seeing things. I have learned to realize that you have to respect yourself a lot, to be careful with words because when you say it there is no turning back. Have clear priorities and know that when you go to a site you have to have work goals because it will be your engine.

Vicky and José, volunteers in Zambia

José. I learned that to dedicate yourself to this you have to have a lot of love and passion, conviction, respect for others and patience and try to put yourself in the shoes of others, in addition to never losing the goal of sight. We have to have a lot of understanding because there will always be many different opinions but we must not lose sight of the fact that we all work towards a common goal. There are different ways to arrive but the goal is the same. In this type of experience you also learn a lot about yourself, your limits and what you can do. I learned that I am capable of many things and before I did not have that faith.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO STUDENTS WHO ARE PREPARING FOR THEIR NEXT EXPERIENCE?

Vicky. I would tell them it's worth it. That is difficult but in the end the balance is positive. When you travel with the motivation to help others you receive much more than you give, you learn about yourself and your limits, qualities that you have and did not know you had and for me it has been an opportunity to open a door to something that I did not know and it is very rewarding.

José. I would tell them not to be influenced by people, good or bad, that they have their own experience and if they really want to make the project worthwhile. I think that a few months of work can not be compared to the love that these people give you.

¿WHAT FUTURE PLANS DO YOU HAVE?

José. I want to continue helping and I want to go to Palestine and Greece to help the refugees and after that I would like to go to the schools in Norway and Denmark to talk with the students who are now doing the programs as I think it is important to talk to them and that they see our experience to motivate them in moments of discouragement. Without realizing it, we have directly and indirectly helped more than 1,000 people in the communities and if we had left and we had not helped them because stupid problems, it would have been a loss.

"Without realizing it, we have helped more than 1,000 people in the community"

Vicky. The future is uncertain but I would like to continue in this and also go to help the refugees in Palestine and Greece. We would like to continue being involved in the project that we just left because we do not want it to be a final point but rather that our objective is to continue helping in the school since it is a long process that requires time and dedication. I want to continue linked to cooperation projects because for me it has been a very rewarding experience.

