



Dreamcatcher is a fantastic organisation! I had the most incredible experience volunteering and staying under their auspices in Soweto, staying at the Homestay of Kamamma Mamule and helping out at Little Dynamite Educare and pre-school centre. I will be sharing this meaningful experience with family and all my friends about how incredible the time I spent in South Africa with Dreamcatcher was. For the sake of others who may be interested, I supply with pleasure my report on my amazing time. I wish Dreamcatcher and all their endeavours only the very best. – Veronica van Nederveen

Postcard



From: *Veronica, The Hague,
The Netherlands*

Volunteered in: *Soweto, South
Africa*

When: *2014*



Visiting and Volunteering in Soweto, South Africa - 9-16 November 2014

An impressive experience, which I shall never forget.

I stayed at the home of Mammule Tau, a very wise lady, and Dreamcatcher Kamamma in Soweto, a township of 4 million inhabitants. She lives in Orlando West with her youngest son, daughter-in-law, Phindile, and their three-year-old twin boys. A very nice household, busy and noisy because of these boys. It was inspiring having her fine prepared meals together with her, talking about life and SA in particular. Her house is roomy and well equipped and I had a room of my own.

From Mammule I learned about the time of Apartheid and later on. When her husband was still alive their home was for years a centre of protest for young people, organized by her oldest son, who is now the mayor of Johannesburg. Much has changed since the start of democracy in 1994. Soweto is now characterized by unemployment, poverty, resignation, and a weak community structure with poor law enforcement, she said. But Orlando West also has a lively centre with many young people around and attractive museums and monuments for the (foreign) tourists. The young people of Soweto love to live here, it is cheap and everything there is close by: restaurants, cinemas, and theatre. As Phindile said: "Life must go on!" In the Soweto community, the grandmother has a very important role. She runs the family. Most of the time she is responsible for raising the kids (the grandchildren). Mothers are in school, have a job or have already died. Fathers live elsewhere, if they are still alive. Television brings many programmes about the importance of education, making music, having good relationships, as well as football and crime.

I attended a Christian church service in Soweto. The church was completely filled with women, men and children and people were even waiting outside. Everybody took part in the singing and rituals. The Church gives structure and power in their lives. I visited Kliptown, a part of Soweto where black people from neighbouring countries are settling illegally. The houses in Kliptown are different from those in Orlando West, which have a lot of single storey brick houses. In Kliptown most of the houses are very small and made of corrugated iron sheets, with one toilet for about 25 houses. Yet even in this part of Soweto there is a wonderful project run by a young man from Kliptown who teaches young kids to work with computers and gives them support to continue school. The success of this kind of activity, there are more of them, depends on donations from elsewhere in SA and the support of some highly motivated local people.

During the week in daytime I visited the educare & pre-school of the twins, Little Dynamite. This is a well-organized Christian school of 60 children with a principal, three teachers, a cook and a gardener. All of whom are women, except for the gardener. The school gives excellent education in Zulu and English. Each day the children have two nutritious meals at school and a sleep of at least two hours, they sing, dance and play a lot. The children are being prepared at school to become independent individuals with strong Christian values. The children look healthy and happy. The teachers are very caring and stimulate the kids. And the principal, Cohcoh, who is 68 years old is clearly the boss. I discussed with her and the teachers how to make their pre-school even stronger. It was really a joy to be with them for a week.

Volunteering at Little Dynamite, Soweto

Little Dynamite provides educare & pre-school for currently 60 children aged from 6 months to 6 years. It is a well-organized Christian foundation and Christian principles are stressed in order to give the children high moral standards of values. The children learn Christian songs, to pray before their meals and how to behave in social life. It is bilingual, English and Zulu. The children look healthy and happy. It was a joy to see them singing, dancing, sleeping, eating, playing and learning. The three teachers are very much caring for the kids, they love them all. The classrooms are clean and cosy. The teachers operate as a team, with their own roles and responsibilities. At the moment of my visit they were preparing for graduation, the transition to primary school, later that month. It was a great experience to visit Little Dynamite for a week. I never will forget all the smiling little 'Dynamites' and I wish them all the best.

It was amazing to see daily life in Soweto, the single storey houses with barred windows, surrounded by high fences, all the people walking on the street, the sellers at the corner, the white taxis everywhere. You are never alone there. And I met such nice people with high moral values who feel very responsible for their own life and their children's future. Therefore, I am very positive about the prospects for Soweto. Although I do realize it will take a long time to get sustained good results. "Life here is hard work, but worthwhile" as someone said. "Start with education" is what I heard everywhere. There is more than enough effort and courage here to ensure a better future in Soweto.

Veronica