

Namibia
Summer
2011



I am sitting in my office staring at the month-to-month timeline I created upon my arrival to Namibia. I can remember thinking about how big the task at hand was and how I would have many months to complete it. Now, I am writing final reports, saying goodbye to friends and colleagues and packing my bags. I cannot believe that my time in Namibia has gone by so quickly. The experience that I had this summer has had a profound impact on my life and future. Through my work and travels, I have learned so about both international development and myself.

I have seen the idea of community unfold in front of my eyes in a way that I never imagined was possible. I will never forget walking down the streets of Katatura (a slum outside of Windhoek) feeling deeply upset by the appalling conditions and then, with a focus of my eye and friendly words from some locals, a whole new world was visible to me. All of a sudden there was a world where, despite the poverty, people relied on each other. Men huddled around makeshift tables playing cards and talking while the women were busy chatting and shoeing away their children. The importance of human connection is visible everywhere. A close Namibian friend of mine summed it up well, “in our world, relationships are the most important. Our time is limited and without being able to trust and rely on each other, our lives are too hard.”

The Child Labor project that I worked on during my time in Namibia helped me to learn about my future field and my own development philosophy. It helped me to realize how complicated development is and how important it is to take a holistic and rights based approach, when designing and implementing programs. The realities of working on the ground in a developing country can't be learned in the classroom. One must always strive to learn about what is going on under the surface when working in international development. When I began working on the project, everything



seemed cut and dry. It wasn't until I went into the field and began talking with the people we were trying to help that I started to understand what was going on. Problems like child labor are so multi dimensional that they must be addressed carefully and cross- sectorally.

I feel so grateful to have had the opportunity to travel and work in Namibia this past summer. My experiences working in the field and getting to know the country were absolutely amazing. My lens for understanding development has changed and will carry on and continue to grow with future projects. None of this would have been possible without the help of the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation. Thank you so much!!

“Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to a divine purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: That man is here for the sake of other men.”- Albert Einstein

