

# **Service learning impact in South Africa: aligning student ideals with community needs**

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Connect-123

Internship, Volunteer & Study Programs

# Red Cross Children's Hospital, Cape Town

How can we best learn from each other?



# Connect-123

- Internship, Service Learning & Volunteer
- Link international students to local organizations such that both equally benefit
- In Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Dublin and Shanghai
- University partners + direct applicants

# What is Service Learning?

- A **specially designed** experience combining reflection with structured participation in a community-based project to achieve specified learning outcomes... combining theory, practice, ideals, values
- Volunteer Abroad programs: typically not for credit, not as structured

*Forum On Education Abroad*

# Types of Programs

- Education
  - tutoring, help-to-read, after-school programs
- Poverty/Homelessness
  - building houses, helping refugees
- Environment
  - sustainable gardening
  - restoring parks
  - recycling programs
- Public Health



# Goals: Student's Perspective

- Personal growth / International experience
- Earn credit
- Build their CV
- Explore careers



# Goals: University Perspective

- Increase students' civic engagement / global awareness
- Develop students' leadership, problem solving, communication skills
- ISL is *high impact* learning
  - Studies have demonstrated that ISL students have more profound experiences than study abroad students
  - “Learning by doing” works, the message sticks
  - “ISL is the most powerful pedagogy available to higher education” (Bringle and Hatcher, 2011)

# Goals: Community / Service Provider Perspective

- Program creates tangible benefits
- Collaboration can spark new ideas as students, faculty, and locals can learn from each other
- International network can lead to new funding opportunities



# Mini Case: Ikamva Youth

- Ikamva's mission: help high school students from disadvantaged areas to improve skills
- Program Goals:
  - have local/international students learn from each other through the creative arts
  - increase self-confidence
  - side benefit: fundraising



# Mini Case: Ikamva Youth (2)

- The idea:
  - Provide digital cameras to local students
  - Ask them to spend 1 day, taking pictures of their lives, documenting what was meaningful to them
  - Invite the community to a photo exhibit + talent show event, where local & international students perform together

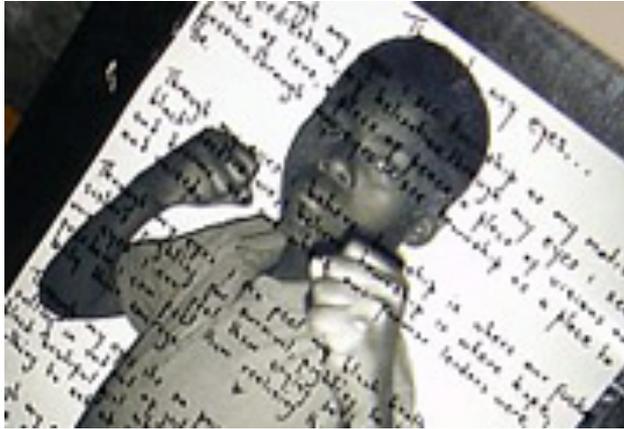


# Mini Case: Ikamva Youth (3)

- How it worked:
  - A local camera store donated 20 digital cameras
  - International students helped local students with the photos, how to use a camera, how to use a computer, and how to edit images
  - For the talent show, local students helped the international students with the talent!
  - The project then took on a life of its own...



# “Through My Eyes” photo exhibit / talent show



# Program Design Challenges

- Identifying projects: importance of relationships, being part of the community
- Duration: short-term programs, long-term problems
- Sustainability
- Quantity vs. quality

# Best Practices: Plan

- Ask about community needs and define tangible goals in advance, based on time available
- Keep goals modest, realistic, achievable
- Integrate field trips related to learning objectives
- Safety: housing (homestays?), transport
  - Increased immersion can mean decreased safety; find a responsible balance

# Best Practices: Set Expectations

- Pre-trip orientations are important
- Screening: service work is not for everyone
- “Need to Know” document
- Be respectful, receptive, participate
- Dress code
- Photos, consent form



# Best Practices: Reflection

- To “unpack” the experience, consider daily discussions
- Communicating the Value Seminar
  - What competencies have been gained?
- Feedback from students, university & community:
  - What worked?
  - What could be improved?
  - Were the goals met?



# Questions?

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