

My experience with the Social Support Foundation

I was an intern with SSF from the 04.08.2016 until the 04.11.2016. I would like to describe my opportunities, my personal feedback and the acknowledgment in the following section.

My opportunities

During my 13-weeks internship with SSF I could gather experiences in many different working sectors of a local NGO. The following bullet points illustrate the areas I was involved in:

- Supporting the fund raising process for a HIV & AIDS project for Men having Sex with Men (MSM) in 3 local prisons
- Leading the fund raising process for a HIV & AIDS project for women in Obuasi
- Creating of online fund raising for individual support cases by SFF and prospective SSF projects, by contacting potential donors and by using fundraising platforms and social media
- Updating the SSF website – generating posts (SDGs, support cases such as students with special need, etc.) and gathering information about the organisation (the SSF profile, the SSF organigram, etc.)
- Organising of online payment options for the SSF website for national and international donors
- Assisting during budget planning for a project for a sustainable vocational skills development centre
- Marketing for new interns – contacting universities, creating of a flyer and information guide, personal guiding for interested students as first contact person of SSF
- Assisting the Executive Director and the Administrative Officer in administrative work
- Supporting during fieldwork in rural communities concerning a market reconstruction for better access for physically disabled people, such as taking pictures and videos of discussions between SSF und the local community
- Cooperating with a volunteer in a project in 6 local high schools for HIV & AIDS education, Otitis externa education and Ear Nose Throat (ENT) screening; planning, implementation and evaluation in terms of a final report
- Establishing a report about public health and environmental issues of the local gold mine industry (based on scientific data, interviews, personal contact with local experts, etc.)
- Attending a conference about advocacy for gold mine workers in Accra as the SSF representative and writing of an according report
- Attending a conference about the rights of people with disabilities in Obuasi together with the Executive Director of SSF and writing of an according report

Personal feedback

When I arrived in Ghana I thought I will never fit in – the differences in every possible relation felt too enormous. But with time, things became easier and I started to find my way.

Among many other things, Ghana taught me patience. Patience with my surroundings and patience with myself. Having a German mother and a Swiss father, productivity and engagement at work are stereotypically demanded in my home countries and didn't change for my performance at SSF,

which had to be adapted until a certain point. I learned to be flexible and tried to make my work suitable for the given situation.

I read a lot about Sub-Saharan Africa and how it is mostly presented as the part of the world, which needs development the most. But as I learned as well, there need to be “African solutions for African problems”, which I started to understand during my time in Ghana.

The 13 weeks with SSF were filled with chances to meet many different people, interesting discussions and demanding activities. I always appreciated the feeling of being part of a small team which is working as much in the field and close to people as it is possible.

Seeing theories learned as a Master of Science student in Public Health at the University of Southern Denmark put into practice in Ghana was just wonderful and a real motivation to dive into it.

Even though I experienced moments of emotional loneliness, there is no chance I would ever regret coming here. Trying to see the world through other eyes and the willingness to let myself be changed by this experience taught me personally at least as much as academically.

I would recommend an internship to everyone who is ready to make a real change; hours and hours of office work will easily pay off for a thank you of a high school headmaster, who was attending the HIV & AIDS education or a thank you from a mine worker, whose worries are heard and written down.

Ghana can have a rough side, but I have seen so much beauty during weekend travelling, always met interested and open-minded locals and if I needed it, there was always a helping hand. I very much hope I could give something back to Ghana and its people, who were part of my unforgettable internship experience.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Charity for being a wonderful, patient and refreshingly honest co-worker and supporter – thank you for teaching me more than you will ever know.

I would like to thank Louis for answering all my questions, for including me into the world of his NGO, for giving me the chance to work independently and for encouraging me to set own priorities within my working range – thank you for being a demanding boss and teaching colleague.

Meda wo ase,
Larissa