

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER



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World Aids Day: December 1



On the 1st of December we celebrated World AIDS Day.

On this day people are encouraged to help raise awareness about this pandemic, and also to help dispel the many myths about the disease by educating others about it.

To date, no cure has been found for the disease and millions worldwide are affected by this deadly virus, with Africa being the most affected. Out of the 34 million HIV-positive people worldwide, 69% live in sub-Saharan Africa.

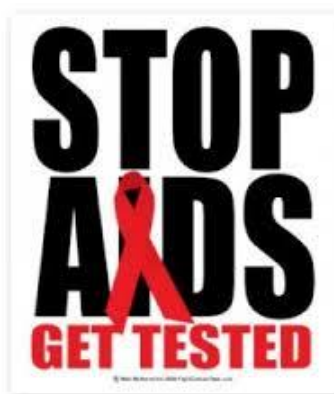
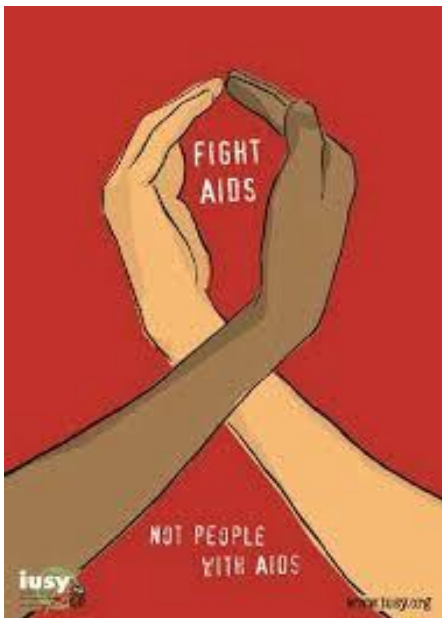
There are roughly 23.8 million infected persons on the African continent.

Our German volunteer, Marie Anderson wearing her red ribbon to show support.

There are many initiatives created to raise funds for the treatment of AIDS in our communities, and as a result, the number of people testing HIV positive are slowly beginning to decrease worldwide.

With the help of our Health department and local organisations, South Africa has managed to stabilise its numbers. Celebrating this day means encouraging everyone to lend a hand in order to keep helping organisations that aid people who are affected by the disease.

Our various care projects around the world work very closely with HIV/Aids care centres that provides care for young children who have the disease, and often also care for their mothers, at no cost.



16 Days of Activism and our Social Justice program

From the 25th of November until the 10th of December we saw a number of campaigns raising awareness for the 16 Days of Activism Against Women and Child Abuse.

During the 16 days of activism, communities and organisations around the world come together to take a stand against the many violent actions towards women and children.

Issues such as abuse and rape are things that women and children remain victim to,



in increasing numbers each day. While many might imagine that abuse takes place outside the victims' home, this is often far from reality as the truth is that most abuse attacks take place behind closed doors. It is often the people closest to a victim who would project their violent behaviour on to them; a family member, boyfriend or husband.

Gender based violence (GBV) indicators studies conducted by Gender Links in six countries of Southern Africa, showed that the most common form of GBV faced by women is perpetuated by men, and occurs mostly in intimate relationships.

It makes it more than fitting that this year's focus for the campaign is to educate young boys and men. By educating men and children on the effects of violent behaviour, we have a greater chance of eliminating abuse from our societies. Women are also educated through workshops, talks and consultations that urge them to protect themselves and to speak out against abuse.

Our Human Rights Organisations' Social Justice program also plays a great part in this kind of development for women. The organisation works very closely with St Anne's Homes and Sisters Incorporated, an organisation which provides support and shelter to women who are facing abuse or are without shelter.

Our Social Justice volunteers, under the guidance of our Volunteer Supervisor, Miriam Macdonald, provide weekly two hour workshops for the women at each of the homes. Before the workshops the volunteers have to research laws and rights that they will introduce to the women, and depending on the theme of the workshop, the volunteers also provide educational material that the women can apply to their lives.

The social justice department realised that one of the major issues impacting the women's knowledge of their rights is money. Women in the shelters often associate human rights with money; with money you have rights but without it you have no rights. It's always a surprise to them when they learn that they have the same rights as a celebrity or politician with money, and that's where equality starts.

A lot of them would feel intimidated by the court process and our volunteer supervisor Miriam MacDonald would help them with this process and encourage the women to stand up for their rights. Miriam and our volunteers work very closely in ensuring that the women have all the help they need when dealing with law related issues. They assist them with filling out legal forms such as protection orders and child maintenance claims.

This helps a great deal for the women as they are from then on able to familiarise themselves with legal processes should they need it again in future.

Whether dealing with the responsibilities of being a single parent, or trying to integrate back into society after an abusive relationship, women often neglect themselves and never take the time to relax. The second part of the workshops the social justice team does with the women is a more creative and fun session where the women get to sit together and get to know each other. They do this through fun activities such as yoga, DIY face masks and salsa dancing; through this the women and volunteers also form a bond that allows them to feel more comfortable speaking about the issues that they face in their lives.

The women that come to the shelters are often coming from an abusive background, and are then still trying to discover their independence and to heal emotionally. The social justice team through its workshop and consultations try to help guide them through this period by empowering them with these informative workshops.

Campaigns like the 16 Days of Activism help us to inform and empower women from all walks of life. "It's important to raise awareness. Everyone needs to be educated, so abuse doesn't take place. Our boys and men should know that women are not objects." says Miriam. Ultimately awareness on the issue is something that should be raised 365 days a year. The more effort society makes to highlight such issues, the more progress we will be able to make.



Top 3 Volunteers of the Year:



Teaching Project: Renai Chen, 33 years-old, Holland

Renai Chen introduced the Self-Organised Learning Environment (SOLE) to her Teaching placement and project partner, Floreat Primary school. Through her marvellous work and dedication, she was able to help children at the school learn about the basics of researching and learning independently as opposed to being given a lesson. The children teach themselves by being presented with a question that they are required to research an answer to on the internet.

Renai further more raised donations that resulted in tablets being donated to the school, in order to continue the SOLE project.

Read more about [Renai's story here](#).

Music Project: Shane Waxler, 19, USA

Shane was one of the great faces, which almost literally lit up the Projects Abroad South Africa office upon arrival.

Shane was an enthusiastic music volunteer who taught music theory and practice at Floreat Primary School. He is definitely someone whose company was enjoyed by both volunteers and staff.

[Read more about Shane's story](#)



Shane Waxler teaching music at his placement school

Care Project: Steffen Vogel, 18, Germany.

Steffen is a volunteer with a big heart. After organising a cooking day and Christmas celebration for his placement, it's great to know his hard work has made a positive contribution to their futures.

Read more about Steffen's story [here](#).



Steffen plays with a child at his Care placement in Vrygrond.

Farewell to our Global Gaps!!

Our Global Gap group arrived in October after their stay in Ghana, to join our Care and Human Rights projects. This was a very stimulating experience for both our staff and volunteers.

The lively group of 17 Global Gap volunteers also participated in other exciting projects; like the Surfing and Music projects. We wish them well on their next projects in Peru, Nepal and Thailand. It was truly great to get to know all of you!



Our Global Gap group outside their host family home in Grassy Park.

Photo Gallery 2014

Check out our exciting moments from this year in pictures.



Left: Former Building volunteer, Jeffrey Hensler with the children from the crèche based at the site.



Right: Former Building two weeker, Federico Maienza.



Bottom Left: Our two week Human Rights volunteers with Projects Abroad founder, Peter Slowe.



Left: The guys from the Human Rights office serving at the Womens Day high tea celebration.

Right: Girl Guide volunteer, Beth Conroy with a child from the care project.



Bottom Left: A group of volunteers on a tour of Capricorn township.

Below: Surf volunteers Sophie Ramsgaard and Fanny Schroter.



Journalism volunteer, Shusuke Tsuto from Japan.



Jacueline Cashman volunteering at our special care project in Heathfield.

Editor's Note



Kay Kekana, Communications Officer

It has truly been a great year for us here at Projects Abroad. I'm always in awe of the amazing work that is done by both our staff and volunteers.

I must commend our great operations staff for always going the extra mile and seeing to it that our volunteers are comfortable and happy during their stay here with us.

Looking back at the past few months so much was achieved by volunteers who more than anything wanted to make a difference in their placements.

*The likes of **Corina Hofmarcher**, **Antoine Cremel**, the lovely group of **Girl Guides** and of course our top 3 volunteers of 2014 are just some of the great stories and volunteer experiences we've had. We have had a total of 654 volunteers working at all our various projects, with an amazing 2578 beneficiaries.*

This highlights what an eventful year it has been for us. Our volunteer participation has helped us change a lot of lives, change that will surely make this country a better place for all.

We will definitely be ending our year off on a high note as we welcome back our Director Gisela Madden who has been away in Cambodia setting up their conservation project on one of the islands.

Our staff is eagerly awaiting her return and we cannot wait to share the great progress that we have made in the past year.