

12 September 2019

I would like to thank The Law Foundation of South Australia for giving me this scholarship so that I could participate in Projects Abroad's Law and Human Rights internship in South Africa. It has been an incredible learning experience. In this report, I will first explain the law and human rights program I completed during this internship. Secondly, I will outline what I learned professionally. And finally, I will explain the personal development I underwent during this program.

#### Law and human rights program

My internship commenced on Tuesday, 25 June 2019 and ended on Tuesday, 23 July 2019. During my internship, I worked in two divisions of Projects Abroad: The law department and the human rights department. I participated in both divisions simultaneously. Projects Abroad created a weekly roster that outlined whether I would attend a legal clinic and/or a social justice program each day of the week.

Under the law program, we attended community legal clinics established by Projects Abroad in schools and public libraries. These clinics were in Townships, which are the poorest areas of Cape Town. Often, clients could not afford to travel for legal assistance and therefore, these clinics were very beneficial to them. Although these areas were somewhat dangerous, as evidenced by one of our Uber Drivers refusing to drive us to our clinic for the fear of getting robbed. Because of the continuous work Projects Abroad has done to help these communities, we were able to operate in safe buildings with the respect of community members.

As part of the legal clinic, we had to interview clients and help them resolve their legal issues. On the day I started the program I was assigned the files of several clients. Throughout the program I was given other interesting files. I perused the information available in the files, conducted further research on their matters and then called the clients to confirm their attendance at the clinic on the following day. On the day of the interview I would interview my clients as well as any new clients. With old clients, I updated them on the progress of their matter and sought further instructions where necessary. With new clients, after they completed their client information sheet and the retainer agreement, I interviewed them and took detailed notes of their issues. The language barrier was very slight as most people who came to the clinic spoke English. I consulted with my supervisor if I came across any issues or needed to confirm whether I have gathered all the relevant information. After the interview I went to the office and typed my interview notes in detail. If it was a new client, I began the process of creating a new file for them. I dealt with a wide range of legal matters. I drafted wills, both under South African Law and Sharia Law, drafted divorce summons to commence action and particulars of claim, completed forms required to commence a claim for unfair dismissal and workplace injury. I also contacted government departments to expedite matters. Sometimes it was a bit challenging to get in contact with the clients as they often did not have phones and provided their family member's phone numbers. However, it was very rewarding to see the clients begin to trust me with their issues.

Under the Human Rights Program, we empowered children and women to fight for their right to education and work. We volunteered at a school holiday program where kids were provided educational entertainment and free meals. This program gave kids a haven away from the streets and helped their parents go to work. During this program, we also made a presentation on avoiding teen

pregnancy for the older kids. Some of the children were very talkative and loved to hear about our Australian culture. One girl, who wanted to be a pilot when she grew up, asked me all about Australian landmarks so she can come and visit them. I served food to the younger kids while dancing with the older kids to folk songs, which they translated for me. It was a great experience. I also presented interactive workshops on resume and interview skills to young women at St Anne's, which is a centre for women from troubled homes. In addition, I also assisted youth offenders in prison facilities by educating them on strategies for reformation and social rehabilitation. For instance, I made presentations on anger management and coping mechanisms for depression. It was difficult to hear that some boys were afraid they must return to the same gang environment after their time in prison. After hearing this, we focussed our presentations on giving skills and strategies to improve their mental, physical and social wellbeing, both within the prison facility and when they are beyond it. It was also difficult to make presentations for some girls in the female youth centre. This was especially true for the girls who were indefinitely kept in the facility to protect them from the dangerous conditions at their homes. They had not committed any crimes and being in the facility made them restless. However, some of these girls ran after us when we were leaving to ask for the presentation slides and the worksheets we brought. It was great to see them actively try to learn and improve their situation in life, despite peer pressure to do otherwise.

In addition to these activities, as part of Nelson Mandela Day, the Projects Abroad Law and Human Rights departments cleaned and painted two large metal containers, which were to be used as a study space for students and a community legal clinic.

#### Professional development

This internship helped me developed my legal research, drafting and communication skills. I learned to quickly take notes during client interviews and type them into detailed and clear interview memos. I also learned to utilise the databases provided to us, as well as the legal textbooks available to us, to conduct in-depth research into complex legal issues.

I also improved my communication skills. I learned how to communicate clearly and succinctly with people, both face-to-face and over the phone. Over the phone contact was the hardest as sometimes these people were busy driving or looking after their children. I had to communicate my message quickly and using plain English. On the other hand, I also improved my ability to de-brief my supervisors on legal issues after interviews. As I managed my own files, I had to think critically and ensure my supervisors were aware of any limitation periods and other major issues in the matter.

My time management skills also improved during this internship. I learned to prioritise my tasks and balance my workload. I also learned to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Australian legal system by comparing it to the South African legal system.

#### Personal development

I have always lived with my parents', so it was challenging to live without them for such a long period of time. However, this program put me in the deep-end and I learned how to manage by myself. My host mom, Brenda, was lovely and made us delicious South African meals.

I also made friends with people from a diverse range of countries. I learned about their cultures, languages and cuisine. I shared the Australian culture with my new friends, learned about the legal systems of other countries, and was inspired by the impressive stories about the hardships that other volunteers have overcome.

I developed my intrapersonal skills and time management skills as I learned how to balance full-time work and my social life. I was aware of how little time I had in South Africa and I was determined to use it fully. Therefore, I challenged myself each day. I crossed off many items from my bucket list, including paragliding, shark cage diving, climbing Table Mountain and going on a South African safari.

### Conclusion

Overall, this was a remarkable experience and I am very grateful for the scholarship The Law Foundation provided me, without which I would not have been able to complete this Law and Human Rights internship in South Africa. It was an amazing and fun experience. I have included some photos below for a snapshot of what an amazing time I had in South Africa.



*Figure 1: After interviewing clients – at the Vrygrond Legal Clinic*



*Figure 2: During a quick break after interviewing clients - at the Mitchells Plains Legal Clinic*



*Figure 3: After painting the metal containers behind us on Nelson Mandela Day – at the Mitchells Plains Legal Clinic*



*Figure 4: During a Projects Abroad social gathering*