**Volunteer Work in South Africa**

1. Introduction

Volunteer work is, globally speaking, about the exchange of cultures. Immerged into a totally different world, I got a particular glimpse into the tremendous complexity of South Africa’s culture. Furthermore, witnessed a fraction of humanitarian aid, I am now more than ever interested to learn more about the multiple impacts of development work on a specific and sensible environment. All these experiences particularly affected my personal growth in uncountable ways, including my professional orientation. This article encompasses the observations that I made during my stay followed by a reflexion on development work and its implications.

1. My observations

After six months of volunteer work, I am now trying to digest my experience. As I am thinking about a carrier in humanitarian aid, writing down my thoughts, backed up with literature, I consider this method as an ultimate tool to express not only what I witnessed, but also what I could suggest for the future intervention.

Before my departure, I considered as important to experience South Africa’s particular culture on first hand, without any prejudice coming from different sources, such as media. Despite the fact of its relative similarities to our European culture, my first days in Cape Town did not challenge me with the well known cultural shock. Although I started to sense differences not only between the different ethnicities but also between rich and poor, I liked the life style of the local people and the particular environment by scouring all the touristic hotspots.

Concretely, given the fact that I was about to work with all kind of people, it was highly important that I would encounter key points of South Africa’s complex history, explaining the reason for my visit to Robben Island and District 6. Although travelled with a relatively positive picture, drawn by the famous Nelson Mandela and the rainbow nation, I slowly began to realise that the aftertaste of South Africa’s past is still highly affecting its present.

Propped with a glance into the historical background, I then travelled to Bonnievale where I started my volunteer work at Bonnie People Project. Generally, its ultimate goal is to optimize the living conditions of people coming from Bonnievale’s informal settlement so called Plakkerskampe. Specifically, through education, security and care, children, adolescents and adults are provided a rich environment where they can learn and develop their skills in order to ameliorate their personal and physical life, which eventually contributes to global changes of their habitat.

Partly emerged into South Africa’s enormous complexity, I began to realise that South Africa embodies a vast amount of contrasts. Among all these contrasts, tensions between the different ethnicities are the most obvious. The caused conflicts are still causing a lot of issues affecting the political, racial, economic, social and psychological parts of South Africa. In respect of my limited stay, to draw a clear picture of the situation, however, is not an easy task given the fact that the narrations are rotating depending on the ethnicity of the person I was speaking to. In other terms, the black community describes South Africa’s current situation with more positive and promising words than the white or the coloured community. This could be partly traced back to the alteration of the social structure during the end of the Apartheid years in which the black population was permanently dominated by the white community in all domains of the live, such as professional carrier and education, just to name two.

In any case, the sober reality is that changes are still happening. In the book “from dependency to dignity”, Schultz and Buys (2014) are supporting these observations. Since it was a big deal for South Africa to completely change its society in 1994, the real work is now to find a new balance in which everybody has to find a place. Nevertheless, it is easier said than done due to the fact that “change is not merely an event, but a process (Schultz & Buys, 2014)”. Still living in the past, people often adopt the attitude of blaming and throwing the responsibilities to others than to begin to realise that they also have an impact. Indeed, admitting that one can generate a significant change is very difficult for people with the mindset of submissiveness.

As a matter of facts, I witnessed this first handed whilst staying in Bonnievale. In almost every domain, white people possess high positions whereas coloured and black people are filling up inferior positions. As a consequence, the white community commands and the others follow. Growing up in this particular structure, it takes time to change that type of submissive and “blaming others” attitude. For the black and coloured community it is difficult to take initiatives and promote a change because they have never done it before. A result is that the white has to intervene considering the others as lazy and lacking of motivation. Furthermore, the attitude of “holding accountable others for one’s current circumstances” is not only present in their personal life, but also during their work: I have no impact; it is beyond my task and shall be directed by the principal.

For example, when addressing the problem of the high sugar consumption by the kids, the teachers at the project totally blamed the parents who are giving sweats to their children. They do however not acknowledge that, beyond the gates of the project, they do have the power to ban the sweats and the cool drinks. Indeed, the high sugar intake in the population eventually leads to waves of health problems, such as diabetes and overweighs, and related financial burden for South Africa.

In the same line, the attitude with which the staff members are approaching their work is significant as well. It seems like the reason to work is only to earn money, beyond that there are no efforts, such as looking for new ways to innovate the project’s approach or being involved in decision making. To alleviate this issue, I planned workshops on “Goal setting and Communication”. Indeed, my goal was to develop and strengthen the identity of the staff towards the project. Having an enhanced clear defined and collective identity, each member knows exactly his positions, as well as his duties. Being a part of a greater picture, they will sense the urge to engage as a team towards a common goal, and this beyond financial reasons. Taking into account my restricted amount of time, we implemented, during almost every meeting, ludic games illustrating the topics of this workshop followed by a group discussion.

Even if Bonnievale is relatively violence-free and safe, there are a huge amount of underlying problems, most of these issues caused by the difference in skin colour. As challenging it is to draw a clear and overall picture of the situation, one fact that really struck me in Bonnievale was that the different ethnicities are still not mingling up between them. For instance, a lot of white people are yet not going to Happy Valley or Plakkerskamp. Taking a walk in these places, people often observed me and wondered what my intentions were, as a lot of white people do not promenade in these areas. At the beginning, I needed to get used to that particular attention.

In order, however, to really understand the underlying matters of local people, it is important to live like local people (Damberger, 2011). Making a particular effort to perceive how local people are living is crucial when you are working in such a sensible field as development aid (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Damberger, 2011). Indeed, free from all bias and rumours coming from people foreign to these places, you perceive not only their real problems, but also how inhabitants are coping with it, resuming all the reasons why to involve local people in all kind of planning of the Bonnie People Project.

One of my personal goals was, in fact, to experience first handed this particular culture. As a consequence, I befriended with a lot of local people who then showed me places that were usually avoided by white people. By showing interest into their life-style, I felt very welcomed and people were particularly open to demonstrate their life and to exchange worldviews. They told me about the underlying problems. For instance, the black community is undermined by the white and coloured community, particularly in the municipally where they do not get heard. Furthermore, Plakkerskampe has an executive committee where all sort of issues are handled. Realizing that here lays a crucial key of improving Bonnievale’s environment, I tried to build a bridge between this committee and the Bonnie People Project. Concretely, the people attending the meetings know exactly what is going on in their village and they know how to cope with it. Internal issues, such as robberies or minor conflicts are, for instance, handled during these meeting, without the police interfering.

In their book “When Helping Hurts”, Corbett and Fikkert (2012) highly recommend to involve the local people when it comes to development work. Indeed, living their whole live in conditions of poverty, local people are a valuable asset when it comes to alleviate poverty. Exceeding the understanding of foreign helpers (as we do not know what poverty really means), they do not only know this particular culture, but they also acknowledge the really underlying problems and their solutions.

Furthermore, a lot of misunderstandings rumours and misconceptions occur, maintain and keep the people away from these areas. While some people, mostly white people, recommended me to simple avoid these areas because of the high risk of getting robbed or attacked, others, local people and the police, were giving their approval, under the condition that I am accompanied by friends. All I got to witness is that I had a wonderful time with local people sharing their life with me.

One explanation of this lack of interaction could be explained by the different life-style that the different ethnicities have. Besides the fact that, during weekends, music is howling from every corner, alcohol abuse is particularly high in Bonnievale, not to mention the cases of the drug abuse. The majority of the people are investing their hard earned money into alcohol which causes a lot of subsequent problems, such as physical violence, crimes and addiction. This weekly investment seems to be their only goal, accepted as a part of their culture. However, the repercussion of a highly alcohol consumption are multifaceted. Indeed, the Langeberg Region reports the highest rates of fetal alcohol syndromes in the world (WHO, 2011). For instance, children growing up in these conditions are already facing a dark future, because they do not have reliable role models in which they can trust. As there are not other leisure activities as drinking alcohol in Bonnievale, high school drop outs are subsequently leading to a next generation of heavily drinkers.

Besides all the positive adventures that I got to know along my stay, it is important to embrace the negative points, such as my frustration and lack of motivation, as well. Taking into account the positive and the negative experiences is a huge source of learn opportunities. Indeed, reflecting on these experiences gives me a better understanding of the environment in which I was integrated.

As frustrations are partly caused by unmet expectations, I needed, at some stage, to investigate and to clear out my own expectations and motives why I am engaged as a volunteer (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). People sometimes pursue motives not directly linked to help people. Determine one’s motives also prevents to reduce people to objects and to see them as inferior because they are lacking of money and intelligence. For example, I handed out questionnaires to the teachers in order to evaluate how they see themselves in relation to the project. Then, I asked to return the question sheet one week later. Thinking that this would not be a big deal, it was particularly effortful to ask the questionnaires back. As I always fulfilled what the teachers were asking me, I felt very frustrated, when I did not get back my questionnaire.

In the book “from Dependency to Dignity”, it is explained that people have different levels of volition, defines as “the spark within us that drives our responses, and ignites our willpower that triggers our inner motivation to act” (Schultz & Buys, 2014). Based on how much stimulation you got during your whole life, you are more or less ready to take initiatives. Schultz and Buys (2014) further justify that, due to the particular historical background of South Africa, some people never got the opportunity to decide for their own life. Indeed, given that the white community are occupying high positions, they command and the others are following. They never learn how to take responsibilities and being part of decision making. If education quality from school and parents are not stimulating enough a child’s development, it is difficult for that person to be self-determined and he will continue to blame others for his life circumstances. As we are located on different volition levels, my required work could be seen as a supplement charge, that was not well handled, which subsequently resulted in this delayed return.

This investigation of one’s motives should not only be done on an individual level, but also on a larger scale. Indeed, the project should justify their presence and assess its specific actions. As a consequence, the big picture of the organisation’s contribution will be apparent, it also helps to keep track and to evaluate whether its work patterns still are in harmony with its higher goals. As mentioned later, people will identify themselves to the organisation, which ultimately augment their investments. Regularly assessing one’s approaches not only prevents the god-complex attitude but also the behavioural automatism in which human frequently fall in. The automatic, unconscious and rigid implementation of actions blinds for new innovative ideas that would probably be more appropriate for a given situation. This also prevents from frustrations, as one is prepared when its expectations are unmet by the local people.

Equipped with our European mentality, we often impose our values on local people, excepting that they have to behave in a certain way. When they do not behaviourally stick to our plan, we frustrate and minimize our efforts, at a point where mental diseases emerge in us, such as burn-out. Classified as a waste of human and financial resources, an organisation without openness towards innovative approaches hurts its members and as well as the targeted population.

During poverty alleviation, it is also essential to address not only one’s worldviews but also the local worldview (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). Indeed, the way how they tick and conceive their surrounding dictates their particular life choices and often keeps them in their poor conditions. As difficult it is to modify worldviews and as anchored as they are, not taking them into account could do more harm and the intervention is doomed to failure before it has really started. It is also worth noting that people sometimes stick with heart and mind to their worldviews, which makes it even harder to improve the circumstances.

During my stay, I encountered many unbelievable false worldviews. Among these worldviews, I heard that the black community is diseased from childhood on with HIV/AIDS or that STDs are transmitted by food, making the use of condoms useless. As well, South Africa’s leaders also fuel these wrong statements of HIV/AIDS, by claiming that HIV could be prevented by just drinking a lot of alcohol or taking a shower.

Moreover, the community’s misery can partly be a consequence of a dysfunctional governmental system. For instance, the government is paying R300 to young mothers. Without providing any other health systems, such as health and life skill education, the cycle of teenage pregnancy is sustained due to the fact that teenagers see this amount of money as very attractive. Furthermore, the high alcohol consumption is tolerated among the community, rationalising it as a part of the culture.

In order to address these common worldviews, Christa and I planned a workshop, called “Choices”. We attempted to transmit the just right information about daily matters that are faced by each one of us. Indeed, the conception of this workshop was that in order to do the right daily and life choices, we need clear and right information about the positive and negative consequences that follow our actions. Always illustrated by physical activities, the workshop encompasses the following themes: alcoholism and drug abuse, development of any kind of addictions, the ability to say no and the importance of clear defined goals in one’s life. As fun it was, we hope that the participants remind the global idea that their choices matter and guide them through life.

As we will see later, the notion of poverty can lead our action in one or another way. Armed with our European mind, we often think about the poor live conditions people are living, forgetting about our own poverty that is surrounding us in Europe (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). The donor countries, such as Europe, are facing a list of political, economic, social and psychological issues, growing bigger every year.

Among the psychological problems, we encounter high rates of depression and burn-outs linked to a more and more competitive work environment. In a world where time efficiency is highly appreciated, people are always in a rush and forget to value the small things, such as spending quality time with their family and friends. Another point is the fact of kids playing outside and enjoying jumping around is declining. Also observed in adult behaviour, we often see children with cell phones sitting inside and hiding in a virtual world. The consequence of these behaviours will cause a deprivation of social interaction and subsequently enhance the withdrawal from reality, perpetuating in a cycle of psychological and social issues. During my stay, I observed children with self-crafted toys, running around with modestly fixed bicycles and playing with sticks. They are not afraid to play in the rain. Their creativity is set no limits and these children enjoy the company of their comrades. In addition, it is unbelievable how immense their body conscience is as they are not timid to show their dance moves.

Thinking about one’s poverty helps us to fight against our “God-complex”, the sense of superiority that we often adapt when we are going to third world countries. Furthermore, after reflecting on our own matters, it is legit to ask why everybody should follow Europe’s lead. Why do we keep on imposing our values and standards of wealth to a foreign culture, such as Africa, that we consider as “underdeveloped”? It is important to question our standards by which we evaluate Africa’s current situation. Depositing a variety of resources, Africa has all the potential to strive for its own destiny, free from the pollution of the western world.

On a political, economical and social scale, considering the huge prevalence of all the negative facts that South Africa’s people are facing, fortunately, I had met, during my stay, a lot of individuals who are optimistic and try to make a change by investing all their energy into humanitarian objectives. Lucky to have a lot of freedom, I seized the opportunity to visit some other projects.

First of all, I visited a school in Mitchell’s Plain, a “coloured township” that is nowadays known for high criminality rates and drug abuse. Started as an Early Childhood Development Centre, the project called “Trinity Children’s Centre” (<http://trinitychildren.org.za/>) is now a pre- and primary school for children that live in Mitchell’s Plain. This highly organised project taught me the efficiency of a well structured school system and how important communication between the team members is. Indeed, every Friday, the stuff gathered in reunions talking about not only work related themes, but they also share personal stories. This partly results in a good harmony that one is feeling in the project. Furthermore, I was enlighten the holistic concept of education and its components, such as knowledge, security, sleep, nutrition and the teachers’ attitude towards the project and the teaching. As mentioned later, I highly recommend getting in touch with this particular project in order to exchange information and knowledge.

Second, I was invited visiting Montagu’s “The Hadassah Family Wholeness Centre” (<http://www.montagu.org.za/organisations/the-hadassah-family-wholeness-centre/>). Basically, the project welcomes unemployed women and their family in need and provides a context where they can ameliorate through skill development their living conditions. As a partially self-sustainable enterprise, the project has a second hand community shop and promotes needlework and computer skill training in order to secure funding. The point that struck me is not that this project is able to partly support financially its need, but that its group of 4 entrepreneurs trained by the project know that they will make only money in 2-3 years time, before that, the group needs external support. As for the Bonnie People Project, I strongly suggest to upgrade its network because this project is heading towards a self-sustainable company by involving the community and network.

The Vangnet Project (http://www.valleysmountainskids.co.za/index.php/projects/vangnet-project), translated the life net, is another project that I frequently visited during my stay in Bonnievale. Vulnerable to crime behaviours and drifting to a false track, the team at Vangnet Project occupies youngsters by offering alternative activities than alcohol and drug abuse or crime. Living in unstable home circumstances, the adolescents have often no perspective due to repeatedly impotence of their life circumstance, such as low literacy in family and violence in their immediate environment. However, through visual and performing arts, the youngster can seize skill development opportunities which ultimately lead to a higher self-image and self-confidence. The manufactured art products as well as the performance can then be exhibited throughout the Western Cape which gives the involved adolescents a sense of achievement. Since the Vangnet Project is in Bonnievale as well, it is important to regularly have an exchange on information. In addition, in order to strengthen the collaborative work, the two projects should plan activities in which their beneficiaries can communicate and work together towards an alleviation of issues.

1. Conclusion

During my 6 month stay, I got a glimpse into South Africa’s complex culture. It was very interesting to hear all these fantastic stories and lifestyles of amazing people and their contribution to change their environment. I learned a lot not only for my personal life, but also for my professional career. Indeed, this stay triggered my reflexion on the controversial concept of development and humanitarian aid, which will be highlighted on the next pages. As it was a life shaping experience, I am very fortunate to have experienced this cultural adventure as it changed my view on life in uncountable ways.

**The controversial concept of development aid**

Development aid is a very complex and disputable undertaking. It is complex because there is a huge number of factors that are unpredictably interacting. The results of these interactions are often manifested after a very long period of time. Furthermore, it is of highly importance to take these factors into account, because otherwise it will make the development work ineffective and lead to a controversial overview of this concept. As Damberger pointed in his Ted Speech “*Everything people see from Africa doesn’t matter. And everything that matters from Africa, people don’t get to see* (2011)”, aid is controversial, because Africa has received, over decades, an unbelievable amount of money without apparent political, economic and social improvements (Moyo, 2009).

Development aid is described as “financial help given by richer countries to poorer ones to help their industrial and economic development” (Financial Times Lexicon, nd). Whereas humanitarian assistance is defined as “aid and action designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2015)”.

The reason why development work is so delicate is that the issues that are tried to be alleviated are often manifestations of complex interactions of factors situated on different levels. In other terms, a dysfunctional system can be caused on a historical, political, socio-economic and/or psychological scale. As for South Africa’s current ambivalent situation, for instance, the government is not following its duties, which makes it difficult for people to climb up the scale of wealth. Furthermore, given the historical background, people are still suffering from its past, such as the superiority of the whites and the submissiveness of the coloureds and the blacks.

“Give a man the skills to fish instead of feeding him fish”. This sentence perfectly summarizes the true nature of development work. However, in history, a lot of development aid was done based on the idea that Africa’s people needed to be fixed and formed according to a western norm.

Equipped with our Western mindset, that aid in all forms is good and that poverty has to be addressed by material handing-outs, donors and social worker are applying a relief approach that means distributing clothes, toys and food, where local people would estimate it as not efficient, creating more damage than good. Assigning constantly free money in form of grants to government and to people does not stimulate their ability of self-determined thinking or decision-making to handle their own situation (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Moyo, 2009).

For instance, donors, mostly white people, distributed food, instead of given them the corns and the knowledge how to harvest. In other terms, they handed out, or sometimes even impose, material resources, such as food and money. Subsequently, the targeted population get used to that. It seems that the issue is solved, but on a long-term scale more matters emanate. Creating a form of addiction, the recipients cannot think anymore about an alternative solution and are demanding more and more money. Delivering material on a frequent basis undermines people’s autonomy and self sustainability (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). Battling with a low self-esteem, their ability to innovate creative solutions designed for their specific issues are not stimulated which lead to serious problems, once the money is no more provided. As with every form of addiction, once the material supply is scarce, the withdrawal symptoms painfully begin. Every new beginning is hard, but, fortunately, new alternative methods will be found (Moyo, 2009).

Instead, it is important to invest in relationships that empower disadvantage people (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). However, building up relationships is a long lasting and time-consuming process, but in the end, its effects are potent and provoke to a critical change. Indeed, people’s self-esteem and self-value increase to a point where they begin stepping out of the cycle of helplessness and take responsibilities over their own life.

As a donor, it is important to swift from a product mentality to a process approach. Immediate relief and results may seem as very attractive at a short-term basis, but are dangerous for the future. As cost and time consuming it is, these changes are long-lasting. Concretely, through skill development and specific training in finances, business management and planning, people are able to change their condition with their own two hands, restoring their dignity. Under constantly supervision, they could start a business and subsequently become self-sustained.

Already mentioned the acknowledgement of our own poverty, it is important to think about the concept of poverty and worldviews which differ either coming from a western culture or a third world country (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). Indeed, the view on poverty that we adopt can extremely tunnel the ways we try to alleviate the living of distressed people. Emanate in many different shapes and forms, poverty is very complex term. Basically, poverty can not only be determined as a lack of material resources, but also regarded as a lack of love, compassion, education, social support and activities. In South Africa, for instance, the quality of education will never improve due to the fact that the infrastructure is simply not appropriate for this task (Schultz & Buys, 2014). Not only teacher’s trainings is lacking, but also the classrooms are overcrowded, putting 40 or plus children in one classroom managed by one teacher.

According to materially rich people, the concept of poverty is defined as a lack of things, whereas materially poor people describe their condition in psychological and social terms, such as low self-esteem, sense of inferiority, powerlessness, and so on (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). As a result, donor and helper with a materially rich background are not really appropriate to attack the matters at stake due to the fact that the local community is considering poverty in different terms. This explains the fact of involving local people, with that particular cultural background and life-style, into the planning and implementation of help actions against the true problems. Not only will work be more efficient, but delegating responsibilities to local people can prevent all kinds of harm. At this point, donors are asked to step back and leaving the work to locals, who know their business. It is however important to mention, that projects often are reluctant to claim their liberties and to set boundaries because they are afraid that donors will withdraw their money.

This constantly handing out of material things, such as food, clothes, money, also fuels the black community’s attitude that white people are rich and, therefore, always give. That’s one reason why a white person is more often asked for money than person with different skin colour.

Furthermore, the issue at stake is not well assessed. Key factors, such as culture and mentality of the people, are not taken into account. Misdiagnosing the given context can end up in a disaster not only for local people, but also for helpers. Concretely, if a situation is not fully appreciated, the issue is not only improving, but human and material resources are irreversible wasted. People will stop their donations or their efforts because they become tired and frustrated not seeing any progress. However, one should be aware that every progress takes times. As time and cost consuming it will be, determine the right approach tailored to a specific system will make the intervention last longer.

Many stories of failed projects are emerging. Concretely, donors have these good-sounding ideas; they are building up wonderful infrastructures which are perfectly working during their stay. However, once these people have left, this infrastructure is doomed to failure, leaving people in a worse situation than they were before (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). Indeed, as planned and thoughtful the whole project is, inventors fail to consider the part of maintenance (Damberger, 2011). Besides maybe the fact that the project is not adapted to the very nature of the environment, local people have neither the knowledge, nor the material to sustain the project on their own.

Aid intervention can also interfere or even destroy the live of local people. Concretely, providing materials can undermine the local businesses (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Moyo, 2009). In sensible environments where people are able to sustain themselves through legit work, distributing material resources does not only weaken people’s abilities and self-worth, but also destroys people business. One illustrating example where aid failed was the case of handing out mosquito nets for free (Moyo, 2009). Instead of buying the nets from local manufacturers, it destroyed a whole market field, putting people out of business. Furthermore, a lot of nets were thrown away because the maintenance of broken nets is no more guaranteed. It is therefore important to assess the impact of one’s intervention in a sensible system.

Lastly, there are different kinds of aid and failing to clearly discern them can also turn the whole concept of aid upside-down. Corbett & Fikkert (2012) distinguish between relief, rehabilitation and development. In a natural or a man-made crisis, the urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid, in terms of handing out material resources, such as money, food and building materials, is considered appropriate in order to attenuate the suffering, otherwise not coped by the local people. This is called *relief*. However, if the relief context is extended to a certain point, where local people can handle their own circumstances, this kind of aid can create more harm than good, by basically inducing dependency or superiority-inferiority. The concept of *rehabilitation* encompasses the fact of working with and not for the local people to restore the positive elements of their pre-crises conditions. The *development* is described as a process of ongoing changes. Based on an empowering process, it is praised to work with people and not done to or for people. This approach ensures the participation of the targeted population in all kind of aspects, such as assessment, design and implementation. In the same line, Moyo (2009) adds charity-based aid, which is mobilized by charitable organizations to institutions or people on the ground, and systemic aid. In the latter case, money is paid directly to governments either trough government-to-government transfers or transferred via institutions such as the World Bank.

Therefore, it is highly necessary to think about the different forms of aid. Besides assessing the issue at stake and the local people’s ability to cope with, discerning the right form of aid can fuel an efficient intervention which impacts have long lasting effects.

Conclusion:

My volunteer work made me realise that development aid is a very complex business. In fact, sometimes it can do more harm than good, when the intervention is not totally thought through. A colossal number of factors, many of them not apparent at the first sight, have to be taken into account. Furthermore, every action, as subtle as it is, has a consequence in a short-term as well as in a long-term aspect. As a consequence, it is recommended to frequently assess one’s motives and goals and to ask how to behaviourally reach these goals. Personally, I am, at the moment, at the beginning of my adventure in this enormous world of development and humanitarian aid. I am looking forward to investigate more in detail what aid is really about, including the fact to determine the most effective ways in alleviating social and psychological issues in emerging countries.

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