



September 2010 **Randstad volunteer Dorine in Namibia**



Since March I've been working as a business & enterprise development advisor for the Namibian Development Trust (NDT). A very interesting and challenging job! I'm having a great time and it gives me great satisfaction to work in development aid. Having said that, things aren't always easy because they don't go as fast and as easy as I'm used to back home.

After an induction session from VSO upon my arrival, I moved to Mariental, 250 KM south of capital Windhoek. Southern Namibia is very flat, vast, dry, sparsely populated and cold in winter. Fortunately, it hasn't been that bad so far and I'm really enjoying my time here! However, it can be pretty cold during the night... Did I travel to Africa for that?! Obviously that's not what it's about, the work I am doing here is much more important. I work for NDT, a small organization working on and with community based projects. Unemployment in southern Namibia is rife, some figures indicate over 50% of the working population. Through community based projects various non-profit organizations, including NDT, try to create more jobs. It is obvious projects like these are needed, in the communities I work with, there is a lot of poverty. NDT helps communities set up enterprises so they can make a living. It will take some time before they're profitable but we'll get there, and once we do, the people here will gain an income.

The project I work on consists of eight camp sites and two tourist information centers around Mariental which have been built in the past two years. They're now almost ready for operation. The communities still need support starting up their business, which I give them together with my Namibian counterpart Elly. She'll continue this work when I go home later this year. Elly and I made a plan for the next few months to prioritize what's needed most: developing and giving workshops to the communities. Every week we give two or three workshops at the campsites, the rest of the week we work from the office on finishing the infrastructure and marketing activities.

After my first week I attended a business management workshop given to three of the communities I work with. The workshop was held in Afrikaans, relatively easy to follow for Dutch people, although speaking it is a bit more difficult... The people in the south mainly speak Afrikaans and Nama, a click language, which sounds very funny and is very difficult to learn! Understanding each other can be difficult but luckily my colleague Elly speaks Afrikaans, Nama and English. The format of the workshop was similar to what we're used to in the Western world. By contrast, the attendees weren't always as focused as we might think, often being distracted by children and mobile phones...

Of course life is not only about work and I already saw a lot of Namibia. Because of public holidays we had a few long weekends which I used to visit national park Etosha, Swakopmund (town at the sea) and Sossusvlei. I am also meeting lots of new people, which is really amazing! All kinds of interesting local people, who are very hospitable, and of course the other volunteers from VSO who travelled from all over the world to work in Namibia. In short, this is an experience I wouldn't want to miss!

Dorine