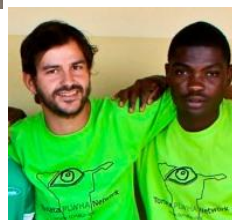




## September 2011 **Randstad Spain volunteer Adrián in Namibia**



The most important thing I've learned during my four years as an advisor for Randstad Professionals is that the key to success is being able to adapt yourself to a situation. So when VSO offered me a volunteer assignment in Ongwediva, a Namibian town near the Angolan border which has one of the highest rates of HIV in Africa, I could only say YES!

I had always been fascinated by working in a developing country, getting to know new cultures and learning new ways to do things. When I discussed the possibility of a VSO assignment with my managers, they encouraged me to do it, so I went ahead! During the assessment and pre-departure trainings I started to realize that I was close to living an amazing experience.

I work as an organizational development advisor for an organization called "Tonata", which means "Open your eyes" in the local language Oshiwambo. Tonata is a network of support groups of people living with HIV/AIDS. We are one of the few NGOs in Africa whose main activity is providing communication services. We do this for people living with HIV/AIDS through our magazine, radio program and sending mass texts. We focus our efforts on HIV awareness and avoiding the stigma that come with the virus. We also act as a link between trainers and our members so they receive information as well as training to improve their skills.

At the beginning life was difficult here as there were heavy rains in Ongwediva and the city was partially flooded. I didn't understand what Tonata was or what my role would be. But after a few weeks I started to enjoy my placement very much! In Tonata I found a space for creativity and pro-activity. There is a lot of work to do and new ideas are always welcome, that sounded perfect to me. The first thing I worked on was in support of the identity of the organization: I built a web page and created a new corporate image for them. Nowadays our web page receives a lot of traffic from around the world. You are more than welcome to visit us: [www.tonata.org](http://www.tonata.org)

In parallel to my job at Tonata I have been using my photography skills to support several NGOs as well as "The Namibian", the main newspaper here. Photography is a good way to advocate for the rights of groups that suffer from discrimination. Additionally I proposed the use of my photos to Randstad Holding to raise funds. They put me in touch with colleagues and the ones Randstad Spain and Randstad CPE in the UK responded 'When do we start?' That was great! They prepared a photo exhibition of the pictures in their intranet and colleagues could buy my photos, the funds of which go to projects here in Namibia!

We decided to invest all the funds raised in Eluwa Special School, which is a boarding school for deaf and blind kids. Some of the kids are orphans, others do have family but they are often maltreated by them because of their disability, so much so that they are forced to leave their homes. The school and the pupils have very little so all helped is needed and appreciated. There is nothing more beautiful than making a positive difference in the life of a person. Thanks to Randstad Spain a lot of kids will have enough clothes for the next years. And thanks to Randstad CPE nobody will laugh at the Eluwa Football team again for not having equipment. Well done my friends, you made it happen. Everyone in the community of Ongwediva including me is proud of you and your efforts!

Adrián Sánchez Escribano