

MY SIX MONTHS REPORT IN GERMANY

We arrived in Germany on 29 July 2015, as South North volunteers for Welwärts Bielefeld program. Weltwärts Bielefeld is a German program which has been sending German volunteers to do one year social work in South Africa, Mozambique, Mexico, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Peru and Ecuador since 2008. From 2014 they started to receive volunteers from the countries where they send their volunteers, and in 2015 we were the first volunteers from Africa. Currently we are two volunteers from South Africa and two others from Mozambique. The weltwärts program receives volunteers from South and placed them to different organizations in Bielefeld Germany to work for one year. The organization I am placed to work with is the registered German association KOSA (Koordination Südliches Afrika) is a nation-wide affiliation of organizations, groups and individuals involved in development policy, working locally but also across the country on Southern Africa. KOSA has also been the successor to the association Alliance For Action on Southern Africa, the former Anti-Apartheid movement in Germany. KOSA has focused on the economic relations between the region of Southern Africa and the European Union, for two years now KOSA has been actively involved in the “International Apartheid Dept and Reparations Campaigns in Southern Africa” as well topics like “water and privatization” and also the planned “economic partnership agreements” between the EU and ACP-Countries with special attention on implications on Southern Africa.

In August 2015 we had German language course for the whole month and also some workshops about Weltwärts, German history and had introductions of our work and what is being expected from us. In August I also participated in an anti-coal demonstration here in Germany and met with anti-coal activist’s from Netherland, France, Germany and trade unionist from Zimbabwe.



It was of course a nice experience and had an opportunity to talk about our struggle against coal mining in South Africa. In September I started working at KOSA office and I was introduced to KOSA and the aims and topics of KOSA currently and also to my tasks of everyday work.

In September I had meeting with MÖWE an organization based in Dortmund which is working with KOSA in coal import for Germany. Part of the meeting was to discuss possible seminars we could do

at schools about coal mining in South Africa, I presented our work in South Africa and after they had interest in having a screening of The Bliss of Ignorance as it covered and explains many aspects concerning coal mining in South Africa. Then MÖWE developed a flyer which was sent to different different school in Northeim Westafalia, asking schools if they have interest in having screening of the movie. They used the picture above to advertise the seminars to the screening of the documentary.



Only one school agreed to have the screening of the documentary, the screening will be on 22 January 2016 in Siegen Germany at a secondary school.

From 15 until 20 October 2015, I was invited to take part in a climate pilgrimage walk, which was organized by different church based organization. The pilgrimage walk started in Hamburg Germany and its destination was Paris France, purpose of the walk was to raise awareness about the COP21 in Paris and also to get more people to be involved in the Environmental Justice campaign. I joined the walk on 15 October in Osnabruck and we walked 25 kilometers a day, on 19 October I made a presentation about coal mining in South Africa and I walked until we reached Dortmund on 20 October. They continued with the walk until they reached Paris at the beginning of COP21. During the walk I met with activist's from Indonesia, Germany, Sweden, Angola and Netherlands who took part in the walk.



From 10 until 11 November KOSA organized a workshop about paper consumption here in Germany for students from a college in Bielefeld, part of the workshops was raise awareness about timber plantation in Mpumalanga Province (South Africa) and also encourage the students to reduce their consumption of paper. I also made a small presentation about South Africa and introducing Mpumalanga Province to the students and also presented some effects of timber plantation in Mpumalanga.



From 27 until 29 November I attended a Coal Import Network meeting in Cologne which was organized by Power-Shift a German organization. Solidarity movements from Germany, England, Switzerland, Russia, Croatia, Denmark and Netherlands took part in the meeting. Almost all the organization that were present at the meeting their work was more on solidarity with organizations from Colombia, as many organizations in Germany their focus regarding coal import is in Colombia since the percentage of coal imported from Colombia to Germany is the highest currently.

On 05 December 2015 we had a screening of The Bliss Of Ignorance in partnership with Open-Globe Bielefeld, Open-Globe Bielefeld is a group of students from the university of Bielefeld. Their working on Degrowth related issues. They organized an event on 05 December 2015 and they invited me to come and present the situation in South Africa concerning coal mining and The Bliss Of Ignorant we find it perfect to present everything concerning coal mining in South Africa.

Schedule

Gruppenraum		Worldwide Climate Action Day
3 pm	Skype conference with young people in Indonesia	
4 pm	Workshop	Make your own cream or bodybutter!
5 pm	Workshop	Mix your own tea!
6 pm	Presentation + discussion with Lucky Maisanye	Coal mining in South Africa (in English) + Documentary "The Bliss"
Saal		
3-6 pm	Tauschcafé	Bring your stuff, you don't need anymore—others might! Swap it instead of buying it new!
3-6 pm	Workshop + Information stand	Foodsharing Bielefeld
3-6 pm	Workshop + Information stand	Verbraucherzentrale Bielefeld: Make your own chocolate spread!
Stage		
3-6 pm	Open Space	Area for handicraft work and making: Pappmaché, wrapping paper, Christmas decoration, Tetramonnaies, etc.
7 pm	Concert	Unknown Skartist
Cafeteria		
3-6 pm	Open Space	Area for: knitting, felting, crocheting together! Learn the first steps or work on your own project!
3-9 pm	Christmas tree full of wishes	Make your wish!






On 14 January 2015 I was invited to do a presentation about current civil society campaigns in South Africa at Ruhr University in Bochum Germany. I did the presentation to a group of students who meet every Thursday at the university and discuss issues related to global social movement campaigns; they meet from 14h00 until 17h00 every Thursday.

After the doing the presentation and having discussions with the students, I came back to Bielefeld where I met with Greenpeace Bielefeld. I was invited to their meeting as they had an interest to know about the coal situation in South Africa, I made a power-point presentation for them and 28 January 2016 there will be a screening of The Bliss Of Ignorance when all their members are there at the meeting.

On 15 January 2015 I made a presentation about coal mining and its impact to the environment and our health in South Africa, it was during a meeting organized by Mpumalanga Forum from Germany. And there were others who presented their work in Mpumalanga Province who are also members of the Mpumalanga Forum group.

On 18 January 2015 I meet with a group of volunteers from Germany, it is called Group Southern Africa Bielefeld. They do solidarity work for organizations in Southern Africa, so their interested to know the work I do in South Africa and also the current situation concerning coal mining.

Is a great opportunity being here in Germany, I learned a lot about myself and work. Every day I learn something new and gain a lot of experience. I hope all the things I learn will be fruitful for our struggle against coal mining back home. Is not easy being on my own here Germany without speaking German, I practice every day to learn the language. Because speaking their language the less challenges. I hope the next coming six months of my stay here will worth it.