

Project Name- The Travelling Shanty Town

Country- Australia

College- International House Melbourne- The University of Melbourne

Students-

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Project Goals: Our goal was to travel throughout country towns along the eastern coast of Australia, raising awareness for the living conditions in shanty towns in South Africa. By creating our own 'travelling shanty town' we hoped to encourage the people we met to consider issues they may not have otherwise been aware of.

Our group of students bought a 1993 Toyota Tarago to transport us along our journey. Using recycled and donated materials we constructed a fun and inviting shanty town. The shanty town was used to promote our message through engagement with regional communities. We set up at roadside stops, parks, church halls, and outside of businesses in order to reach a maximum number of people. One difficulty we didn't account for was the weather (cyclonic winds) and as a result did not plan any backup indoor areas to set up and were unable to undertake our shantytown in some planned locations. Another unanticipated difficulty was the loss of multiple group members. A number of our teammates, due to personal and medical reasons were forced to leave the trip, and as a result we were left with fewer people than planned to run each shantytown. This lowered group morale but strengthened our teamwork and group bonding. We organised replacement shantytowns to make up for those cancelled due to the weather.

The strengthening of the Australian dollar caused the total grant received to be less than the AU \$10,000 we had budgeted for, forcing our budget to become slightly tighter. Additionally, our budgeted price for comprehensive insurance was significantly less than the actual amount, meaning quite a large upfront cost for the group. To compensate for these unexpected costs, we were able to find a car that actually cost \$2000 less than we had budgeted for, and our budget for petrol was higher than our actual expenditure.

We made sure the shantytown was bright, colourful and attention grabbing. This colourful setup, as well as donated balloons and glow sticks, drew children and their parents to see what we were doing and gave us an opportunity to talk to them about what we were trying to do. If they didn't have time or didn't want to stop they could take a brochure and read about our project. At our shanty towns, we set up a small 'Market Place' stall, where we sold items that had been donated by the African Australian Friendship Association (AAFA) and the African Grocery Store in Darwin, including jewelry sets and small boxes of tea we liked to call ShanTEA. These sold very well, as they were small, cheap and useful. We were also given the copyright to an African cookbook, which we printed and sold copies of. This was not quite as successful as it was more expensive than our other items. The items for sale were a point of interest at our Shanty Town, and encouraged people to stop and look, and if they felt like it contribute to our cause while getting something out of it themselves.

Our original plan was to gain permission to set up our shantytowns on ovals and in local parks. This was unsuccessful, as councils were slow to respond or didn't respond at all. Schools were also very apprehensive to allow us to camp and set up our stalls on their grounds, as they were worried about health and safety and legal issues. Finally, we arranged with a Church in Canberra, and through a number of other personal connections different places where we could display our shanty town. The church setup was particularly good, and our most successful organised display. People were very receptive and supportive of our cause, and the children loved all the games and activities we had organised.

The Travelling Shanty Town came into contact with a wide range of people that may never have experienced these living conditions. As a result, we were able to direct their attention towards the people of Lavender Hill, and many donated money that will benefit them greatly. All of the people who bought tea, jewelry or a cookbook will be reminded constantly of our cause and the message that we were trying to send through the gifts that they purchased. While this project was immensely important and effective in its aims, there are currently no plans to continue this project in the future as other commitments mean that the group is unable to continue the travelling shantytown.

Part II

One of the most fundamental purposes of our project for peace was to educate the public about the definition and meaning behind the concept itself. This peace can be political, social and economic. We considered the meaning of peace in all situations and gave accurate, well-thought-out definitions. We consider political peace to be a balance of participation and subsequent satisfaction in the government and legislators. Each member of

a community must have an equal chance to be able to influence the politics and become actively involved. There should be no separation of class or power depending on race, social status or family background and connections. As a group we also considered the meaning of social peace, and what a community requires to be able to socially interact and live with each other in a civilized manner. This civilization can be acquired through a healthy mix of education, employment and social interaction as a child. If children are not sent off to work at an extremely young age, and instead are encouraged to build their social skills, this may assist in creating a more civilized community in the future. Economic peace is something that has proven to be a struggle to achieve by many countries in the world today. Parallel to the concept of political peace, economic peace is largely based on equality between people of differing race, religion, family connections and social status. If people cannot be considered to be of equal status then it becomes very difficult for a community to establish a level of economic equality, stability and consistency. Fundamental to the idea of economic peace is the idea of consistency and good governance.

As a result of living in a mock shanty town and improving our knowledge through interactions with the local communities, we have made both short and long term contributions to peace. On an immediate level, we introduced a greater awareness of shanty living into communities which may not have been conscious that this is a global manifestation of poverty. Through our creative and positive approach, which appealed to people of all ages and backgrounds, we created an informal atmosphere for education that could inspire them to 'spread the word'. An important communication tool in this sense was a brochure, which we encouraged people to pass on to others. In the long term, we have directly contributed to the success of Philisa Abafasi in Lavender Hill, by donating all profits to the organisation. Moreover, we hope that the awareness raised has brought about a change in the way Australians view the issue, which will in turn foster positive thought and development, and in time extend as far as Lavender Hill itself. These two contributions will increase the success of Philisa Abafasi, in turn raising the quality of life for residents of Lavender Hill, and creating initiative for action to combat shanty living on a greater scale.

This project has changed the way we think about the world in a number of ways. Through planning and researching our cause, our knowledge of Lavender Hill in South Africa has expanded. We are now more aware, with personal connections, of what the situation is like in these areas. This makes us look at our own lives differently, appreciating at greater levels our daily access to clean water, heating, and food. Not only do we look at our own lives with greater appreciation, but we respect and acknowledge those who are forced to live in such undesirable circumstances. Where appropriate, we try to spread such an impact and feeling on to those around us. Furthermore, through the planning and execution of this project, we have formed connections within our group and have learned from the entire process. Overcoming hurdles along the way has brought us closer together to fight for the cause; we have gained appreciation for each other and the difficulties that arise in the organization of such events. When we see initiatives with similar intentions we understand the input that is put in to these projects and hope we will be more inclined to participate. Through participating in this project, we feel that our views of the world have changed for the better. Although the impact might not be seen by the entire world, we hope that such ways in which we have changed will slowly resurface and continue throughout our lives.

Everyone on the trip has become more considerate and patient, as we didn't only have to deal with the people who wanted to know about our project but also with the people who didn't and the people who wanted to challenge us on our position. However, even this added another lesson for us, as it made us think more broadly about poverty and impoverished conditions all around the world, not just in our focus location and we incorporated that into our later shanty town stops. It was also a good group activity and team-building adventure. When going on a road trip, especially one with such an important agenda, it is necessary to have all members of the group working together and most of the decisions have to be team decisions. We've learned to balance our strengths and weaknesses and to prioritize our wants and needs in order to be a good team.

I am really glad I volunteered for the Travelling Shanty Town project. It was an eye-opening experience that enabled me to raise awareness for the terrible conditions of shantytowns to people who may otherwise have no contact with them. I learnt a lot about other people and the way they live, as well as a bit about myself. I would definitely recommend taking part in this project to others, as it really is a worthwhile experience. *Rebecca Skehan*

BUDGET:

