

SAMPLE STUDENT REFLECTIONS

A Week in an Unfamiliar Environment Reflection

For my week in an unfamiliar environment I worked for one week in the Disabled home, a foundation that gives people with disabilities a home, a normal paying job inside the foundation as well as a chance to function in a society of their peers. The foundation had mainly a bio garden centre where they grew organic fruit and vegetable as well as flowers. On our first day we were explained that the produce went under the “demmetter” bio label and was sold in their own Bio-shop.

Some personal challenges that I faced were how to speak Swiss German to these people. This was very important to me because I wanted to fit into the entire group. Also as with every meeting for the first time we found that it was difficult to initiate the conversations because I often have problems when mustering the courage to talk to someone new. Also I was always considering whether there were forbidden topics with the entrusted people (although as I later found out this simply wasn't true).

My principle occupation inside this place was working with the garden centre. I worked weeding out the Celery (no pesticide could be used for Bio produce), Mowing the grass and using it to keep some plants cool in the sun, harvesting tomatoes and Paprika. The most challenging of these tasks I found was the mowing as the ground was uneven and there were rocks that had to be avoided. Also I had to work alone and not with one of the entrusted people so it was relatively unrewarding. However while doing the other work especially weeding and harvesting we were always with the disabled people and we got to talk to them work with them. Although the work was hard and tedious (we were exhausted at the end of every day) and the sun could quickly set on dehydration in the green houses, I believe this experience was an amazingly rewarding one.

The one thing I learnt there was that even though there was supposed to be a metaphorical wall between us and them to begin with; they were actually no different to us. I think something I lost for these people was pity, because they were happy with what they were doing as well as with what they had achieved. However there was obviously a development process to this epiphany. At the beginning of the week the students stayed by themselves except when placed with the entrusted people to work and communications between us were quite shallow if at all present. Slowly however both of the groups started integrating with each other and started talking about their lives. They talked of their families, their girlfriends and love life and even gossiped among each other. Soon we seemed like all the separation had just melted away and we to were just their friends working with them.

The entrusted talked about their disabilities and how it happened as well as some of the difficulties and challenges that they faced. There was a recurring theme that unfortunately began to emerge, discrimination. On our first days we heard about one teenager who asked us whether his, “Voice sounds retarded”. Apparently he had been bullied before by some locals who made fun of his voice and his looks and he wanted to know if there was anything true about it. Although this discrimination was not evident in the foundation obviously, these people when they were exposed to the real world had to battle cases like this frequently. This was something that really enraged me. If those bullies had the time to get to know the teenager, like we did then they would realize that there was nothing the matter with him. However something that surprised me about this was how strong these people were. It

really gave me a sense of grounding to know that the even though these people have experienced hardships I could not begin to imagine, they still came everyday with smiles on their faces.

Another depressing theme we came to face was depression itself. Some of the stories we heard were really crushing. We came to realise how fortunate we really were with all the opportunities we had. It was horrible when we realised that the people were jealous of us sometimes because they would never know get these opportunities. Also we found that some people were suffering from depression because of their disabilities and there was even some talk of suicide. We tried are best reminding them about the things still left to live for but I really don't know how much good we did. Some how my problems seemed pathetic in comparison to the difficulties these people had to face.

Overall, I believe it was definitely a worthwhile experience because it gave me a chance to do some self evaluation as well as meet some new people and some new stories to tell. Although there were challenges along the way, I'm sure that there are no doubts on whether this was the right experience to undertake.

My week in an Unfamiliar Environmental

For my one week in an unfamiliar environment, I chose to work at Seabeach Gardens, a high care nursing facility in Sydney, Australia, which provides palliative care for the frail geriatric population with incurable diseases, ranging from dementia to cancer. I also applied to work as a volunteer in Russia, with an organization helping street children in Moscow but that didn't work since their operation had been put on hold due to a lack of funds. I was informed of Seabeach Gardens nursing home by a family member in Sydney and immediately established contact with their director of nursing, Dianne Herr, who assured me that they were always looking for volunteers to assist the staff.

After making all the necessary arrangements, I immediately outlined some personal goals for my week in an unfamiliar environment. These goals were; to work towards the relief of pain and suffering of dying people, to learn more about the 'end stages' of life, to acquire an understanding of the problems that these people faced on a daily basis and to gain experience in the voluntary field.

I left for Australia on the fifth of July and arrived there on the seventh, having made a one day stop over in Dubai. I arrived at Seabeach Gardens nursing facility at 12pm on Monday, July 11th and it was arranged that I would work there from 12pm until 5pm every day until Friday, July 15th. Upon arriving at Seabeach I noticed that the facility was rather small and it blended perfectly into its suburban surroundings. When I arrived, I walked through the main doors and walked past an old woman, sitting in a wheelchair, who stared right through me and barely acknowledged my existence. A nurse then came and wheeled her into a large room with a television set with about thirty other residents all sitting down quietly, engaged in various activities. They were much older than I had expected and it was at this time that I realized that this week wasn't going to be as easy as I thought. I then met with director of nursing, Dianne Herr, who gave me a tour of the facility. It was definitely bigger than one could see from the outside and I was also surprised to see that the residents' rooms were the equivalent of what one would expect to find at a private hospital. She introduced me to the staff and also informed me that they had been understaffed lately and they had a lot of work that I could do. Obviously, bearing in mind that I am not a nurse and have had no training whatsoever in caring for people with serious diseases, it was no surprise that initially, many of my tasks didn't involve direct contact with the residents.

Over my five days at Seabeach Gardens, I engaged myself in as many tasks as possible in order to make the most out of my time there. There were some jobs that had to be done every day and others that varied from day to day. For example, every day I helped prepare lunch, tea and dinner in the kitchen as well as setting all the tables before mealtimes. Tasks that varied from day to day included decorating the facility for the residents' "Christmas in July" holiday, installing a new key system in the main office, replacing all the old dustbins in the facility with new ones that had yet to be unpacked from their boxes, helping residents walk safely from the bus to their rooms after returning from a field trip, ensuring that the birdcage was always clean and equipped with clean food and water and helping the recreational officer conduct the afternoon's activities with the residents. These tasks made up the majority of my time at Seabeach and any other free time I had, apart from a thirty minute lunch break each day, was used talking to the residents and trying to understand their problems.

The vast majority of residents at Seabeach, during the time that I was there, suffered from the various stages of dementia. Over time I realized that this was in fact one of the cruelest diseases that one could get since it caused residents, depending on their degree of

dementia, to forget their names, where they were and why, all memory of family and friends, how to speak their mother tongue language and even basic everyday functions such as walking, sitting down and even eating. Many residents of Seabeach Gardens have to re-learn how to do these basic functions on a daily basis.

After getting to know them, I realized that many of the residents, although some physically crippled, were still very intelligent and they told me that they liked to keep themselves occupied with games and mentally challenging activities. I noticed a scrabble board on the bookshelf and asked if anyone would like to play. This was not an easy task because once I had found a group of residents who wanted to participate, they had all, apart from one, forgotten what it was they had just agreed to. It was through activities like this which allowed me to gain insight into the lives of these people and the way in which they looked at life; many of them, simply waiting to die whereas others were grateful for their long innings and enjoyed every day as if it were their last because there was a good chance that it was.

In conclusion, this was definitely an experience that I will not forget any time soon and it made me wonder why I had never done anything like this before. I worked with the intent of easing these peoples' suffering, I learned invaluable lessons about the 'end stages' of life from the people who knew them best, I was educated in the workings of dementia and successfully gained experience in the voluntary field., thus completing all my goals. I am very happy with how I applied myself to this task and I will look back on this as one of the highlights of my eleventh grade.

Musician

Creative: 30 hours – I practiced flute and competed in the Dallas Symphonic Festival Senior Concerto Division.

After incessant hours of practicing flute and occasionally sacrificing my academic grade, I received first place in the Dallas Symphonic Festival. This was completely new to me because in all of the competitions I participated, I always received 2nd, 3rd, or even no place.

I acquired two important realizations from this experience. First, I learned that judges look at the whole performance. When I walked into my audition room, I was so nervous that I messed up on the very first note. I was quite flustered, and my accompanist and I had to start over. Throughout the five minutes and thirty seconds of my music, the B flat swam back and forth in my head. At the end of my audition, I was quite sure that I did not even place due to that one note, but rather, the judge said, "You overcame your first mistake very well." I did not know what to make of this comment because I thought the judges only looked to mistakes to penalize. However, she assured me that the most important element in music is the whole performance, not the trivial mistake. In addition, it was how I reacted after the mistake that mattered. My ability to still give my best performance knowing that I had messed up is part of musicianship. But I know that is not quite true. My ability to spring back up after a mistake is not only part of musicianship but also part of life. Whenever I fall, I need to push myself up from the ground and run the journey of life again.

The second realization is actually rather depressing. After I got over the shock of getting 1st place, instead of feeling happy, I felt relief. I was relieved that I had another proof of my passion that I could include in my college resume; after the relief, a wave of anger and sadness came over me. I felt as if I had deceived my passion for music for merely an achievement. Even though it is not possible for me to go from defeat to defeat, from competition to competition without some level of strong passion, I was saddened that there were ulterior motives to my winning, that I had to prove my passions to college admissions officers by winning.

In retrospect, I do not think I learned two different lessons that day. I believe it was merely two faces of the same realization. While the society does care about the overall performance, what counts are the results. I acknowledge that it is impossibility for colleges to look into every applicant's passion, but why do these passions have to turn into mere calculations in the process?

I was actually quite ambivalent about including the second, rather sad, epiphany about this experience because it was not a "positive" learning. However, life is not always happy, and throughout life, all of are going to have to face the harsh and benevolent realities. Therefore, I included the second portion.

Developing Response - emails

Initial e-mail from student:

I'm going to be learning the Can-Can for this French contest at the end of February, and I was wondering if that would count as ACTION.

And I'm going to be doing photography for the French contest too, so would that count as CREATIVE?

Yesterday, I had Solo and Ensemble. When I played my solo for the judge, I didn't do as well as I could've and so I felt kind a disappointed.

I don't know how talking about CAS over email works exactly, but I hope this is a start.

Advisor response:

Yes, the Can-Can may certainly be considered action, no problem there. Yes, photography would work as creative. Your reflection on your Solo and Ensemble isn't full enough. Tell me the story, which pieces were you playing, why didn't you do well? Tired? Bad day? Too much on your mind? Where will you go from here? What does this tell you about yourself? Is orchestra not a priority right now? Why or why not? Etc. etc. You don't have to answer all of these questions, but think about the experience and give me a full picture of what happened and what you have learned from this.

Second e-mail from student:

Oh, so I'm supposed to tell you how I felt basically? Well...My piece was Partita No.2 (Allemande) by Bach and I felt prepared for this more than last year but when I went to play, at the end, I was thinking 'YES, I'm almost done!' and then I messed up. I didn't get to vibrato as much as I wanted to because I was afraid that I would mess up.

Oh and I have really, really, bad performance anxiety and somehow that day, when I performed, I didn't get nervous until I messed up. (Maybe it's because I'm sick and I don't really care as much because the same feeling happened on Friday for my playing test).

It's weird because this year when I have playing tests, I start to shake physically and previous years, my heart usually just starts beating really fast. I still get cold sweaty hands, but this year isn't bad. Last few playing tests, I've been doing worse than I usually do/could do (I practice in the morning and I can play the section but in class...it disappears) Since I started not doing my potential on playing tests, I wanted to drop orchestra next year but I like orchestra and the only reason I thought about dropping was because I didn't want Mrs. Thomas to think I wasn't good when what I was playing wasn't my best.

This isn't a lot, but I hope it's something compared to my last email.

Hospital Volunteer

I am not quite sure how exactly to write this reflection, so I will tell you about the incident that happened while I was volunteering at Centennial Medical Center last week.

Last Saturday, I went to volunteer at the hospital as usual, and I expected to copy and file papers, ask patients if they need anything, or change beds. However, this Saturday, a nurse asked me to make chicken noodle soup for a patient. I was excited about making the chicken noodle soup because my work at the hospital is extremely limited and not too stimulating due to the fact that I am a student without any certification. All I was to do was open a can of Campbell's Chicken Noodle Soup and put it in the microwave. This was such a simple task if you knew that you were not supposed to put cans in the microwave. Ignorant of this crucial fact, I put the whole can in the microwave.

Oh my... let's just say that the poor pregnant lady never got her chicken noodle soup.

Standing in front of that black microwave, I had one of the most profound epiphanies. I never realized that I did not know how to do the most practical things, such as using the washing machine or the dishwasher. As an IB student, I had centered my life around studying, not on doing the laundry or washing the dishes. I had always left these "trivial" things for my mom to do based on the excuse that I needed to study. But as I stood in front of the microwave realizing that I was not going to get the chicken noodle soup, I also realized that practical knowledge was just as important as trigonometry and centripetal acceleration. Never will I put another can in the microwave, and never will I dismiss practical knowledge as merely trivial. This passage underscores how growth may not always be predetermined. This student's epiphany could not be anticipated, yet her reflection clearly meets the aims of a CAS experience, personal growth.

I am quite sure that you now have a totally different opinion of me after this incident. It is a silly incident, but believe me when I say that it was not so silly when I realized that I broke the microwave. I am still not sure if this is how I was supposed to reflect my experience, so please e-mail me back and let me know if this is acceptable. Otherwise, have a happy Friday!

Journal Entry Number 1

25/11/07

Elizabeth Walker

Activity: Volleyball – Junior Varsity (Action)

Target Skill – I haven't played volleyball for very long. I am really not much of an athlete, but my best friend, Kathy, promised me I would love this sport if I gave it a try. This is definitely out of my ordinary type of activity. I am a runner and prefer to work out alone. Volleyball seems like another way to improve my fitness level, have fun and work with a group. I have to admit that I am a bit nervous about trying something so public.

Activity to date:

My stomach was upset the first day we suited up. It seemed as if everyone knew exactly what they were doing, everyone but me. My friend was so patient and kind, helping me understand the rules, the regulations and where to stand. I found serving the ball most intimidating. All eyes were on me...I thought I would die. The game went much faster than I imagined. Everyone is always in motion and all the players were most serious about winning. This made me a bit uncomfortable as the group dynamic was new for me. I found it difficult not to be in control all the time.

This activity is becoming more important to me. It gives me a sense of belonging. It's fun to see other players in the hallway and be able to say hello and know we belong to a club together. My high school is so large, it can be easy to feel a bit alone.

The activity has a goal, which supports the criteria for a long-term commitment and opportunity for growth. Adult supervision, the coach, is implied, although not directly stated.

The activity fits the criteria for the Action category of CAS. Volleyball is a new skill for this student. The reflection reveals student's feelings and concerns.

Activity: Visiting the Nursing Home (Service)

Target Skill – Serving people who may not have many visitors.

This is what I am good at. I love old people. My grandmother is the most important person in my life. She has a very good friend, Margaret, who had to go to a nursing home. When I heard that not many people visit Margaret, I knew I had to do something. I was so surprised to see that more people than Margaret were happy to see me. Who knew that so many families forget the older family members? It was so sad. I look forward to reading to these people. We have the best conversations about all the characters in the books and we try to figure out what will happen next in each story. It's funny how we usually move from the books to talking about real life and real people. The best stories are usually not in the books, they are stories from the lives of these old people. I think I look forward to visiting them more than they look forward to seeing me. One sad part though, one of my favorite people, Jack, died last week. I don't know exactly how to handle this or what to say. This is a struggle for me, but I will still go back.

Activity: Dance Class (Creativity)

Target Skill – To Make the Dance Team

Luckily my school offers a dance class. I am a good dancer, in fact I have been dancing since I was four years old. Jazz, tap, ballet...I do it all! My school has a big spring show. Making the dance team is a big deal. The costumes, sets, theatre department, all if them come together to create one of the biggest nights of the year for artsy people like me.

Future Plans

I am still stuck on this project aspect of CAS. Like I said earlier, I am kind of a loner and working in a group is tough. I do feel very strong about the Pro-Life movement and think maybe I can get involved with that. I don't know...maybe a picket line with posters, handing out leaflets...I am not sure. Will get back to you on this one.

e-mail from student

Good evening Dan,

I do not know if my running competitions, which is part of my cross country's training, would interest you. If I'm asking it, it is simply because I had a competition this morning, and I wanted to give you a brief description about how I felt.

So first of all, this was my third competition ever in running competition and I incredibly increased , my performances! So, when I finish this race after 18:43 seconds there's a link to prove my participation

<http://www.sportstats.ca/display-results.php?lang=eng&racecode=44064&lboard=Overall&page=0&sizeofpage=200&sortby=place&limit=2000>

I have to tell you that I was really proud of this race, because I almost touched my goal which was to finish in 18:30 and for the first time since I started running I was not suffering at all when the race ended I just felt good and refresh, awaken, and I would not hesitate to invite some of my friends in this kind of event where there is a great ambience, it is a simple health festival, a melting pot of sports, fruits and music !

Well that is it Daniel ! talk to you later !

response from CAS coordinator

Hi Mathieu,

Congratulations on such a successful race. It sounds like the training is paying off. I checked out the web site and I see that you placed amongst the fastest runners. That's great. I'm sure you will meet your objectives if you keep at it.

Please be sure to keep me posted.

May I suggest that we keep this e-mail thread going. The next time you feel like writing, simple hit "reply" and we can keep on-going "archives" of your progress.

Have a nice evening.

Dan

Wine and Cheese Evening

“Wine and Cheese Evening” was held at André-Laurendeau College on November 10. Several volunteers were needed to ensure the success of this event, so I submitted my name to the organizers.

Before the guests arrived, we took a brief training course by the wine steward. We learned how to set the tables, serve the wine, and clear the tables. Once the guests arrived, our duty was to look after one table of eight people. There were two servers for each table, which required a certain level of cooperation. As well as serving the wine and cheese, we had to ensure that there was sufficient bread and water for each guest. Throughout the evening, I learned what being a server was all about. I had worked previously in a restaurant, but only in the food preparation areas. I saw what the waiters and waitresses did, but I never really realized what their jobs involved. This training allowed me to discover the level of “etiquette” needed when serving tables. Everything I learned that evening will be useful to me for the rest of my life, whether I work as a server or host people at my home.

Overall, I enjoyed participating in this event, although I found it quite stressful. I would have liked to have more practice before serving the guests. I was very fearful of making mistakes. That said, I think the volunteers were very well treated. There were over forty college students involved in this event, and almost none had experience serving tables. One organizer was assigned specifically to the team of volunteers, which was very reassuring.

The objective of this event was to raise funds for the André-Laurendeau Foundation. The organizers did everything they could to minimize their costs, so the involvement of so many volunteers was essential.

Work-out

At the beginning of September this year, I very enthusiastically started an exercise programme at the College gym. All my life, I have always been physically active and I have always been involved in a number of sports. This time, I undertook a more intensive workout programme. My main objective was to incorporate physical activity into my daily routine. At first, I found it difficult to juggle a Monday-to-Thursday schedule of homework and working out. I was really exhausted by the end of the week. With time, though, I got used to it and really started to notice the results. Not only did I gain in strength and endurance, I also noticed that my stress levels dropped. All my life, I have been told that physical activity is good for the brain, but it was only this fall that I realized how true that is. My daily 90-minute workout became a sacred moment for me, even the night before an exam. Through my workouts, I really came to understand the value of physical activity, not just for the body, but for the mind as well. Since this was a very personal project, I don't really think other people gained from it. For me, though, I realized that I am quite a determined person when it comes to an activity that I enjoy. I can say that I accomplished my main objective, which was to get accustomed to a rigorous routine that I plan to continue. We hear all the time that it's important to eat well and exercise. Now I know just how true that is. This is now integrated into my routine and I hope it will remain so for a very long time.

Primary School Workshop Leader

As part of their holiday celebrations, the teachers at De la Volière School organized workshops for their children. They needed many volunteers to lead the workshops. When I arrived, the organizers explained the programme for the afternoon and what was expected of me. Throughout the afternoon, the children and their teachers moved from one room to another, where different activities were taking place.

My activity did not last as long as expected. I therefore had to think of new games in order to fill up the time allotted for my workshop. Over all, the games went well, but some classes were unruly. I tried to maintain order and calm, but not always successfully. Before this project, I had never worked with children, and I had never considered how hard it would be. I have always been a fairly impatient person and I realized that working with children, especially such young ones, requires a huge amount of patience. I saw really turbulent and trouble some children, and I saw both patient and exasperated teachers. I came to understand the very important role of teachers not just in academic education, but also in the socialization of children.

Honestly, I didn't really enjoy this activity. I realized that I probably don't have the right personality to work with school children. Nonetheless, I was able to develop my patience and my workshop leader skills. I also learned how to interact with children, how to capture their attention, and how to achieve order and calm in the classroom.

Latin American Dance Course

At first, I decided to choose this activity because it was something that was completely new for me and that allowed me to meet new people in a programme where a number of faces were unfamiliar. I got to know a number of people who I now consider as close friends. First of all, it's important to know that I dance like a lumberjack. I have very upright posture and my body tends to be quite stiff. I'm not even remotely loose. I remember the first course in particular. What a disaster! I arrived barely five minutes late and the teacher had already started the class. I had a hard time catching up to the others who were already working on their dance steps. Even worse, these were just the basic steps! The other participants laughed at the way I was trying to swing my hips. It was no big deal though because it was the type of activity where shyness has no place and new groups of friends form. The fact that I was laughed at made me want to persist even more. I practiced my new moves every day, wherever I could, even though I felt a little silly. I practiced in front of the mirror, in class, and sometimes just before going to bed. In the end, these dance courses increased not only my determination and patience, but also my ability to dance! Really, I only have good things to say about this activity. Thanks to my dance classes, I met new people who have become my friends. I had a great time doing an activity that I could never have imagined myself doing. I even managed to provide a source of entertainment for many people, including myself. I think it's one of the best things to do to meet new people and to help build self-esteem. Since taking the Latin American dance course, I feel more comfortable dancing in public and I feel a lot less shy in front of other people.

Work with the developmentally disabled

I had always wanted to work with the developmentally disabled. However, I had always feared contact with such people. As soon as I started working with them, I realized that they were friendly, funny and pleasant. I became quite close to a couple of them and now consider them as friends. One guy always talks to me about sports, in particular hockey. Even though I'm not really very interested in hockey, I found it interesting to talk to him about it. Spending time with these people really helped lift my spirits. They make you laugh and teach you many important life lessons. I really enjoyed myself working with them, whether it was playing badminton, swimming, doing crafts, drawing or special events (apple picking, Christmas party). They made me feel more at ease with myself and more comfortable in the college. I always try to find the time to speak with them. I think what I appreciated the most about this project was the human aspect. I loved spending time with them, because I accomplished something fundamentally good. Whether it was talking about sports with Chris or about women with Johnny, or teasing Michael and Darryl, or even catching up with Santos (the one who talks non-stop), I really had a great time. I'm totally envious of the coordinators (Rosie, James and Sylvain) who are amazing people working with other amazing people.

Ecuador trip – Work projects

I developed my personality thanks to our three weeks of intensive group life. This was a new social experience for me during which I developed my ability to listen to others, my empathy and my ability to share the details of daily life (meals, bathrooms, etc.). I was also able to work on my open-mindedness, particularly with respect to my tastes and preferences. Often, despite all good intentions and reasoning, we aren't able to remain as open-minded with our senses as we are with our intellect. For example, I think I made some progress in that I learned to tolerate repeated playing of the one and only CD on the bus (or for that matter, their music in general). This was also true of the sickly sweet-and-sour tree tomatoes that they considered as a real treat.

This trip, with all its different activities, surely allowed me to acquire many different skills and helped form a new set of values. I improved my Spanish (the desire to communicate was unequivocal) and learned to teach English, not to mention all the other accompanying experiences (contact with children, adults, preparation, the unexpected, field-trips, etc.). I discovered a culture, different people, creativity, the notion of time. In other words, I discovered the world. For example, I discovered that in this culture in transition (towards the West), Ecuadorians haven't yet mastered the art of building fires in a fireplace, recycling or composting. It's understandable that these people have never been able to obtain these luxuries, although there have been some encouraging efforts. This leads me to talk about our preparation day that took place before our departure. The comments and ideas that we developed together concerning international development now seem quite well founded. We weren't going simple to enrich our own lives (culturally, monetarily, the system of loans and debts between developed and developing countries), our presence, our financial contributions, a little labour, and especially the human contact, did not constitute a one-way street. (...)

On a physical level, there was constant exercise, thanks especially to the physical demands of living in altitude. After two days, I was able to adapt enough to play "fuzball" with a respectable level of endurance. Also, climbing Chimborazo on horseback was a great experience (instructive and worrisome, too!). As well, I managed to ride a few waves on a surfboard; this was an exhausting but exhilarating sport. The games that we played were an excellent way to get to know each other and to share a few moments of enjoyment together. The children caught on quickly; we even established rules non- violence. These were very satisfying activities for all of us. But this was true even when we were with the adults: when we played a game around the campfire with the guides, I had the impression that we were particularly united at that moment.

I can say quite objectively that the experience was as positive for the Ecuadorians as it was for us. Depending on the activity, some people benefited more than others, but overall, we all gained a lot (...) The children and the guides learned a little bit of English; at least they got a short introduction. We left behind clothes, computers, some money in exchange for services, manual labour, etc. I believe especially that the encouragement, The joy, the open-mindedness and even drawing and doing handicrafts brought major benefits. In sum, I have only great memories of this experience, including the moments of minor discomfort, and our ability to overcome them.