INTERNERSHIP REPORT

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Street Child of Nepal

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INTRODUCTION

Justification for choice of internship and organisation

Street Child of Nepal (SCON) is the local branch of a UK based NGO (Street Child UK), which was established in 2015 as part of the earthquake response. SCON worked with UNICEF to develop many Transitional Learning Centres to help children access education even during the emergency stage. Since then, the organisation has expanded, and is now involved in many different projects assisting various groups around Nepal. When researching the organisation, I found that the aim and mission of SCON was very worthwhile, as they aim to improve educational opportunities and reduce marginalisation in various locations. Additionally, I really admired many of the programmes the organisation has been involved in, ranging from the empowerment of the most marginalised peoples in the country (the Musahar), to developing an app to prevent human trafficking, to providing education for the children of the seasonal migrant brick factory workers, who have very few opportunities otherwise.

The role that I applied for was as an Enterprise Volunteer. The organisation is currently in the process of setting up a social enterprise on the roof of the office building, which will hire local marginalised individuals and provide a space for recreational and cultural activities, with all revenue raised being put directly into the existing activities and projects of SCON. I found this new and innovative idea very exciting, and decided I would like to get involved in such a project. I had never visited Nepal, but had always heard amazing things and it sounded like a great opportunity to get involved in an interesting organisation, working on an exciting project in a wonderful country.

Obtainment of internship

Having applied for literally hundreds of internships, I saw this position advertised on Relief Web. I applied through the head office in the UK, and was selected for an interview a few weeks later (in August). Not long after that, I received an offer and began to make arrangements to begin two months later.
Expectations of internship

I have never worked anywhere outside of Australia so I didn’t really know what to expect. I had heard many stories about the need to be relaxed and not stress about the slow nature of work in Nepal, so I was prepared for that. I had expected that the logistics of establishing the social enterprise would be slightly further ahead than they were in reality, as very little work had been done regarding fundraising, legal aspects, activity ideas etc. I knew there would be a mix of people from different nationalities, with permanent staff from Nepal and a range of international volunteers from all over the world. I was therefore excited to work in such a multicultural team, and learn about different cultures worldwide. I assumed I would be involved in fairly menial tasks, but I ended up having quite a lot of responsibility. I was expecting more supervision and direction than was provided, and more organisation overall. The UK office had not even communicated to the Nepal team that I was coming, so I was a complete surprise!
Structure

Street Child is a UK based organisation that has local offices in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nepal, Nigeria and Sri Lanka. The Nepal office (SCON) opened in 2015 in the aftermath of the earthquake. SCON has also established a partner local NGO named Shaksheik Chetana, in order to benefit from both international and local NGO status. SCON is largely dependent on the UK office, which provides much of the funding and also brings in international volunteer interns; however, they are trying to become more independent. The team here is a mix of international volunteers and local Nepali staff.

Goals

SCON began working in Nepal since the earthquake to establish transitional learning centres and help children to continue their education during the emergency. SCON has two main goals: (i) to improve educational opportunities and (ii) to reduce marginalisation and increase empowerment. A variety of projects have begun since the transitional learning centre initiative was finalised, improving access to education for the children of migrant workers, disabled children, children from certain marginalised castes and groups etc.
TASKS AND ACTIVITIES

I was involved in a variety of projects during my time with SCON, each of which involved different tasks and activities.

Impact enterprise

I originally joined the SCON team as an enterprise volunteer. The organisation is currently in the process of setting up a social enterprise on the rooftop of the office building, through which cultural and recreational activities will be available. Within this position, I was responsible for developing the curriculum for four types of English language classes (one for professional English, one for English for children, one casual conversational English class and one intensive English class focusing on improving reading, writing, listening and speaking). This required a great deal of research into what other organisations are providing, what the local population would like to learn and through what means etc. I also conducted research into other activities that could take place in the rooftop space, based on a customer discovery survey that was completed prior to my arrival. Additionally, I was involved with fundraising, reaching out to contacts in Australia, the UK, Canada and the US to encourage them to get involved with our project, and developing business proposals regarding the project. I did some graphic design work, designing a possible logo for the enterprise and also creating brochures and flyers advertising and detailing some of our services.

Faith based WASH project

I also became involved with developing a faith based WASH intervention in a small Muslim community in the south of the country. For this, I was tasked with researching and developing the curricula for three interventions: (i) community led WASH, (ii) menstrual hygiene management, and (iii) child friendly WASH. I was lucky to visit the community in a field trip, whereby we conducted interviews to determine the needs and knowledge of the community, and also to meet with a facilitator to discuss the logistics of delivering these sessions. I was also able to attend the delivery of the first session.
Due to language constraints, I was not directly involved in implementing this session, but I was there to support the facilitators and answer any questions they had regarding the programme. I found the choice of participants/host community slightly perplexing, as they seemed to have above average WASH standards, practices and facilities. Additionally, we failed to reach the target number of beneficiaries due to disorganisation, and those sessions that we did deliver were very chaotic. The class sizes for the women were far too large to effectively impart any knowledge, as we had over 100 people in each session. The men and children were much more calm and well behaved, but there was a much lower turnout for their sessions. The local facilitators were expected to assist in the local logistics, however, they did not fulfil expectations. They were often running late for the meetings, and did not effectively coordinate with the communities to ensure a good turn out. It was a very interesting experience, as it was my first visit into the field and gave me a taste of what life in the humanitarian sector could be like.

**Musahar girls project**

The Musahar girls are some of the most socially isolated and excluded members of Nepalese society. Street Child has begun to work with Musahar girls to improve their employability and education through three programmes aimed at: (i) accelerated learning (e.g. basic literacy and numeracy), (ii) livelihood/employment skills, and (iii) life skills (e.g. WASH, GBV). I was involved with the life skills project, whereby I developed a curriculum for WASH, tailored at the needs of the 15-18 year old girls that this project is assisting.

**Other activities**

I was involved in other activities during my time with SCON. I took part in an individual life coaching session, with Steve Bryon, a life coach from the UK, where we discussed my strengths and weaknesses and made a plan on how to improve my work. Additionally, I attended a workshop hosted by a photographer, Chris Parkes, who had been visiting the SCON projects all around Nepal. He showed us some of the photographs he had taken, and taught us a little about the basics of photography and its power to effect change. We also took part in a grant proposal-writing workshop, whereby the country director helped us to understand how to write an appropriate and effective grant proposal. She taught us about the different writing
styles and content needed for institutional versus trust donors, utilising some examples that she had written for SCON. I was involved in taking minutes for the weekly team meetings, and also was able to visit the local SCON brick kiln school, and it was very interesting to hear about the work done there and meet some of the children.
SUPERVISION OF THE INTERNSHIP

My internship supervision was slightly disorganised, as I was an unexpected arrival. During my time with SCON, the organisation was going through a structural change, aiming to make the business hierarchy more flat and encouraging everyone to take more initiative, as well as attempting to reduce dependency on the UK office. A new system, whereby a different line manager is responsible for the supervision of each of SCON’s projects, is not being implemented. The enterprise head therefore supervised my work with the social enterprise; while another employee supervised the faith-based project, and a fellow international volunteer headed the Musahar girls project volunteer. For each project, we had regular meetings to share ideas and keep up to date with each person’s role and responsibility, so that in between the meetings each person knew their tasks and responsibilities. The country director was not in Nepal for most of my internship, and therefore there was no overall leader and supervisor.

I found that there wasn’t enough communication between different teams, and even within teams, and the line managers sometimes were not even sure what they expected, and therefore struggled to guide their co-workers. Moving forward, I think the new supervision structure will be successful, but as I was there in the transition phase it was a little disorganised.
LIVING CONDITIONS

While SCON has accommodation available, it was quite expensive and required sharing a room. I instead found a hostel/homestay not too far from the office, which was such a great choice. The family I lived with were so lovely and made my time in Nepal so special. I had my own room with attached bathroom and breakfast for less than €7. For any future interns at SCON, or indeed other organisations in Kathmandu, I would definitely recommend staying in this hostel/homestay (called Sanu House). While the home was very clean, the city of Kathmandu is incredibly dusty, which inevitably came into my room.

The cost of living in Kathmandu is low, with local buses costing between 10 and 20 cents, intercity buses around €5, local meals €1-2 etc. Some tourist sites charge a lot for entrance to famous sites, such as the Kathmandu Durbar Square or the popular city of Bhaktapur (€8-10). There are many cafes, bars and restaurants throughout Kathmandu. The most famous and popular area is Thamel, but I didn’t spend much time there as I found it too touristy and busy. Everything closes quite early, and drinks are not super cheap. All of the local Nepalese people are so friendly and generous. I was invited to join family gatherings and events on more than one occasion.

All expenses during the field trip were covered by SCON, including food, transport and accommodation. The accommodation was not quite what would be found in Europe, with squat toilets, unchanged sheets, dirty floors etc. Nepal is a less economically developed country. While the current government is hoping to improve environmental sustainability, there is an enormous amount of rubbish and litter on the streets, in the rivers, in parks etc. I was shocked by the number of people who I saw drop garbage onto the street as they walked. Similarly, spitting is a big thing in Nepal, and I was almost hit by flying phlegm on more than one occasion! ‘Normal’ toilets and hot water are rare outside of the cities/expat areas, pollution is very bad and there is much poverty in the country.
Intrinsic and personal learning effects of the internship

I learnt a great deal through the internship with SCON. I really enjoyed working in such a multicultural team, and learning from each of my co-workers, who have all come from very different backgrounds with a lot of great experience and knowledge to pass on. I developed my communication and leadership skills, and also learnt how to better take initiative and self motivate myself. I also developed my confidence and problem solving skills. Through the field trip I learnt a great deal about life in the field, as there was a lot of disorganisation and chaos. It was my first time living in a less economically developed country (Nepal is ranked 144 in the world in terms of the Human Development Index), so it was interesting to experience a completely different way of life and be welcomed by such an amazing and generous people.

Expectations beforehand fulfilled

I had expected greater communication and organisation between, and within, the head office in the UK, and the local Nepal office. Arriving at the SCON office without anyone having any knowledge of my arrival, and when it was actually a public holiday, was not a good start to the internship! As I had been an unexpected arrival, there were no tasks set for me to complete. For the first few days, I had no meaningful work to do besides reading old reports. After I was finally given a task, I worked very hard on the enterprise project, before finding out that it was largely redundant work, as the project was in the very initial phases (i.e. we had no funds and could not do anything until we found an initial source of funding). I therefore had expected greater coordination and research into the projects, as all members of the team had different ideas and understandings about what we were doing, which resulted in disorganised and ineffective work. I had expected greater supervision than was provided, and wasn’t expecting to be given so much responsibility. With the WASH project, I was almost entirely responsible myself for creating the curriculum and session plan, with very little input from other members of the team. I found I enjoyed this type of self motivated work, and enjoyed the challenge, compared to the
menial work I had expected I would be involved in. I also hadn’t expected to meet such a variety of people with different backgrounds and experiences, so I was very positively surprised. There was a very young average age in the office, but many of my co-workers had achieved so much already.

I hadn’t expected I would be able to spend so much time in the field. I was very happy to be able to visit one of the brick kiln schools, and thought that might be the only field visit I would be able to do. However, the visits to the communities in the Terai (southern region of Nepal) were a highlight of my whole experience with SCON, and completely exceeded my expectations. It was so interesting to interact with the community, attend meetings, and be involved in the delivery of the first of the eight sessions. In the field, I had expected that everything would be very organised, which was very different to the reality that we found when visiting communities. There were many delays, with people arriving late, answering calls during meetings etc. It was a good learning experience, as I am sure this will also occur in many other activities in the humanitarian sector.

**SWOT Analysis**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internship itself</td>
<td>Internship itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involvement in different projects</td>
<td>• Minimal supervision (which actually turned into a strength as I was forced to take more personal responsibility and initiative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developing skills in different areas</td>
<td>• Change of scope – initial work was redundant due to the objectives of the new project leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing organisation</td>
<td>Providing organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multicultural team – employing locals and international volunteers</td>
<td>• Disorganisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Community engagement</td>
<td>• Lacking communication with HQ in UK</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Under researched choice of faith based WASH session participants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Perhaps spread too thinly – trying to be involved in too many projects rather than focusing all efforts on one</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>Threats</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internship itself</td>
<td>Internship itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Able to visit the field and see the implementation of projects I had spent a lot of time working on</td>
<td>• Minimal funding for the projects I was involved in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Safety, particularly during the election period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing organisation</td>
<td>Providing organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Able to draw on status as an INGO, and also utilise the locally affiliated NGO (Shaksheik Chetana) and receive the benefits of both positions</td>
<td>• Competition in the field – many NGOs are operating in similar capacities around Kathmandu and Nepal</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Global reach with strong community involvement</td>
<td>• Difficulty finding funding</td>
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**Function of the internship as part of NOHA**

Many of the things that I had learnt about through the NOHA modules were very useful in the internship, and had prepared me well for practical activities in the field. The Applied Research Design module from the second semester at UCD, for example, was useful for researching and writing reports, proposals and plans. The Public Health module was very relevant to my work developing the WASH project, and I also drew on aspects of the Psychology module. I remembered many aspects of the guest lectures we had had during the semester in Groningen. One that stood out was the message that one guest lecturer had passed on to us – always wear a seatbelt! The roads around Nepal are very dangerous, and it was a message that I thought of often, particularly around the times when we were speeding along narrow, windy roads without any safety restraints!

Perhaps more emphasis could be placed on the practicalities of working in the field, for example, cross-cultural communication. Also, it would have been useful to know more about aspects of logistics such as writing business proposals/grant proposals, fundraising, marketing, monitoring and evaluation, auditing, finance, etc. as these are all important aspects of humanitarian work. I found it very useful to have had a multidisciplinary background, as many of the topics and ideas we had discussed throughout my Bachelors and Masters were relevant and useful for the internship in the field.
Internship for positioning on the job market

I spent the majority of my time working on education and WASH related projects, which I really enjoyed. I will definitely aim to work in these fields in the future. I would also like to work in monitoring and evaluation, as I have had a little exposure to it throughout my internship. SCON mainly hires national staff to fill permanent, paid positions with the organisation, with international individuals working solely in a voluntary capacity. I therefore will not be able to come back to SCON for paid work. There are many local and international non-governmental organisations in the vicinity of SCON, and I would definitely consider working in Kathmandu in the future. However, at the moment I am not set on any particular aspect of humanitarian work, or indeed any specific location. I don’t feel that I have enough experience to make such decisions, and would therefore be willing to work in any sector/location and see what else I may enjoy working on in the future.

My next step will be as a Non Formal Education Specialist and Activity Coordinator at Project Hope 4 Kids, where I will be teaching English and mathematics to refugees in a camp in Greece. The curriculum development skills I gained through SCON will therefore be extremely useful, as will the cross-cultural communication abilities I utilised in Nepal.