

Work camp at Aramitan

After taking part in the international youth conference “Connectivity” I was also offered the opportunity to spend one week working in the work camp Aramitan. This proved to be a week rich in experience for me, both socially and practically. A week I greatly enjoyed and shall not easily forget.

In Aramitan the task for the work camp participants was to help build a house. This house. When complete, will be a home for children to come to when they are no longer coping well with their lives. In Aramitan, they will then be educated in a loving environment until they are ready to go back from where they came.



The main work that my group undertook involved fitting in windows, tiling bathrooms, building a long wall and digging out a 2 metre high area for recycling, as well as other smaller jobs such as breaking down walls.

We were a group of 25 young people from around the world; many were from Brazil, New Zealand and Germany. Others came from America, Canada, Japan, South Africa and Scotland. We all lived on site and slept on mattresses upstairs on the concrete floor – in close contact with nature since there were no windows to keep our sun, wind and rain.

Food we bought ourselves, but were helped with the cooking for breakfast and lunch by a local woman. I think she found working for such a large group of international babies a great novelty. However, by the end she became accustomed to the fact that the consumption of fresh foods was definitely preferred over the typical Brazilian dishes of meat, beans and rice, as there ere also 50% vegetarians.



Socially we all got along well. This was achieved through the joint effort of most of the members trying hard to accept their inmates and understand the difference in backgrounds and cultures. Sometimes hiccups occurred, but these incidents afterwards became amusing stories s to tell and laugh about. Aramitan Workcamp was a wonderful opportunity to get to know more intimately and in

much more depth the contacts made in Connectivity. By the end of the week a real mixture of cultures had taken place and strong friendships were sealed

Each morning we were woken up at 7 by Eric playing folk songs on his banjo, a delightful morning wake-up call! Thereafter breakfast was served, followed by a morning meeting in which we discussed the day's program.

We worked each weekday from 8:30 until 12:00 in our various groups and projects. Then lunch was eaten and we would relax together until 2pm. From 2 till 5 was again hard work and the air would be filled with the noises of hammering, sawing, banging, whistling – people digging, others mixing cement. Some would be carting earth to and fro while some others would be trying to communicate with the builders, who only spoke Portuguese! At 5 o'clock work finished for the day and 25 hot, sweaty, dirty, dusty, tired people would queue for a shower or take a swim in the neighbour's pool. Supper was a joint effort of initiatives that felt inspired to cook something for the group. The evening program was a relaxed one, we would spend time talking, and playing games, sitting around the fire or an occasional movie was shown. At around 1am, silence would begin to reign over the large grey building, as each member snuggled into bed to catch some hours of well earned sleep.

For me this week was a week I shall never forget. I learned so much. I have never before done so much hard physical work – after one day of working, my body was all aches and pains, but it felt so good to be doing some real practical work for such a wonderful project.

For me it was absolutely the right thing to do after Connectivity. I felt to a certain extent I was living out the motto “ from thinking to action”. I also especially enjoyed becoming acquainted with the other participants. Exchanging ideas talking about their views on the world and generally having lots of fun, while laughing so much and experiencing such a great deal together. I truly believe if people personally met up with others from around the world in a positive manner, so many of the political hostilities would be finally laid aside. Connectivity is what is needed to bring friendships into this world.



Angela Gordon.