

# BETWEEN EXPECTATION AND GROWTH

## ALUNCEDO'S REPORT

Warm greetings,

My name is Aluncedo Nogutsha, and I am from Cape Town, South Africa. I am currently completing my volunteer service in Ökostation, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, through a programme facilitated by FIF (Fachstelle Internationale Freiwilligendienste), with VAMOS! as one of its programmes.

I learned about this opportunity through Life Choices, a non-profit organisation based in Cape Town, South Africa, which partners with the programme. Their support made this international volunteer experience possible.

This report reflects my personal journey — from receiving the opportunity in South Africa, to adapting to life and work in Germany, and navigating growth through different experiences.

## The Beginning: South Africa to Germany

When I received confirmation that I had been accepted into the volunteer programme, I felt genuinely excited. It represented an opportunity to step into a new environment, experience a different culture, and grow both personally and professionally.

The preparation phase in South Africa involved organising documents for the VISA application, attending orientations at Life Choices to get more information about how the volunteer service looks like and to prepare for personal growth, and mentally preparing for a completely new setting. During this time, I also reflected on what the experience might require from me - mental toughness, comfortability to be away from home, adapting to new routines, meeting new people, and learning to function in an unfamiliar environment.

Arriving in Germany, I was motivated and open-minded, aware that the experience would come with both challenges and opportunities for growth.

## Arrival and Orientation

The first weeks began with a welcoming seminar attended by South African and Peruvian volunteers. This created a supportive environment where we could connect, share experiences, and begin adjusting to life in Germany together.

Being surrounded by people who were going through a similar transition made the process easier. It allowed for open conversations, mutual support, and a sense of community despite coming from different cultural backgrounds.

## Language and Cultural Adjustment

Language has been one of the most significant aspects of my experience. While I continue to improve, German remains the greatest barrier, particularly because I enjoy social interaction and open communication.

In structured environments, such as the workplace, communication can sometimes feel limiting due to the language. However, in my social life, communication feels more relaxed, as there is less pressure to rely solely on German. This creates a more comfortable space to connect with others while continuing to learn gradually.

From my personal experience so far, I have come to appreciate the organisation and structure I have encountered in my daily life in Germany, particularly in areas such as transport and workplace routines. At the same time, being away from South Africa has deepened my appreciation for home — the people, the familiarity, and the sense of warmth I associate with my own environment.

While I have experienced Germany as a beautiful country with a high quality of life, this contrast between environments has been an important part of my personal reflection.

## Volunteer Work Experience

I began my volunteer service at Fachklinik Münstertal for the first 6 months, where my role focused on supporting childcare within a psychosocial setting. My main responsibility was to look after children while their parents attended therapeutic and medical appointments within the clinic.

This experience introduced me to working in a structured and care-focused environment. It required patience, adaptability, and responsibility, particularly when supporting children in a setting connected to family wellbeing.

At the same time, the experience led me to reflect on my own strengths, interests, and learning goals. Over time, I realised that I am most motivated in environments that combine structure with variety, where I can contribute actively while also understanding the bigger picture.

This reflection led to a transition period, where I explored other possible placements while continuing my responsibilities. This phase required communication, patience, and openness, and was an important part of understanding how to find a more suitable learning environment.

I am now continuing my volunteer service at Ökostation Freiburg from March, where the work is more focused on environmental education, sustainability, and community engagement. The role offers a greater variety of tasks and allows me to be involved in different aspects of the organisation.

An important aspect of this placement is the working environment. Communication is more accessible, as colleagues are also able to speak English, which creates a more balanced and supportive space for learning while I continue developing my German.

## Life Outside of Work

Outside of work, my experience in Germany has been positive and enriching. Socially, things are going well, and I have been able to build meaningful connections in a relaxed and supportive environment.

While I do not struggle with being outside of South Africa, being away has highlighted the value of home in a new way. Everyday experiences often bring a sense of appreciation for familiar routines and connections.

At the same time, living in Germany has allowed me to experience new environments, cultures, and ways of life, which has been both interesting and valuable.

## Reflection and Growth

This volunteer experience has shown me that growth does not always happen in a straight line. Sometimes it comes through reflection, adjustment, and making decisions that better align with one's goals and strengths.

Through my experience, I have developed greater self-awareness, particularly in understanding the type of environment in which I am able to contribute meaningfully and remain motivated. I have also learned the importance of communication, patience, and being open to change.

## Looking Forward

As I continue my volunteer year at Ökostation Freiburg, I aim to remain engaged, open to learning, and intentional about how I use this experience for both personal and professional growth.

This journey has been shaped not only by the opportunities I have encountered, but also by how I have responded to them. I remain grateful for the experience and for the chance to grow through it.

## Closing Note

The experiences shared in this report reflect my personal perspective and journey and should not be viewed as representative of all volunteer experiences in Germany.

Warm regards,  
**Alunedo**