

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Philippines 

WHAT'S INSIDE?

- 02 Volunteer Story
- 03 Future Midwife
- 04 Finding Friendship In A Foreign Land
- 05 7 Memorable Things About
Volunteering In The Philippines

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VOLUNTEER STORIES



Nous nous appelons Priscilla (42 ans) et Sacha (16 ans). Nous sommes Français et habitons dans la région parisienne. Il y a quelques mois, nous nous sommes inscrits en binôme mère/fils pour une mission humanitaire aux Philippines pour trois semaines.

Grâce au site de Projects Abroad et à quelques échanges avec l'équipe française, nous avons affiné notre souhait, et avons choisi une expérience d'aide dans une école. Cette mission nous a permis de partager du temps ensemble autour d'un même projet. C'était aussi l'occasion de vivre proche des Philippines grâce à notre famille d'accueil, des échanges quotidiens avec l'institutrice et les enfants.

Avant notre départ, l'un comme l'autre appréhendions des difficultés de communication tant avec les autres volontaires (car notre niveau d'anglais est très moyen), qu'avec les personnes de la classe, notamment les enfants dont ne nous parlons pas la langue. La vie à l'école nous a beaucoup apporté et la spontanéité des enfants nous a rapidement mis à l'aise. Au fil des jours, nous avons pris des habitudes, et plus d'initiatives. Nos échanges quotidiens avec Miss Doren (la maîtresse) nous ont permis de trouver une vraie place au sein du groupe !

Nos journées de travail étaient bien rythmées : le matin le réveil sonnait à 6h40 pour un départ à 7h15 avec le van qui passait nous chercher. La femme qui nous accueillait nous préparait un bon petit déjeuner typique (riz et viande) pour prendre quelques forces avant d'entamer notre journée à l'école.

7h25, arrivée à l'école pour le lever du drapeau dans la cour. De nombreux enfants étaient déjà arrivés et chacun avait accompli sa tâche (jardinage, nettoyage des parties communes...).

7h30, nous retrouvions les enfants du kindergarten (âgés de 5 ans). Le groupe du matin comportait 40 enfants et celui de l'après-midi 30 autres élèves... pas simple pour connaître tous les prénoms. Heureusement, l'institutrice avait eu la bonne idée de leur accrocher autour du cou une étiquette-prénom !! On était sauvés !

Ensuite tout allait très vite : vérification des devoirs, préparation de ceux du lendemain, aide à l'écriture, apprentissage de chiffres et de lettres, chants et petits jeux moteurs, sans oublier la pause snack !!... les heures filaient et à 10h30 les enfants repartaient avec leurs parents. Jusqu'à 12h nous profitions d'un temps plus au calme pour échanger avec la maîtresse, préparer du matériel pédagogique et rencontrer les autres enfants de l'école. A partir de 13h le deuxième groupe arrivait jusqu'à 15h30 sur un rythme à peu près semblable.

Après l'école nous rentrions souvent par le marché pour acheter quelques mangues et un lait de coco et ensuite direction la maison !

Après une bonne douche, un peu de repos et un bon dîner nous ne faisons pas de vieux os !! 20h30 au lit !

Les points réguliers avec l'équipe de Projects Abroad ont été rassurants et ont permis de faire de belles rencontres. On a ressenti combien la motivation et l'investissement de chacun pouvait apporter aux Philippines à travers les missions proposées par Projects Abroad.

Ce que nous retenons de cette belle aventure c'est le cocktail d'émotions qui nous a porté ces 3 semaines (surprise, joie, frustration, émerveillement,...) et pour finir la tristesse de quitter les enfants, l'institutrice et la famille d'accueil !!

SALAMAT PO !!! THANK YOU SO MUCH !! MERCI !!

Priscilla Werba
Care Volunteer, France



Future Midwife

Having had so many enjoyable volunteering experiences in the past, 20-year-old Frances Cassidy wanted to volunteer again. She travelled to the Philippines to take part in Projects Abroad's Medical Project. She also thought it would be a great opportunity to visit the Philippines and be involved in a community that was badly hit by typhoon Yolanda last year. She also wanted to explore the health system of a different country and culture.

The project is about helping out in the district hospital, city health office and rural health units. Volunteers have the opportunity to shadow doctors in a number of different departments in the district hospital or in one or more of the rural health centres and can even assist in delivering babies.

Specifically, Frances worked in the delivery room and birthing centre and had the opportunity to care for pregnant women, women who have given birth, women in labour and newborn babies. She also assisted in numerous baby deliveries every day. "Projects Abroad allows cultural exchange to happen in hospitals and health centres," she said. "Not only do we learn a lot about how the health system works in the Philippines, but we get to teach them about how it works in our own country and perhaps find alternatives and improvements that can be made," she added.



Her daily tasks consisted of being an assistant in the emergency room, taking vital signs of patients, delivering babies, taking care of newborns, pregnant women and women who have recently given birth. She was given a huge amount of responsibility right from day one! "The staff in the hospital and birthing centre were trusting and confident in our abilities to learn quickly!" she said.

Not only did she learn a variety of skills at her placement, but also a lot about how the health system works in the Philippines and the key difference between the health systems of different countries. According to her, through cultural exchange with the staff, she taught them about how the system works in her country and made some suggestions about how she thinks certain areas could be improved in terms of cleanliness and efficiency. "This experience will be useful for my future as it has given me experience as a midwife, which I will be in three years," Frances said. "Also,

it has taught me to recognize and accept differences and not classify them as wrong," she added.

"My most memorable experience is definitely the first time I delivered a baby. I have so many memorable experiences from my month in the Philippines though - working in the hospital, living the true Filipino lifestyle and being immersed in the culture have taught me so many important life lessons. The experiences I've had, people I've met and stories I've heard have taught me to never take anything for granted again. What I love about the people of Bogo, specifically, is that most people have gone through a lot of hardship after being affected by Yolanda, yet everyone I spoke to without fail sees a bright side and are so positive, happy and appreciative about what they do have!

In terms of differences to where I am from, there are obvious differences such as the culture, food, general way of life and living conditions. On a medical level, the most prominent difference is the patient-staff relationship and how patients are generally treated, especially on an emotional level. This is an area I'd love to continue to carry out research on and perhaps come up with ideas in the future on how it can be developed and improved.

"To the future volunteers, I'd recommend arriving with an open-mind, no expectations and a positive and determined attitude. You are there to volunteer, learn and in some situations, teach. Don't jump to the assumption that if something is different to the way it's done in your country or culture, it's wrong. Immerse yourself in the culture and community of where you are, regardless of how long you'll be staying. Lastly, always keep in the front of your mind that you are there to volunteer, so everything else comes second!" ☺

Frances Cassidy
(University of Exeter student)



Finding Friendship in a Foreign Land!



"We'll be friends forever, won't we, Pooh?" asked Piglet.
 "Even longer," Pooh answered. – A.A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*

First impressions are always funny and at times quiet surprising. For Evie, Tzara is the American who likes to speak her mind. For Tzara, Evie is the silent Brit who is still exploring other options in life; but, as the day went on, they found common ground and shared similarities. They sat next to each other on the bus one evening, divulging the awkwardness of their first day. They tried sampling local cuisine and delicacies, and grimaced at the thought of the sandwich that had been prepared the previous day. In this moment, a friendship was born.

Throughout the weeks they experienced several moments of fun, exhausting, and tear-jerking situations. From spending a weekend on an island to moving in together, everything was worth remembering. From sifting sand to flicking plaster at each other and the walls, of course, volunteering and working together brought them even closer. The most unforgettable experience they had was when they stayed up until the late hours of the morning eating local barbecue and singing Justin Bieber karaoke songs to their hearts' content, while capping it off with Filipino-style burgers.

Without each other, their trip wouldn't have been the same. Their friendship played a key role in making their trip truly worth reminiscing about. It helped them to immerse easily, not just into the Filipino culture, but also with each other. Their friendship opened their eyes to endless possibilities and opportunities, pushing themselves to try new things. And for that, they thank Projects Abroad for the opportunity to bring them together from two different parts of the world.



Like Evie and Tzara, you too can build friendships in a foreign land and create lasting memories. :)

Tzara Geraghty, USA
 Evangeline Griffin, UK

Disaster Relief Volunteers



7 things I'll always remember about volunteering in the Philippines

1) The Philippines



This trip was my first time in Asia; my first big trip outside Europe and the Philippines was the best introduction to a long time stay far from home. The

country and its over 7000 islands are amazing and the people might be the friendliest people in the world. I've met incredible friends and seen fancy places which I will always remember.

2) The work



I was part of the building team in the Disaster Relief Project for eight weeks. I worked in three different sites: two schools and a day care centre. We did painting on the

first two sites and I spent six weeks at the last site. Starting from scratch, we smashed the old walls, dug, bent iron bars, built the pillars, piled hollow-blocks, and plastered walls... It was really new for me; I loved it!

3) The weekends



We worked very hard during the week from Monday to Friday, so we really enjoyed the weekends to chill and rest. Instead of staying in Bogu City, we always went to different places to discover the islands surrounding Cebu. I've been to five different islands, all amazing. Discovering was definitely part of the plan for this trip.

4) The children



The strongest memories that I'll keep for the rest of my life are those with

the children I've met while working on the sites, especially the last one, Ban Ban. It is with them that I had the funniest moments and the biggest laughs. They were first a little afraid and shy, but in the end we played together every day. It was really hard to leave them; I hope I can come back soon to see them again.

5) The other volunteers



Being part of this volunteering mission was the best for meeting new people from all over the world. I made friends with people from the

USA, United Kingdom, Italy, Netherlands, and also France. You work with them, live with them, go out with them; in a few weeks you create real friendships which will last longer than the project.

6) The host family



One of the most important things about the trip is that you live with a family, sharing meals and daily life. This is the best way to discover their way of living, you learn from each other, and you feel really integrated into the country. Mine was fabulous, funny and

very kind; I'll never forget them. Thank you, Ural family!

7) The team



This trip was amazing; I have to thank the entire Projects Abroad Philippines team. Kenneth, Thea, Koreen, Aquiles, Ethel, Ludette, Zach and Mali; I'll be back because

of you. Thank you for everything and see you soon.

Francois Bernier
Disaster Relief Volunteer, France