

ProjectsAbroad









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EMILY BAULCH



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SUON KANIKA

A group of 18 High School students from all over Australia come together to dedicate 2 weeks to a volunteer project in Phnom Penh, Cambodia Only a few of us knew each other before arriving, most of us met either at the airport, during a stop-over or when we arrived at our apartment in Phnom Penh! Once we were all together we quickly realised it didn't matter where we were from, what school we went to or that we didn't know anyone - we were all like-minded people here for the same main reason - to give something back to a community in need Even though it was a big group it didn't take long for us to bond and form a great group!

We had 3 supervisors with us for the entire trip; they picked us up from the airport and spent the 2 weeks looking after us. They were Jessi from Ireland, Aimee from Australia, and Kanika who is one of the local Cambodian staff. Jessi and Aimee lived with us at the apartment and were always around if we needed help at placement, weren't feeling well or just needed a chat!

some amazing friends that I know are for life." - Lara Hayek

the group, in different ways." - Hope Fraser



with the same passion and desire to volunteer than you all connect. We became a family straight away and even though the trip was not about making friends it would have not been the same without all the amazing people I went with. We were a support for each other when needed and we all understood each other. By the end of

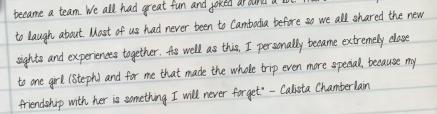
the trip I had become so close to everyone and knew so much about them when it was only two weeks! I made

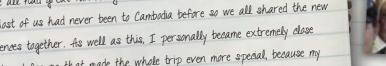
I made some really great friends, however, the people in the group were very different to who ${
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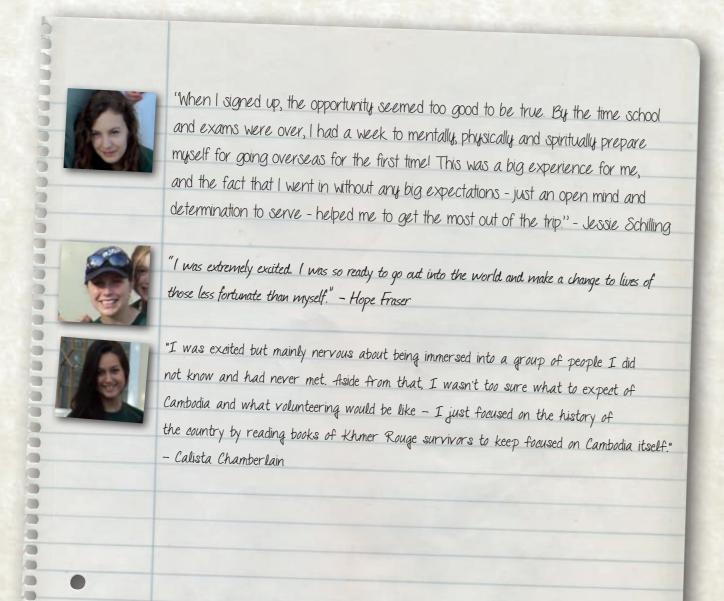


"I loved working with other dedicated young people who were there voluntarily and some who had worked very hard to get there. It was a rare and special opportunity, and I met the most amazing people." - Emily Baulch

GETTING READY

The lead up to a trip like this can be nerve-wracking and daunting, but most of all it is exciting! Projects Abroad gave us lots of information and tips on how to get ready and prepare ourselves including a kit list of things to pack! They were always available when we or our parents had questions leading up to the trip which was very reassuring!

A lot of us had never been overseas before, especially on a trip like this so there was a lot to think about. Once we arrived and realised we were all in the same boat it all seemed a lot less daunting and a lot more like a fun adventure!



PACKING TIPS





"Don't pack too many clothes! Pack only a few items as I ended up wearing the same things over and over again even before I'd washed them. I had to squeeze my shopping in from the markets." - Calista Chamberlain



"Don't worry too much about what to pack, you can get everything there! I took a lot of old clothes and left them at the orphanagel Mainly baggy t-shirts and fisherman pants or



"Make sure you bring hand sanitiser! Lots and lots of sanitiser! I used it all the time. Also make sure you bring lots of insect repellent, hats, sunscreen and sunglasses. Spare batteries for cameras are a great idea also." - Hope Fraser



"I wish I had stocked up on Australiana toys for the kids - it's about the only thing you can't buy there." - Emily Baulch



"Don't pack a full suitcase, you will buy a lot! So not many clothes, but be prepared with toiletries!" - Kate Lewis



"Taking LOTS of Hydralytes is a must - the ones that come in the tablet form preferably - take enough for two per day. For girls, don't take too many pairs of pants, because you will probably buy at least 5 pairs while you're there. Hand sanitiser is a good idea as well, especially for after using the bathroom or before lunch whilst at the placement." - Kathryn ling

OUR ARRIVALS



After what seemed like we were flying forever we arrived in the busy, loud city of Phnom Penh. What a relief to see our supervisors waiting for us at the airport! Arriving in a new city can feel overwhelming with all the new sights, sounds and smells on the drive to our apartment it was great to just sit back and take it all in!

It didn't take long for the surroundings to feel normal, like seeing a whole family on the back of a motorbike, or the bustling street stalls that sell everything you could imagine!



"At first I was scared. I was so overwhelmed by the completely different culture that surrounded me. I was overwhelmed that I was away from home, family, friends and Australia. It was a really overwhelming time for me and I worried about the time ahead of me. The heat was just insane. I remember sitting in the apartment just sweating. Never before had I felt such heat. And I also remember sitting in the taxi completely freaking out, there were no lines on the road, there were motorbikes everywhere. On one motorbike there was a young man on the bike holding a full sized ladder! The number of huge items carried on such small motorbikes still astounds me today!" - Hope Fraser



"I thought it was beautiful. The sights were amazing, all the people on motorbikes, tuk tuks, and the little shops on the side of the road were great. It was so different to what I was used to." - Madeline Sampson



'It was really REALLY humid and the smell of dirt was in the air. I remember finding it strange that all the shops along the road had everything hung from the ceiling - things from hair due to chainsaws! Cambodia is very different from Australia, there's no doubt about that. It was a bit confronting to walk into a room full of people I didn't know, in a country I didn't know - but everyone was really friendly and talkative, which was a relief!" - Kathryn Ling



"I did get a bit of a culture shock when driving through the city. I had researched so much about Cambodia before but to actually be there is completely different! I fell in love with the country straight away despite this shock and all the people were so beautiful!" – Lara Hayek



"I was exhausted upon arriving in Cambodia, purely because of the long flight and sleepless nine-hour stopover. Everything was new and exciting though, and I was eager to explore the new culture. Cambodia was chaotic, but charming. Traffic is insane, and the paverty and different lifestyle is confronting, but the people are lovely, and the food is homely." - Jessie Schilling







OUK HOME

We all stayed together in the Projects Abroad apartment in Phnom Penh. The first thing you notice with the buildings is how they are built up and not out, so many of the buildings (including our apartment) are about 6 or more stories with just 2 bedrooms on each floor and one huge staircase! Let's just say we all got a great leg work out during the 2 weeks, especially those of us up on the top floor!

On the ground floor there was a lounge room with a TV where we could all sit around and chat or watch movies. Also on the ground floor was the tiny kitchen where the cooks would manage to make breakfast, lunch and dinner for all of us every day! The highlight was definitely the rooftop where we could hang out, relax and look out over the city!









my favourite thing was definitely the rooftop and the balconies, great for sitting and chatting at night! Least favourite was the fact that there were so many flights of stairs! My room was on the 4th floor, so I had to make sure I was completely packed for the day before going downstairs" - Kathryn Ling



My favourite part of the apartments was just having a bed to sleep on after such long days! Least favourite part was that they were so hot!"



"I loved the apartments! I have amazing memories on the rooftop late at night, cooking with our beautiful cooks and the fact that we all had our independent time and space but we could also all be together. Despite the broken showers all of it just added to the adventure."



"I loved how all of us were close together, but most of all, I loved how we had a roof to sit on at the top! The roof was where we all gathered and sang and played guitar after a hard day's work, and the views of the city from there were so peaceful. My least favourite thing would be the stairs. There were at least five flights of steep stairs! The structure of the building itself and the narrow and compact way it was built made it so different to the houses back home. Rooms were literally on top of one another so by the top floor it was a long way down. I'd say the small kitchen was also different, and the lack of air-con so that hot, moist air was just being mixed around by the fans in my room. Aside from those little things, I had no trouble adjusting to the accommodation and completely understood that our apartment was considered luxury to what most Cambodians lived in." - Callista Chamberlain





"The apartments were a sight for sore eyes at the end of an exhausting day. To have a bed and shower and cooked meals to come home to was a luxury. The most beautiful aspect to the apartments was the rooftop - a tranquil spot overlooking the buzzing city where one could process all the sights and sounds and feel at peace." - Jessie Schilling

THE FOOD

Cambodia has some amazing local dishes that we got to try, the cooks at the apartment made us some and we went to a few Khmer restaurants where we could try whatever we wanted! They also have some unusual and scary things to try like fried tarantula! While the meals can get repetitive and we saw a lot of rice we were always so hungry after a hard days' work that we would have eaten anything! Also when you see how little others have in developing countries you start to appreciate every meal a little bit more.







"Food was a highlight, because there were many new tastes and flavours to experiment with. Mealtimes on a day—to—day basis were quite repetitive, but they were filling and provided the nutrition vital to get through all the activities. The juiciness of Cambodian pineapple was one of my favourites!"—
Jessie Schilling



"I loved loved loved the food! It was similar to the food of other Asian countries so it was normal for me. I love rice, and we had that every day, as well as fruit. Very simple. My roommate and I, on the first outing to the restaurant, tried about every single dessert we could get. Some were delicious and we happily finished, but others had strange tastes and we ended up passing it around and letting others try the bizarre meals! I would recommend any future volunteers to do the exact same thing. It was fun, entertaining and very funny!" — Calista Chamberlain



"The food was made with such love! The cooks were beautiful! All of it was delicious even though we had the same thing for lunch and dinner each day but I expected something way worse so it was great! I think that when you are in a different culture you should really embrace all the differences. When we were out for dinner I always tried to eat something new! I remember having frog which I loved and even though the meals were repetitive whenever I eat rice now I think of our amazing time in Cambodia!" - Lara Hayek



"I loved the traditional Khmer food We had an overload of it, but I ate it at every chance because I knew I would miss it when I got home." - Emily Baulch





OUR PLACEMENT

Our group worked in 2 Care centres; Home of Hope and Home of Peace these centres house children and adults who have either lost their families, or whose families are unable to care for them - most have HIV or a physical or mental disability. We were able to help out with so many tasks around the centres, like feeding and spending time with severely disabled patients, playing games and sports with the children, teaching English, helping the teacher with the classes - and just generally giving much needed attention and affection. We also managed to get a huge painting job done at Home of Hope which really brightened the place up. Our supervisors were always around organising things and giving us tips on things to do with the kids to make our time there really productive. Working with the beautiful kids every day was what made everything worthwhile!

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"I formed some really special bonds with a beautiful group of girls, probably around 7–10 years old – they taught me how to say "I Love You" in Khmer and in return I taught them how to "Gangnam stylle". They each gave me one of their necklaces on the day I left, so I always have something to remember them by." – Kathryn Ling

"I became really attached to one boy named Androt. He was disabled and couldn't talk, but loved playing outside. He'd always take me to cars and try to get in, and if the car was in the shed he'd take me to the window of the shed and point inside. I helped feed him one day, and watched him steal other peoples' rice off their plates, before eating his own. The day we donated 2 bread rolls to everyone in the orphanage, I think he ended up eating about 6. He was just adorable and I miss him so much.

The last day at Home of Peace, when we had a party with the children, I spent most of my time with a disabled woman, around 50 years old. We painted on a canvas and ate cake together. She actually painted a really nice picture, a lot of colour and spots, until a couple of kids came along and painted over the entire picture. By the end of it, it was just a brown blob on a canvas, but I still have it, up in my room." — Madeline Sampson







'From the first day at placement I fell in love with a boy named Frayer, he became my baby for the two weeks.

He would only let me hold him and always wanted my attention, seeking me out in a big crowd Looking back I can't believe that we didn't ever communicate with words but I have so many fun memories with him, chasing him around the yard!

Another time that has really stayed with me is when I was feeding in the disability centre and a young boy with polio would not eat. He kept crying and the teacher said he was complaining about the pain in his back. This whole time I had been trying to get him to speak some English, asking questions and not receiving a reply. The teacher took him to his bed and said that when he cries they leave him until he stops I asked if he wanted a gentle massage on his back but they did not understand. After asking and asking they finally understood, turned the little crying boy over and I gently rubbed his back. In that instance I heard a beautiful and cheeky laugh! He then started to speak all the English words he knew, showing off to me. That one moment really affected me because I kept thinking that from that one action I was able to help him through his pain, even for a moment. The fact that he had to experience that each day taught me how selfish I am and how much I complain over the smallest things. That massage would not have stopped his pain but just from relieving it slightly he laughed so openly and showed such happiness." - Lara Hayek



"I don't have any special stories; rather, the whole feeling I got out of all of them combined. The children loved to be carried and hugged. That's what I enjoyed the most: the feeling that I could, at least for a little while, make them feel happy and special. When we went out and visited the village Home of Hope was located in, the children followed us out and I carried one little girl on a piggyback the whole way there and back because she had no shoes! She just hugged my neck very tight and snuggled into my shoulder, and personally, that sense of security I must've given her is what I loved the most." — Calista Chamberlain









"There was one girl who I met and we had some basic conversations in English such as 'Hi, how are you today? They would just ask whatever they knew, and I told her my name and we had heaps of fun. On the last day we were leaving, she ran up to me yelling, "sister Kate, sister Kate." This was an amazing moment for me and it really broke my heart that we were leaving" - Kate Lewis



'Mary is a name that will remain close to my heart forever, a girl with a wide gap-toothed smile and a sweet little heart. Communication was a barrier between us, but love is a universal language. When she sat on my lap and we painted together, she was shy and playful, and gave me a new appreciation for beauty. Together we painted a masterpiece. It was nothing worthy of hanging in a museum, but the vibrant colours are majestic because they represent the joy mary taught me to have toward the little things in life. This painting hangs in my room today, and it makes me smile to think of how fond mary had become of me in such a short space of time. It was such a blessing to have been able to show love to this little orphan girl who so desperately needed it.

At the placements we played, taught, or painted There was great diversity in our day-to-day activities, but no matter what task we were given, we were supported and able to give our all. The children were excited and full of energy and enthusiasm. We were able to work with them and draw on our individual skills. I found that I went back to when I was a kid, placing myself in their shoes. Something so simple as a clapping game or ring-around-the-rosy became the most captivating and extraordinary task, and the kids were so content amongst us volunteers who just wanted to experience joy with, and love them, wholeheartedly." - Jessie Schilling









The sign of a hard day's work

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

As well as our regular placement we were involved in a couple of community outreach activities which were truly amazing and rewarding. One day we brought hundreds of bread rolls to Home of Hope with us which we distributed not only to the children and patients of the centre, but to lots of people in the local villages. As a group we walked all the way out to the people working in the rice fields and handed over to them loaves of bread. The gratitude they showed was unforgettable.

We also helped to fund, pack and distribute Christmas parcels to hundreds of families around the centres. These large plastic bins contained lots of essentials like mosquito nets, rice, noodles, cooking oil, palm sugar, some clothes, and lots more. Giving these out just before Christmas was the best feeling - the smiles and thank yous we received made it such a heart-warming experience!









*For me, the bread donations were a highlight. Jess and I walked down one lane. I handed bread to one man and his child, and passed another loaf through the bamboo fence of another woman. The special moment was when I handed bread to another elderly lady, who, until recently, had been homeless. She reached, and, with her hand on the heart of Jess and I, thanked us in Khmer. Her dignity, respect and humility will remain with me forever.

I loved doing the bread donations and Christmas buckets. So often we fundraise and so little we get to see the effect of what we give. Giving, and working, with these people was amazing. It was hot work in the sun, and heavy work with the buckets, but I loved every moment of it." — Emily Baulch



"I loved being with the people. Working closely with them and seeing that what we were giving would be such support for them or even give them hope that people do care. Seeing their situations, their houses and walking through the village we each walked in their shoes in a way. We walked where they walk each day, in the heat and to a place they called home, such contrast from ours but their reality." - Lara Hayek



"This experience taught me gratitude, above all things. An ability to be appreciative of all the little things people do for you. And of course the idea that a little really does go a long way." – Calista Chamberlain



"Packaging the Christmas buckets was a gruelling task, but teamwork made this a rewarding experience! Counting and separating sugar cubes, folding fabric, distributing noodles, mosquito nets and other goods was worth it, as we were able to bless to the families in the community. Most impacting was when the Cambodians came to receive their gifts, and we were able to help them carry the weight of their load by lifting their buckets to their families. The appreciation and love was so moving" - Jessie Schilling





CHILDREN OF CAMBODIA

The children we met during our stay, at the placements, in the villages and just out and about on the streets, were definitely the highlight of our time in Cambodia However it wasn't always easy to see and accept the conditions they live in and the harsh realities they face daily. We were blown away by their energy and smiles despite the conditions and it was truly inspiring to see their positive attitude towards things like education, that we took for granted as kids. Seeing the way these children live and their strength has given us all a great appreciation for what we've had growing up.









"The children were amazingly open and so beautiful! They all wanted our attention and we really felt needed at the placement. I really felt for the children in their situation but their happiness amazed me and taught me so much. The children made the trip. They made us feel welcome and they are the ones who were an example for us to be strong and be happy despite the negatives and embrace the positive things that we each have in life. They made playing with an old water bottle or riding an old broken bike so much fun! The children taught me to appreciate everything that I have but also to not focus on the things that do not have true importance in life. Embrace everyone with love no matter how many times you have been hurt and no matter what situation you are in in life, you can find happiness without wealth. The children see life as it is and although they all suffered they continued with such joy, allowing their beautiful personalities to shine." - Lara hayek



"They were really independent children - they rode their bikes and roamed the streets by themselves, and adults weren't constantly fussing over them I also noticed the children stuck together and looked after each other. In Australia, we live a really sheltered childhood, everything we do, see and think is dictated by our parents. However, in Cambodia I thought the children had much more freedom and weren't overwhelmed by technology, fashion and materialised culture - they grow up learning much more practical skills" - Kathryn Ling



"They taught me to be happy, to smile, to love and to laugh. They taught me that even when you are in the poorest and scariest and saddest conditions, you can still be happy. They taught me to live life and to love it. For that, I am forever grateful."

— Hope Fraser

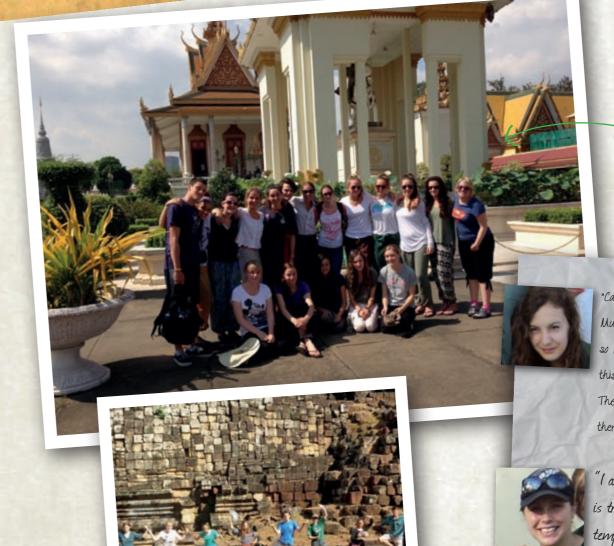
CULTURAL ACTIVIES

During our 2 week stay we got to see so many of the things that make Cambodia such a fascinating place! We went on a tour around the busy city of Phnom Penh, visited the Royal Palace, went to local Khmer restaurants, spent time shopping in the 'Russian market' near our apartment (which quickly became a favourite past-time!) and saw a traditional puppet show at a small local theatre. On the weekend we all visited Siem Reap - a 5 (or maybe it was more) hour bus ride away on some lovely bumpy roads! We visited Angkor Wat at sunrise and spent a whole day walking around all the temples - they were so amazing and something you need to see to believe! We also visited the incredible night markets of Siem Reap and spent so much time shopping and practicing our haggling in Khmer! The weekend trip was a great time to relax after working so hard all week and to bond with the group!

In the second week we also saw the darker side of Cambodia's history when we visited the S-2l Genocide Museum and The Killing Fields - a truly confronting and awakening experience for all of us. It was so important to see these and learn about the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot's regime to get a better understanding of Cambodia It was also a place where we could show our respect to the people of Cambodia







Strike a pose!

The twins

All of us at the Royal Palace



"Cambodia is so rich in culture and history. It was extraordinary to visit the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and Killing Fields, because having done a lot of background research into these sites, it was so much more confronting to see them in person. This is such an important aspect of Cambodia, for this regime has really affected the nation, and is the reason they require assistance even still today. The most amazing aspect of the Cambodian society is that despite the horrific past they have endured, there is such a strong sense of resilience amongst the people." — Jessie Schilling

"I absolutely loved the temples. The temples of Cambodia are magnificent, actually that is truly an understatement, there are no words to describe the glory of such awe-inspiring temples. I think I loved them so much because they were so beautiful, but also because it demonstrated that human labour can withstand significant lengths of time." - Hope Fraser

"I loved seeing the Royal Palace. What made it special at the time was that the beloved King Sihanouk had passed away a few months prior and so the Palace was in mourning. The love for the King who had seen them through the genocide and through the decades after was something truly unique." - Calista Chamberlain

LEAVING CAMBODIA

After 2 incredible weeks it was time to say goodbye to the amazing people who had become like family, and this amazing place that had started to feel like home. Whilst we were all excited to get home and see our families, take a real shower, and eat mum's home cooked food, we all knew it wouldn't be long before we missed Cambodia! In 2 weeks we had achieved so much and this was an experience we would never forget.





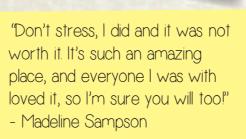
"I felt like I'd learned many important life lessons and achieved a great deal. We managed to brighten up the wall of an orphanage, we gave food to people who were out in the rice fields under a hot sun all day, and we experienced new things and most importantly, helped people in need. I learned that despite any negative thoughts that may arise, especially when tired and hungry, I am actually fully capable of pushing them down and replacing them with positive thoughts that keep me happy and going." - Calista Chamberlain



"It was a relief to finally get home, to be with my family I missed my family and friends desperately so I loved going home. However, I did and still do miss the people from the group and the Cambodian locals very much I learnt that I am extremely lucky to have the family, friends and opportunities that I do. That my country is wonderful and I am so incredibly blessed. The trip also taught me that I am courageous and brave to have gone to another country and helped those that were in need of my help."—Hope Fraser

"One main thing that I have learnt is what you receive from a situation all depends on your attitude. If you approach anything with openness and trust without fear, then you will receive so much. We each went to Cambodia with different expectations and approaches to the situations so we each learnt something different and had a different experience. The way the children view the world is so different to me but I feel as though they are able to find the best in each situation. If I can do this, if we can all do this then we will all be able to give and receive much more openly." — Lara Hayek

'Don't say no to anything, take every opportunity, you won't regret it!" - Kate Lewis





"Don't think twice about anything; just immerse yourself in the experience. Keep a journal or make notes, and take lots of photos, so that the memories will remain with you forever."

- Jessie Schilling

"Enjoy every minute of your trip!

It will be hard, inspiring, tiring,
overwhelming and brilliant all at
the same time. Just embrace all
the opportunities that are offered
your way, this is a once in a
lifetime opportunity."

- Hope Fraser

"Don't drink the tap water, whatever you do! But besides this, have fun, be flexible, open and overall YOURSELF! Remind yourself why you are there and also remember that the more you give the more you can receive so follow your instinct and try everything! Even the spiders if you're game enough!!"

- Lara Hayek

TRAVEL TIPS HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

DONATIONS

Before going to Cambodia, a few of us raised money by holding fundraisers with our schools, families and local communities. We are so proud of how far this money went to help out the community we worked in With the money we raised Projects Abroad were able to set up free dental care for the children of Home of Hope and the surrounding village. All up we provided check-ups and treatment to close to 80 children, some who'd suffered with toothaches and other problems for such a long time. We provided all the children and their families with a care package of some food, toothpaste, tooth-brushes and of course lessons on how to look after their teeth properly in the future!

Projects Abroad were also able to organise lung vaccinations for the children living with HIV. These vaccinations protect the children from the flu and lung infections, for young children especially they can often be life-saving.

This money went so far and we can proudly say that it made a real difference!



"I bought Cadbury fundraising chocolates and sold them at my school. They were a huge hit! I am so excited to know that the money raised went to the dental work of the children. The dental work was desperately needed for the kids as their teeth were terrible. Hopefully the lessons about brushing teeth will be maintained by the children to prevent their need for a dentist in the future."

— Hope Fraser

"I had a cupcake sale! I was very happy about where the money I raised went, especially the vaccinations. We could have actually saved people's lives." — Madeline Sampson

"I was very happy with where the money went. I felt it made a real difference – even more so than our presence. Best way to fundraise – through people's stomachs!" – Emily Baulch

"I had a fundraiser in a park and had amazing results. When I found out that the money went to do so much good including dental outreach, food donations to the families and lung vaccinations I was so happy! I could not believe that something so small could make such a larger impact!

For anyone else planning to fundraise - make it big and just do it! Ask everyone to make cupcakes, get face painting, henna and ask the butcher to donate for a sausage sizzle.

Just have music and make it fun! If that isn't possible do something small over a longer amount of time and most importantly RAISE AWARENESS, tell people what it is for and they will want to support! GOOD LUCK!" - Lara Hayek













