

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES – EDUCATION PLACEMENT

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My six-week placement in the Philippines, has been the most incredible, worthwhile experience of my life. I have been lucky enough to have taken part in several international, rural placements but for many reasons the Philippines has come out as my favourite.

You need to remember that you are in a developing country, each day has challenges, some you expect and some you don't see coming. But each day also has a highlight, or most likely 10 of its own. The biggest highlight for me was the

children. When teaching a class you get the chance to know each student and adore a trait of each of their personalities. These little quirks make up each of your days. For me I had some days that I found harder than others, but without fail and without trying, my students made me feel invincible and appreciated my being there every moment of the day. In particular, some students will touch you in a special place in your heart, for me, her name is Michelle. The greatest highlight I have come away with is this ray of sunshine. Michelle is now my sponsor child as I get to help her lead a healthy life and continue her education, while she continues to teach me strength and kindness.

The truth is everyone has something to teach you, you just need to be willing to listen. Now the funny thing is that I find children have the most to teach you, no matter where in the world. During my time in the Philippines it was my class who taught me the most about myself. These children taught me how to enjoy the little things, even when it is storming inside. Where I would look and see nothing, these beautiful children have an imagination which could entertain for hours on end. Where I see a problem they have only several solutions. The students at the school reminded me of the value of education, and taught me more about the education system than what I realised. I walk away from this experience having learnt more than I feel I could teach them in a few English lessons – my class taught me to work hard at my education and value the opportunity and not let the little problems get me down, instead work for a solution and a better tomorrow.

The biggest thing I took away from the Philippines is that there is value and beauty in everything if we look at it the right way. So many days we take what is around us in Australia for granted; our education system, running water, private transport. The reality is that our everyday life is a blessing. Take a moment each day to think about the little blessings, starting with our loved ones.

My advice to everyone who will listen, especially future students is to make the most of your opportunity, as typical as I know it sounds. But the truth is that these opportunities aren't going to find you each day, you need to work hard so that these opportunities present themselves to you. Make the most of the opportunity because when you come home, I guarantee you will be wishing to have even just one more day back there with those friends.

