

HFHJ Newsletter

Issue #10, March 2008.

Kabaddi! Kabaddi! Kabaddi!:GV Report from India

Life is full of so many lessons to learn and during Global Village trips, I often find that some of the most important lessons about our values, beliefs, and how to live are highlighted in just two weeks. I was reminded of this during my past trip to Pondicherry, India with all the wonderful members of the Same Same But Tokai team. During our 17 day stay, we were able to begin to build over 15 houses and to be surrounded by the many smiles of the people of the Vambapet village. I was especially intrigued by the village women, who spent everyday working along side us, dressed in their immaculate saris, while I remained sweaty and covered in dirt and cement.

How did they do it? How did they stay so clean and beautiful? And how did they keep going in such heat? Everyday they continued to impress me with their stamina and their shy smiles. But I think I learned one of the most important lessons from them during our village sports day.

Kabaddi! Kabaddi! Kabaddi!

In the midst of the sports day activities, one of the women dragged me over to play a game called Kabaddi.

I, along with some other female members of our team, were quickly instructed on the rules of the game. The only thing that I could make out from the explanation was that this game was something like American football minus the football, with a bit of trying to race back to your side of

the court without getting caught or tagged. It looked a bit rough, but I was willing to give it a try!

After the first round of my fellow team members being pulled down by their hair or tackled forcefully, my team decided to get a little tougher. So the next round, we fought harder and put up more of a fight, trying to use some of the other team's tactics to win. Although we were unable to overcome their strength, we all shook hands at the end of the game and had a laugh about some of the different tackles. But as we walked away, I still had a hard time understanding why they fought with such outright roughness. It wasn't until the next day that I realized why they had played with such force. I think what they were trying to remind me of was that you should always give something your best shot, no matter what. And that in the game of life, when we are not sure if we have tomorrow, we should give it our best shot now, not later. I think we often get too caught up in our busy lives and forget to put forth our best efforts because we are tired, bored, or scared to go after our dreams. But in India, where situations can be a little more desperate than our lives in Japan, I was reminded of the importance of enjoying every minute of life now, no matter what the circumstances are and for fighting for what we want. Somehow, I think if we all learn to value life like the village women do then we will be able to reach any goal we set out to achieve and be able to live life without regret.

Habitat Family

During my stay in Pondicherry, I

Team Name	Same Same but TOKAI(Tokai University)
Country	India/Chennai
Work Site	Tsunami Disaster Response: 97Houses
Itinerary	02-Feb, 2008~19-Feb, 2008: 19days
Member	Total: 32 Student(M): 14, Student(F): 18, Adult(F): 2



was so grateful to be reminded of this lesson and to be part of such a fantastic team that went out of its way to make my final trip so special for me. I will never forget all the great people that I met and all the students and teachers that are now part of my Habitat family. You have all changed my life forever and I need to say thank you to all of you who have touched my life and taught me to think with my heart, open my mind to the lessons of the world around me, and give life my best shot. You will be in my heart forever.

by **Mary Burch Harmon**



Japan Update

Volunteering With Habitat: Small Steps Add Up

Awakening

In Dumaguete, Philippines, summer 2004, I had woken up late. I went to the small wash room attached to the house, built by Habitat for Humanity some years earlier, where I had my homestay. It had only a facet, a small plastic bucket, a toilet, and a small portable mirror hanging near the window. As I squirted shaving cream onto my hand I looked in the mirror and caught a glimpse of a huge spider in the corner of the room. I dashed out into the small yard before I knew what I had done. My quick movements attracted the attention of the host father: "Are you alright?" "Yes," I said nervously, "I just rather brush my teeth outside." The next day I summoned up my courage and returned to the washroom. The spider was in the same place, but I was now used to him. It was my small first step toward a greater awareness.

A Connection

We spend our lives forming habits, much as a spider making a web. Like my knee-jerk fear of the spider, we bolt when threatened. Mental habits include not only what we think we need to be happy but also answer such questions as: "Are people in developing countries different? Is our way of life superior? Can we really do anything of value?" Our conclusions are often defensive and we may feel threatened if someone challenges us about them. Are we merely realistic or are we explaining away injustice all around us?

I have participated in twelve volunteer trips with Habitat for Humanity,



in the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand and have assisted in building about thirty houses for homeless families. I am very happy to have seen so many families have a home, but my greatest joy is in seeing our team, students and myself, letting go of conditioning that keeps us from growing as human beings.

During that same trip in 2004, at Smokey Mountain, Luzon's huge garbage mountain where scavengers earn a meager living, I remember visiting a family, a mother and three children, with a group of ten students. The mother was a scavenger who spent the day collecting plastic and tin for selling. Large bundles of materials were stacked neatly in the yard. The home was handmade, of corrugated metal and scrap wood, but it was nicely decorated with colorful pictures, mostly from old calendars. It had plumbing and electricity. As the mother began talking about her life, the students began to cry. Finally, the mother asked: "Why are you crying?" No one could answer. "They are touched by your way of life," I offered. Something deeper was happening, however. Students were letting go of beliefs that kept them from touching someone from a vastly different culture, who was so much poorer materially, as one human to another. The connection was palpable as we took the children outside to play catch with balloons. We were quickly lost in just enjoying the moment with them.

Friendship

Of course, I wanted to change everything that contributed to this family's poverty: Corrupt government, corporate exploitation, greed of the wealthy, overpopulation, ignorance, world callousness. But I had to admit that this was a home. The family had love. If we wanted to be of any help at all, we learned that we first had to open ourselves as people, then maybe we could do a little.

"Isn't it better to send money than to spend it on yourself, going to



another country?" "Are you really doing anything to help them?" People often ask these questions. It shows our orientation in the developed world toward the value of money and concrete results. Well-meaning though the people may be, I usually respond with a question: "Do people only want money? Doesn't friendship, learning about others also have value?" It's true that we gain a great deal from the experience of traveling to a developing country.

Being Constructive

We could be accused of selfishness and using others to deepen our own experience. The importance of joining a volunteer project is a matter of the heart, however, and cannot be measured in monetary terms or necessarily in quantifiable results. When families I have worked with in past years send me pictures of their daughter's graduation or new additions to their family, I realize how much richer I am than if I had just sent money. But isn't the benefit mutual? Hasn't friendship blossomed? Haven't the distances between culture and experience been narrowed? Maybe the world is just a little bit better as a result.

People in wealthy nations also want some practical way to be constructive. Helplessness may characterize our age: reports about ecosystem destruction, armed conflict, increases of toxic pollution bombard us every day. We become deadened by it. Volunteering is a small psychological step that can lead to doing more in any of number of ways. As a

Japan Update

Japan Hope Builders Team in Bangkok, Thailand

teacher at a college, I have the privilege presenting some of the harsher realities of the world: child labor, corporate corruption, media manipulation. But I have to admit that much of this is abstract in a classroom and can actually work against constructive ways of helping. It's easier to be angry than constructive. Habitat for Humanity helps us take a small step toward being optimistic and helpful.

Foot prints

To sum up, it's the small things that matter most in volunteer work. Usually we are not able to change the world very much, but we can open ourselves to change. We may not be able to give people in need all that they need, but we can do our small part. When I volunteer, I always think of Lao Tsu's words: "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Whatever ideals we have about the way the world should be, we always begin to make them a reality by taking a single step, however small that step may be. We can all leave traces that benefit others.

Mark N. Zion (Associate Professor at Tama University)

Valuable experience

Members of Japan Hope Builders, which is a mix of university students and adults, had participated in Global Village in Bangkok, Thailand for 12 days. Everyone started out without knowing others' names, but had gathered for the same purpose and spent 12 days with a lot of laughs and returned to Japan with the valuable experience in their hands. The following is the members' voice.

(Ayumi Ota)

The members' voice

This was my second time to participate in GV. From the GV I had participated in the Philippines back in February, 2005, my perception towards volunteering had changed completely, and had decided to par-

Team Name	Japan Hope Builders
Country	Thailand/Bangkok
Work Site	Pathum Thani
Itinerary	02-Feb, 2008~13-Feb, 2008: 12days
Member	Total: 11 Adult(M): , Adult(F): 1、 Student(M): 4、 Student(F): 4

ticipate in GV again because I wanted to have the same wonderful experience just like I had had in the Philippines. The house building had started out by making the foundation, making the cement without machine, painting the roof's bone, and putting the walls up with bricks. It was a very valuable experience. From this GV program, it made me notice the importance of houses. Houses are not only a place where you can keep out of rain or wind, but is a special place where you can set your mind at ease. I think that all people who were involved in the GV had built up "a warm home". This GV was really fun, with a lot of laughter, and I didn't want to return to Japan. I couldn't imagine becoming really good friends with all the people I had met for the first time. I am glad that I have participated in this GV. I was moved by this wonderful experience. **(Kunihiko Sato)**

Not only be my memory

This GV in Thailand was very satisfying. In Japan, it was winter but in Thailand, the temperature had gone up to 20 degrees everyday, which we were able to spend the day with T-shirts. Thailand was in the dry season but we had an unexpected rain, so the working days had been different from which we had planned. However, we got extra days to go touring, so we got to ride elephants. At first, I was anxious about joining a group with people I did not know, but as the work days went by, I was able to talk to everyone. I especially had fun with the bucket relay. One thing I had regretted is that I did not work imagining that I would live in the house for 10, 20 years. I would like this experience to not only be my memory, but some-

thing I can pass to other people and can make use of in my daily life in some way. This experience was fun and enriching and was a very valuable one, which I cannot normally experience. **(Ryo Anbo)**

Feel the warm hearts

My first time in Thailand... It was as expected, very hot. It had rained the first 4 days, so we couldn't work as we wanted to, but after the fifth day, we had started our real work at the building site. What we had done was carry cement through bucket relay, poured it on to the floor of the house, carried bricks and built it up as the skilled workers had directed us to. I felt irritated by the very little jobs we were able to do, but it seemed that the local skill workers and the home owner had felt happy to watch us have fun at the site. We couldn't speak Thai with the skill workers, so the local coordinator had translated for us but we had fun communicating with the skill workers by gestures. We had learned more than we had gained something useful, which was a very valuable experience. I was able to feel the warm hearts of the Thai people, and Thailand became my favorite country. This gave me another chance to think about volunteering, so I would like to continue being involved with various activities. **(Kumiko Sensui)**



Event and Project

On March. 4th, the 7th Habi-bitto (Travelors with a Purpose) gathering was held.

The theme was on the Global Village in the urban area. There was an introduction from Ayumi Ota who had participated in the GV in Bangkok, Thailand about the works in Bangkok, and the important points on working in urban areas. In this Habi-bitto, there were people who were participating in the GV for the first time, so there was an explanation on the GV and the importance of R&R (Rest & Relaxation).



The poverty issue and poor living environment is not only a serious problem in Bangkok, but also in other cities. Not only in developing countries, but also in the United States or England or Japan, it is an issue. We have explained with pictures of various countries so that everyone can understand about the reason why cities fall into poor housing environment and the mechanism of cities' particular poverty issues. Not only with the Habitat GV, but there are many opportunities to go to big cities for tour personally. GV is a "Travel with a Purpose". Therefore, you can see something different from

tours when you go to the cities through GV.

The Merits of Urban GV Projects

You can get involved with resolution of the housing shortage issue which is a serious problem in the city area.

You get to understand the particular poverty issues in the urban area. You can save time and money since it is located in the city area.

It is easier to participate and leave any time you would like to in your limited schedule.

The infrastructures are maintained, so it is easier for people who are concerned about their health problem to participate.

Report on "Frostbite" held at Yokota Air Force Base (1/20)!

"Let us have HFHJ known to people in a new way". This is the concept we had had when we participated in "Frostbite" held in Yokota U.S. Air Force Base. It was expected to snow, but we had a very fine weather. Frostbite is a large-scaled rally with a kid's marathon, five-kilo marathon and half-distance marathon held at



once and there were 7,000 participants which made the place lively.

In the beginning, we had a warm-up exercise just like Billy's Boot Camp, which made the place heat up. Some of the participants had dressed in tiger or maid costumes, which made it interesting to the audiences.

The members gathered from UT-Habitat wore Habitat's jacket and had put a stickers on their backs (which was a plan to have people running behind notice!) We participated in the marathon uniquely, by running with hats and balloons which we had made on our own. And moreover, some of the members had zig-zagged while running! Thanks to our member's efforts and the base's discretion of putting our booth next to the winner's platform, we had many people visit our booth with interest during the marathon. From our participation in the marathon, we hope that we had successfully provided opportunity for people to learn about Habitat's activities and to gain new interests from everyone

UT-Habitat, Megumi Masuda

<to announce>

Team Leader Training 2008 Spring

◇OSAKA AREA◇

Date& Time: May 31(Sat)/Jun. 7(Sat)

11:00 - 16:00

Venue: Undecided (We'll inform you when it is ready.)

◇TOKYO AREA◇

Date& Time: May 31(Sat)/Jun. 7(Sat)

11:00 - 16:00

Venue : Habitat for Humanity Japan Office

Participation Fee: Free



Habitat for Humanity seeks to eliminate poverty housing worldwide through participatory, community led programs. In 2006 we mobilized nearly 1,000,000 volunteers in over 100 countries. For further information on our exciting activities and life-changing opportunities for you to get involved, contact us today!

Habitat for Humanity Japan

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