

**My name is Becky, and I spent three weeks at the Rosie May Home and the Boossa School in June/July 2012.** I don't think I really went out with any specific aims in mind, I just wanted to support the fantastic on going English programs and to be just a small part of helping to give the girls the happy childhood that the home strives to achieve. I took with me a range of things that had been donated by people who preferred to sponsor me in that way (which I found was a very good alternative to suggest to my school, and would possibly be good for other types of community groups if they don't seem to like the idea of a monetary donation- though I did have to be careful to have enough room for clothes!!), things such as skipping ropes, pens, pencils, and most importantly stickers! I also took with me my ballet shoes as I knew that the home emphasised dance in memory of Rosie May and had regular lessons.



The volunteer information day that I attended in January was indeed very helpful- we had already committed to the project by that point so the specifics given were what I found most useful- visa information, currency information, what to pack, where to get cheap flights and most importantly fundraising ideas! I didn't feel prepared at the time but that's probably just the worry of flying halfway round the world, but looking back on it, there isn't much more we could have done or you could have given us to be prepared- it was always going to be a culture shock and that's what made it exciting!!

### **Fundraising**

In terms of fundraising we did all sorts of different events- big and small- to reach our target, as well as contacting schools, universities and businesses- which we found was definitely the best way of doing it (there's only so many events you can make your friends attend!!). We started off with a Christmastime 'Human Auction'- selling our friends and other volunteers as slaves for the evening at a large university Christmas party. I then followed that up with a lent challenge- giving up long showers and being late (pledging to donate myself every time I was late or took a shower over five

minutes)- this probably raised more money from me than from others but it helped to gain moral support as it showed I was also giving to the cause! I ran a small cheese and wine tasting evening with about 15 friends (for an entrance fee) as a small event, and also contacted my old school and was allowed to conduct two presentations and collect after each one, which again increased our total. I won the travel bursary at my university for the most 'deserving' and 'exciting' travel project and Rachel gained a corporate sponsorship. We then took part in the bupa 10,000- which got us a lot more sponsorship from friends and family and we generally publicised our justgiving page every few weeks, alongside the RMMF website, in order to gain more donations by telling people about the work we would be doing. All in all, a lot of different things! I think my advice to future volunteers would have to be to look everywhere possible and even places some places you think won't be fruitful for donations- if you don't ask, you don't get, so don't just write anywhere off! Also, keep going even if it's not happening as quickly as you might like, persevere with bugging friends and family and with publicising, because eventually people will give- even if it's after seeing what you've done while you're out there!

### **Rosie May Home**

When we were actually there we had fun doing all sorts of activities with the girls- we baked cookies and brownies (only with the older ones whilst the younger ones played outside), we made hundreds of birthday cards, we painted pictures, wrote letters, drew more pictures, made butterflies, played games outside, did some dancing and some yoga, and (rather messily) printed everyone's hands and feet- while most importantly, doing the English cards and helping the girls with their conversational English and their English homework for school. Most things went by without too much going wrong- and although the younger girls are always a bit more excitable and considerably messier (hence why we didn't bake with them), we had expected and prepared for it by not giving them some of the messier craft items, glitter glue and poster paints, and by conducting the hand and foot printing outside. Personally I wish we had spent a little less time indulging the girls in their love of colouring and planned a few more big craft activities- as they can colour when there are not volunteers there- and I wish that I had taken more colouring pencils, paper and outdoor equipment with me (although you can never take everything) to leave with the girls when we had left, because they go through paper SO quickly. I found a little difficulty with the English cards because the girls sometimes got very possessive over cards and angry if they didn't keep winning and sometimes you just had to let them storm off and as long as you kept persisting with them day after day they would still want to take part. I liked the systematic nature of this system as it continued between volunteers and I felt like I was really able to make a difference at the home in the long term by continuing the English scheme and helping to work on the girls' social and communication skills through the activities, and in the short term by organising activities that the girls found enjoyable.

### **Accommodation**

While we were there we stayed at Sunil Gardens Hotel in Unawatuna, which was very pleasant and the staff were all very helpful when we were trying to organise trips and very pleasant to talk to generally, making us feel very safe and welcome! The beach was such a lovely place to stay, although it was a bit of a trek in to the Home and the School in the mornings- in season it would probably be easier to stay at Hikka, but we definitely enjoyed the fact that Una was still lively in the off season

period! It was really very good value for money for us, as students- sharing a double bedded economy room for £7 a night between us.

All in all, I had an absolutely fantastic time and I have experiences that will always stay with me- I really hope to be able to volunteer again in a few years' time (when I have the money again) and see the progress that some of the girls have made.