



YEP — It's Ooty

Last December, a team of intrepid, enthusiastic students, volunteers and CARE staff members set off for Ooty, Tamil Nadu, India, to carry out a Youth Expedition Project (YEP) at the Mizpah Home orphanage.

Located at 2300m above sea level, nine hours from Bangalore, the Mizpah Home was a rustic setting for the YEP.

The team was welcomed with the news that the orphanage had shifted to a new site some 3km away! Undaunted, the team took this new challenge in its stride and adapted accordingly, even though this meant a 45-minute trek to the site every day.



The goal was to refurbish and render hospitable a derelict house, to provide a new home for the orphans before the end of 2003.

The team worked hard to achieve this. They cleared the junk in the side yard in preparation for foundation work; renovated the kitchen for an extension by demolishing a wall, clearing debris, digging a trench, laying floor foundation and painting the new wall; prepared, treated and repainted the existing walls and grilles of the house; completed two murals on the walls of the living area; and assisted in completing cupboards for the dormitories.

The team even spent time with the children, helping them prepare for their exams.

Everyone had a positive experience and learned some valuable lessons, particularly about themselves.

Merlissa Lim learned that “everything is human-related”, and says that communication, interacting with people, understanding human behaviour and “respect for self and respect for others” are the important things she learned on this trip.

Hidhir also learned about communication and respect “now I have more patience in dealing with my younger siblings and treat them nicely as a result they respect me more because I treat them with respect”.

Some YEP team members also spoke of another lesson they’ve learned, about the privileges that Singaporeans enjoy.

“Walking to the worksite I noticed a father and daughter. The father was fetching water from the drain to bathe his daughter. It was shocking for me because you would not see this in Singapore,” says Zack, “Everybody I meet now, I relate my experience to them and try to convince them of the need to somehow help these people and also to treasure what we have now”.

Thomas agrees with him, “[the YEP trip] helped me to treasure everything back in Singapore, especially those things like human basic needs like water, shelter, food, and warmth. The most important thing is family value the orphans at Mizpah Home helped me not to take my family for granted; and to treasure them more”.



Team members hamming up with the kids



Part of the team, on the last day of work



Group at send-off at Changi Airport



Cheers for a great meal



Scraping the wall, in preparation for painting



Painting with a smile



Working on the second mural



Having a meal onsite



You're number 1!



A bevy of tai-tais



Our daily bread



Amidst the bricks



The kitchen extension, taking shape



Taking a breather