

India- Sebs School, Vellore

### **Ruby**

Last December I was presented with the opportunity to travel to Vellore, in the Tamil Nadu state of India and work as a volunteer. This involved helping children who came from disadvantaged backgrounds gain access to education within a safe and trusting environment. This opportunity arose at the perfect time for me as I was on a gap year, working in Sainsburys, and looking to utilise the time that I had for a new and engaging experience (no offence to Sainsburys).

### **Ash**

It was a pleasure to work with Sebs in Vellore, India. It gave me the opportunity to see how different school is for the children compared to back home in England. I loved teaching the kids and playing all sorts of games with them and getting to know a few on a more personal level. Even though they did not speak very good English it was an amazing experience to help them learn more and for them to communicate with us.

### **Raff**

I am extremely appreciative of the opportunity to go and visit Seb's Project and see all the amazing work done there by both the charity and the schools itself. Volunteering in Tamil Nadu was such an amazing experience, from watching how our interactions impacted these children, to the wide variety of music, dance, arts and culture that I was able to witness, it's incomparable to anything I have been able to experience before. The children seemed very appreciative of the school itself and were proud of their teachers and their education, offering to show me what they had learnt at any opportunity they had, as well as this, many of the children shared a passion for art/drawing and had notebooks full of pictures they have drawn of their family, teachers, friends and even myself! The school children and the teachers were all very kind people, ensuring that we felt safe, comfortable and welcome the whole time we were there, to which I am very thankful for.



We visited one of the Tribal schools, located in the Jawadhi Hills. We brought with us colouring pens and paper and did a drawing activity with the children. We encouraged them to write their names in the middle and then draw patterns and



designs around the page to make it look pretty! The children were so receptive and enjoyed being creative. We also had the pleasure of watching them perform Bharatanatyam, the classical dance style of the state, which was brilliant to watch!

What was really apparent was the dedication of the teachers involved with the school, we learnt that 3 of them live at the school during weekdays as the journey to and from their home would take too

long to do everyday. They also educate the parents in the importance of allowing their children to go to school, which is not easy as within certain tribes in the hills education is not viewed in a positive light, with families believing it may influence their children negatively. Without these teachers and their passion for the cause, these children's lives would look very different. These teachers are an example of how standing up for what is right and being proactive can create great impact and change. Visiting the Tribal schools was definitely a highlight for us and an incredibly inspiring trip.

### Providing Resources

Before heading out to India, we each fundraised an amount of money that would allow us to buy the children items they may need for their school work and in their everyday lives. We bought new pens, as well as pencils and colouring pens for the school to have a supply of if the children were in need of new stationary.

Ash and Raff also bought books for the children at Seb's School.

### Ruby

I was largely volunteering at MBKGP Pannai, a hostel for orphaned girls, as well as women and elderly in need of a home. I helped the girls during their study periods with their English, as well as taught dance in the afternoon to those who were interested. I have always loved dance, having started from a young age and tried a variety of styles, I really feel that dance and movement to music



is a great way for people to bond and connect. I really wanted to share this with the children at MBKGP, we did a range of dances to different songs, a firm favourite was a street dance piece I choreographed to "Ice Ice Baby" by Vanilla Ice. They in turn taught me some bharatanatyam which I loved!

Teaching the girls was an eye opening experience for me, their eagerness to learn demonstrated to me the importance of education and the opportunities it allows for these young girls. Their work ethic and focus within their study periods further reflected their own awareness of the importance of getting a good



education. Having just come out of sixth form and being lucky enough to have received a good education from a young age; this experience really made me mindful of the fact that education is a privilege that is not accessible to every young person. I became aware of the unfairness in this. Where I may have complained about maths and science, there are children that are hoping for the opportunity to learn such things. Through organisations such as MBKGP and Seb's school it is made possible for these children to access education. Those who would otherwise be homeless and, due to lack of education and opportunities, extremely vulnerable. Seeing the children with so much light and curiosity about the world have a space to grow and explore their intellectual sides was extremely fulfilling.



I am really grateful to Emma Koshi, Tharyan Koshi and Domonic as well as Anita and Mr Daniel from MBKGP for looking after us during our time in India. Their kindness and hospitality was greatly appreciated.

