

Nineveh Charitable Trust

Project Trust's 2016/17 Report

A Warm Thank You...

Project Trust's 2016/17 Volunteers have returned to the UK having accomplished great things over the course of their placements. They overcame unique challenges, integrated into new communities and realised that despite religious, cultural and linguistic differences between people, there are aspects of life that transcend these barriers to form international bridges.

We are in the privileged position of witnessing young people develop over the course of a two year period, starting with their Selection Course and then throughout fundraising and their overseas placement. It brings me great pleasure to be able to update you on their development as well as Project Trust's most recent progress.

An Overview...

As a charity it is our aim to develop soft skills – key life skills – of the young people we work with. Every year, up to 300 young people finish school and then leave their families, friends, home comforts and securities behind them as they embark upon a challenging long term overseas placement with Project Trust. We support their struggles, encourage their endeavours, celebrate their successes and rejoice upon their return in the knowledge they have gained an incredible amount, whilst also offering so much to the communities in which they have been living for a year.

Last year's cohort inspired our staff team on the Isle of Coll. Their determination shone in challenging situations and their creativity effectively put to use on a day to day basis. Friendships overseas have been formed, relationships with pupils and colleagues worked upon, new lives created in entirely unique places, fires built and passions developed within Volunteers for learning more about the world and being a positive influence within it. There is much more than a thousand photographs and an overflowing rucksack brought home with each Volunteer. Vivid memories, awareness of global issues, appreciation of other cultures and markedly improved skills in communication, confidence and leadership all return to the UK with them and stand the test of time.

An Overseas Update...

Last year, Project Trust Volunteers taught and supported 44,374 children, young people and adults in teaching and youth care projects around the world. Our Volunteers have a fantastic global impact each year, providing much needed assistance to communities without taking work away from local people. This number, however, does not even begin to tell the story of how much our Volunteers learn or give during their placements.

Post-placement, Volunteers return to the Isle of Coll to attend their respective Debriefing Course. This is an opportunity to reflect and share their experiences with us. They also spend a day planning ahead, looking at CV development and discussing various ways to stay involved with Project Trust. These courses have allowed us to put together a snippet on what our Volunteers accomplished overseas.

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New challenges were faced by many. They ranged from taking up a completely new role as a teacher, to adjusting to a new way of living – hard wood beds, freezing winters and high altitudes meeting scorching sun, monsoon downpours and humid jungles; Nepal's contrasts can be both its greatest challenge and a gift.

Confidence, resilience and patience have been tested to new levels. They have been equally matched, however, with impressive determination, responsibility and maturity. As a result, rewards have been reaped and characters strengthened.

Senegal's Volunteers informed us that they have learned the true meaning of community, generosity and perseverance. In Ghana, Volunteers witnessed their students grow in ability and confidence; leaving at the end of the year brought about the realisation of how much of an impact they made on the children, but also how important the children had become to them.

For many, the world shrunk around them as they found similarities with people from halfway across the world and friendships were formed there. In Cambodia, a Project Trust Volunteer was the best man at a local wedding!

Our Volunteers in Swaziland experienced a humbling, yet rewarding, year overseas. Working in El Shaddai, a care facility for children who have been orphaned, abused or neglected, in a country with one of the highest HIV/AIDS levels in the world, Volunteers took on the roles of big sisters to the children living there. Independently, they taught a range of ages from pre-school through to high school. As well as a busy teaching schedule, they were tasked with serving food at meal times and playing with the kids at weekends. A lack of resources coupled with a lack of qualified teachers in Swaziland can mean those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds fail to receive the education they deserve.

And for Sophie, a Volunteer in Nepal, it was whilst looking out of a window in her mud-walled, blue-shuttered room, where she could see the cold, white peak of Mount Dhawalagiri, that she had her moment that all Volunteers have – she realised she had become a member of a family, a community, from a completely contrasting world.

Project Trust Volunteers offer so much to their communities. Their enthusiasm, passion, and commitment to immersing themselves in their new surroundings is invaluable.

Closer to Home...

A lot has been achieved closer to home during the 2016/17 year too. The ambition and determination our Volunteers possess are qualities which are also ingrained within Project Trust and its dedicated staff team.

We continued to reconnect with our Returned Volunteers over the past year.

2016/17 saw an incredibly successful pilot scheme take place in Scotland of a Mentorship Programme, whereby Returned Volunteers provided an extra layer of support for newly selected Volunteers who were lacking the support at home, which made fundraising more achievable and less daunting. 83 Returned Volunteers across the UK have committed to volunteer their time this year supporting our Volunteers in greatest need of fundraising assistance and guidance.

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Project Trust has always provided financial assistance in the form of bursaries. We formalised this process last year with the introduction of our Access Fund. 19 Volunteers were offered a bursary through this fund, aiding those from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds whose personal circumstances made it difficult to reach the fundraising target.

As well as working with our partners overseas we maintain strong relationships with partner organisations in the UK, demonstrating ongoing commitment to our Diversity Strategy.

Your Support is Invaluable...

The world in which we operate has changed a great deal from the one that existed in 1967. Whilst the world may revolve in the same way it has always done, throughout this period our priorities have changed. Our work and approach must evolve as we are provided with new problems to solve. Our ethos and vision remain the same: our challenges are different. If anything, they are greater.

We work with more and more young people whose financial backgrounds make it difficult to meet the fundraising targets set. Working with an increasing number of young people who have experienced, or are experiencing, mental health issues means we have had to adapt our support and increase our skill sets accordingly.

With that said, every year the initiative and creativity our Volunteers display marvels us. With the support of a dedicated member of our staff team to guide and support, the majority of Volunteers reach their targets. There is an increasing number, however, who require bursary support and this challenges our goal of remaining a financially sustainable organisation. As such, I would like to thank you once more for your support. It is only through the generosity of individuals and Trusts like yourselves that we are able to support hundreds of young people each year through their challenging overseas placements, allowing them to develop essential skills that provide a strong foundation for their future education and/or employment.

We are always looking to improve how we report upon our Volunteers' successes and their impact. We would greatly appreciate having your opinion on this matter. How would you like Project Trust to keep you updated on our progress? If you would like to meet with any of our Returned Volunteers, please let us know. I would also be delighted to personally meet with you. Should there be a convenient time and place for us to meet, please do not hesitate to respond to my letter. We can arrange this at a time convenient for you and happily answer any questions that you may have on the direction that Project Trust is taking.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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