



India | Volunteer Travel Adventure

Arlene Angeline Chandra

University of Michigan, School of Social Work

arleneac@umich.edu



North India

As stated online by GoEco.org India is the seventh largest country in the world and home to more than a billion people. It beautifully blends the past and the present together which can be seen in its rich culture, multiple religions, and magnificent architecture. The landscape is quite diverse, ranging from the snow-capped Himalayan Mountains to jungles and beaches.



The Experience

I took a 7,386 mile journey from Ann Arbor, Michigan to New Delhi, India to learn, grow, an experience a world unfamiliar to me — only to be impacted so immensely by the children I encountered at Kamal Loachan Society; for their hearts are so pure, full of joy, love, laughter, compassion, and generosity. Together, we learned English, mathematics, general health care, played games, and painted rooms, while honoring an upholding cultural humility. I am forever grateful and blessed for this experience.

Date Stamp

This poster was created for the Fall 2016 Global Social Work Poster Session.

Placement & Project

Kamal Loachan Society offered opportunities to work with street children. The main focus was to provide love and care for the children while engaging in informal education, homework help, and playing fun, recreational, and therapeutic games, including drawing and coloring.



Agency & Community Partner

As stated online by GoEco.org the organization has established dozens of ecological and humanitarian programs in cooperation with organizations globally. The target audience is ecologically concerned, adventurous travelers, who want to explore a region first-hand while getting to know the local people, customs an eco-system through a vetted an organized volunteer program. The partnering agency for this experience was an international volunteer placement match organization entitled, Volunteering Solutions.

Outcomes

This experience offered cultural reflections an acknowledgements for social work practices within a developing country. The children were offered a balance of educational and recreational support and services. Together, a bond was formed, instilled with both respect and regard.

Skills Utilized & Developed

1. Speaking India's national language is a skill that was both utilized and developed. The Hindi dialect is different across continents, states, an even communities.
2. A developing country offers the opportunity to practice patience, flexibility, an adaptability.
3. Having and holding an empathetic heart, intellectually, culturally, an emotionally.



Classroom Connections

All of the coursework offered through University of Michigan's Masters in Social Work program were applicable and relevant for this global special studies experience. In particular, SW 504, Diversity and Social Justice in Social Work and SW 730, Child Maltreatment reminds us the power of privilege. In that, social workers should leave their agendas behind and reserve judgement. Most importantly, we should not act without being asked, because sometimes what we pity may be of great cultural pride.

Career Connections

I have chosen to dedicate my life to assisting the most economically and socially disadvantaged groups in our society — abused and neglected children. The children I encountered touched my life in more ways than one. For this reason, I am writing and dedicating a children's book called, Family is Friendship, to the children at Kamal Loachan Society in which all of the proceeds will be donated back to the children I served.

Lessons Learned

1. Our privilege can be paralyzing in understanding a community's culture. We might feel that a community is poverty-stricken accordingly to the luxuries afforded in western society, when in actuality the community is thriving in tradition.
2. What may be viewed as patriarchy, may actually be love and protection.



Advice

1. Accept an appreciate cultural shock, even if you share the same identity as the people you are serving. All around the world culture is honored, celebrated, and practiced in their own unique ways. Immerse yourself, an embrace the journey, because it will be beautiful.
2. Learn the country's etiquette. What may be acceptable in your homeland may not be welcomed abroad.

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