

Calcutta Hope's Boys' Home, Kolkata

There are numerous reasons why so many people volunteer abroad every year. Some have a desire to travel, want to learn a language or meet new people. Others want to make a difference and gain a better understanding of the world. For me it was about all of these, and the words of Mother Theresa had been in my heart for some time, 'Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.'

Whilst volunteering at Calcutta Hope's Boys' Home I had the opportunity to teach and play with the children. But also to be taught. I traveled, and was taken to many places. I made a difference, and yet was educated by most of the people I met. I taught English, and learnt a little Bengali and Hindi along the way. I developed lifelong relationships with the children at the Home and the staff at SEED. I gave and received love, kindness and affection. We laughed, we cried, we danced (Indian style!). It changed my life.

The children at the Home have had to live on the streets, abandoned or treated so badly that they were forced to leave home. Child traffickers have cruelly exploited some. They have been in danger from drugs, predators, disease and even their own family.

Calcutta Hope's Boys' Home offers children a safe environment to recover and grow. The children have become happy and healthy, and are finally realizing their right in life – to a childhood.

Experiencing life with these children was rewarding in so many ways. The managers of the Home – Bijoy and Mr Chatterji – care for and love these children as if they were their own. It is an inspirational environment for all.

Can you really make a difference? Yes, you can!

And there remains around 200,000 children living on the streets of Calcutta. It would be wonderful if these children could join the children in Calcutta Hope's Boys' Home too...

Rebecca Dowey

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