

Jodi's feedback about The Dhaka Project

After doing a few Dhaka layovers and making the day trip down to the Dhaka project, I decided a day wasn't long enough and I needed to experience it for longer. So I waited for my next annual leave to come around, packed my bags, and made my way to Dhaka for a week long experience. After meeting with Maria a couple of times before I went, I was briefed for what to expect and all the things that needed to be done while I was there.

When I arrived in Dhaka, and finally made my way through customs, I was met by a full entourage from the Dhaka project, including the principle, teachers, and two students, holding a huge banner reading WELCOME TO DHAKA JODI! . I felt surprisingly important, and thought that if this was anything as to how the next week would be, I couldn't wait to get my hands dirty!

The 15minute journey to my guest house in the middle of Gawair where the Dhaka project was located was full of anticipation of what my accommodation would be like. I will say, I was pleasantly surprised! A beautiful little two bedroom apartment on the third floor, with 2 balconies and full western everything! From dvd player, internet, fridge, to full western bathroom.



After an extremely good nights sleep, I meet up with the team again, to begin to knock down the list of duties given to me by Maria. The list was daunting and I was slightly overwhelmed but I went at it full of enthusiasm. I spent the whole day at the market buying 24 bags of 85kg of rice, potatoes, dahl, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, lice shampoo, diapers, shoe shine, and washing powder. I quickly became accustomed to bargaining in the market, and in no time was waving my arms around speaking the few words I had learnt in Bengali.

The next day I decided I was going to be brave enough to visit the slums of Dhaka. This is where most of the families of the Dhaka Project have come from, and I wanted to see the contrast and just how far they really had come in their everyday life. The children in the Dhaka project school are so well educated and are all learning English so quickly, it was hard for me to believe they had come so far in such a short time.

When I was back at the school after my sight seeing trip, I had to distribute the toiletries I had bought the previous day. I couldn't believe how happy the children were! It was amazing to see how seemingly basic essentials we take for granted, are a rare luxury for the children, and enough for them to get excited about. It

was hard work giving out all the toiletries to children in the school, in the preschool and in the kindergarten. I needed a well earned rest afterwards, to be prepared for the next day ahead.

We piled 16 children, 2 teachers, and myself into a van and we headed for a day of fun and surprises at Fantasy Kingdom! This was one of the highlights of the trip for me, as all the children had never experienced the thrill and excitement of a theme park. It was overwhelming for all of us, but that didn't stop the children from insisting we ride ALL the rides there at least once. When we found one the boys liked they asked to ride it again and again. All the children were so ecstatic, and I couldn't help but get swept up in it all, as we screamed with delight whilst riding the Bumper cars.

On a personal note, the other highlight was being able to sponsor two children whilst I was there. It was fantastic to meet with the families, see the conditions in which they were living, and discuss their needs. I was able to speak to all the children and parents individually, and find out what they each thought they needed the most. So now I can help them to furnish their house with luxuries like a desk, cupboards, and I can keep up to date with things as they come up. Now I will be able to see the difference I can make through sponsorship.



During my time in Dhaka, I became very close with my sponsor children and their families, and found it very hard to say goodbye. After many tears shared by all, I had to pull away and head back to the airport to return to Dubai. Once I finally got to the gate, the whole experience hit me and I burst into unstoppable tears, not wanting to leave. Once the entire aircraft had boarded, the ground staff asked me if I was still getting on the flight. Reluctantly, I got on the aircraft, but straight away started planning my next trip back to Dhaka.

Jodi Napper
Emirates Cabin Crew