

# Project Peduli in Yang Tzai, Guizhou



Imagine 21 city kids spending 10 days in a village. Now imagine 19 of them having language barriers with the villagers. One would think “how on earth are these kids going to actually execute anything they have planned?” Well all it took was a little extra determination for us to communicate with the villagers. Plus, lucky for us, we had a few amazing translators who were always there when we were in need of help.

So what exactly did we do? We went to the pre-school to and did lots of gardening, painting murals on the walls and also taught the kids a little bit about hygiene, English, Science, arts and crafts and more. The best of the three for me is obviously teaching the kids because I am seriously horrible at painting and gardening.

Therefore I will touch a bit on the education part of the trip. Honestly, I didn’t think I would even enjoy interacting with the kids. I didn’t think I even like kids. However, I knew that if I couldn’t do a great job at painting or gardening, I had to at least give my 200% at education. Lo and behold, kids (most of them anyway) actually enjoyed my presence and interaction with them, much to my surprise. Someone even asked me if I would like to go into that field. I guess this trip really made me understand and know myself better.

Not forgetting the other 20 awesome people I spent 10 days with. The trip would’ve been a torturous and lonely if it weren’t for them. They were my family for 10 days, and I cannot thank them more. I love you guys!!

-Atiqa Selamat



One of the most memorable experiences were having to see elderlies trekking up the slopes to join in the prayer congregation diligently.

One that I came across was this noble man who was all smiles when he met us. He was one of the common faces that we met in the prayer hall and despite having a walking aid, he would still do his ruku and sujud normally. In fact, all of the elderlies did the same.

I have much admiration for these strong individuals whom have not only shown strength, but commitment to their faiths and beliefs.

We are lucky enough to have a tour of the village and what we saw was really shocking. They had so much limitation from electricity to comfort. But I fail to realize that regardless of these limitations, their

faces were always full of smiles and warmth that everything seems sufficient. A wonderful example of gratitude.

One of the amazing thing that we discovered were the houses made of mud. It may seem to have defined their social status at first. Little did I know there are more to this natural property to compliment its usage. We were told that during winter, the inner temperature is warm whereas during summer, it will be cool instead. So regardless of weather, this mud-made houses will provide their inhabitants comfort. SubhanAllah.

Lastly, it is about Language and Islam. Since my recce trip previously, I have realized that language should never be a boundary for Islam to spread. It has reaches to parts of the world where education is lacking. Today, more than 4 hours drive up the mountains and you will see the young and old practicing the beautiful deen. Some even being able to converse in Arabic. I felt ashamed. In a developed country like Singapore where Islamic education is easily available, I fail to make the best use of it.

No doubt language/communication has been one of the biggest challenge that we face in this trip. But the way the host treated us was full of patience, warmth and love. We are grateful to be given this opportunity and witness ourselves how Islam is practiced here. Definitely a trip worth remembering. We hope the little that we did there, will make beneficial positive impact in the long run.

For YangTzai, with love.

Aminuddin

## **Reflections for Project Peduli China:**

**Standing in the midst of high mountains and a breathtaking scenery shows you the bounty of rahmah that Allah s.w.t has given to the people of Yang Tzai and not us the urban people. The Urban people who have been showered with blessings of cemented grounds and clean toilet. Urban people who have been showered with man-made creations of success and economic growth. We admit we have all the means to place ourselves at the top of the world, scaling through the world of tech and innovation and we think we are great.**

**Coming to China, reminds me that we are not so great after all. We need money to put food on our table, the people of Yang Tzai, they are self-sustainable and they are capable of growing their own. We complain about what we want to do when we are 60 and old, the old generation of Yang Tzai are still carrying a bag of corns on their back climbing up hills and mountains. Climbing down trees bringing down walnuts and other kinds of gifts from nature. Generously, sharing it with their neighbour and friends. Even with strangers like us, whom they only meet once. That is just some of the differences I observe. Yes, their environments are less clean but their hearts are pure and kind. Who are we to think that we are better?**

**We come to China thinking that we are different? Are we really? We see the old left alone in a simple village house, and in Singapore, we see the old left alone in their one-room HDB flats. The layout is the same, a simple kitchen, a living room, a bedroom and an old parent left to fend for themselves. The rich in China prosper and continue to grow while the poor are left to struggle and live a simple**

**“poor” life. In Singapore, how is it any different? They live with goods made in China, so do we, the only difference is we enjoy the quality goods while they are left with cheap ones. The cost of living there is the same as Singapore, even after currency conversion. So how different are we from our neighbours who live miles away from us?**

**All we see is the products, all we hear are the economic success of China, we do not see the pockets within society that get left behind as the rich go forward. We do not see the pain and the struggle of the people in Yang Tzai. Whose existence seizes to exist even on a map? Just how their plight along with many other poor people in China seizes to exist in the mind of millions out there. This trip allowed me to see how the social, political and economic nature of China intertwine and create the reality I see in front of me during the 9 days. Humility, a worthy lesson I learned in 9 days.**

**- NUR AQILAH BINTE RAJAB**





*Project Peduli: Guardians of Guizhou*  
*Yangtzai, Guizhou, China*  
*Bakti Khair*

My first step into China had me feeling very excited yet anxious for what's coming. The cold breeze I first felt as I walked out of Kunming Airport was surprisingly refreshing and spiritually motivating. I immediately found the aspiration to carry out my responsibilities as a team member and all the tasks assigned to me to the best of my ability. Project Peduli: Guardians of Guizhou. A flaming red sweater we put on not to just provide us warmth and comfort, but also as a uniform to identify ourselves as a unit with a common goal heading towards a similar direction. Interestingly, the warmth and comfort also came from the bond that was formed throughout the trip. We faced the cold together, putting our mission objectives ahead of our health, yet everyone looked out for each other. The participants of this project found and learnt empathy and understanding from both the people of Yangtzai Village and ourselves. This Project Peduli had been quite different than the previous ones I was involved in.

This project found myself mostly behind the lens of a digital camera, recording emotions, characters, and events; a task I have never personally accomplished before. I spent my time turning my eyes into lenses themselves, always looking for a good angle and trying not to miss out on any opportunity to capture important moments. Because of that, I subconsciously made careful audio and visual observations of my surroundings. I consider myself fortunate to have observed how the sun rose perfectly from behind the mountains and sat itself among the beautiful set of magnificently-shaped and textured clouds to cast its shine over myriads of flowers and plantations. The sun would then set to give way to a panoramic spread of bright stars mapped all over the night sky, accompanied by a melodically-unique call to prayer. It felt as though the elements of nature were transmitting emotions too with God's will. The scenery that I have witnessed have definitely carved its place in my heart, mind and soul. It is a privilege to have experienced something so contrasting to my homeland.

The beauty of Yangtzai's landscape was very reflective of the villagers staying in it. Despite having a communication barrier, inspiring characters and positive emotions were still expressed and seen from the activities that were conducted for Al-Falak Preschool, Al-Fattah Mosque, and Yangtzai Village. In Al-Falak, I met selfless preschool teachers and a principal who have dedicated their lives to ensure a good future for the children of Yangtzai. I met children who are always eager to learn despite their age. In Al-Fattah, I met a hopeful and knowledgeable Ustaz who never fails to lead a prayer with strong-willed faithful villagers who travels to and fro the mosque and home despite their age. In Yangtzai village, I met inspiring individuals who are capable of different skills to sustain themselves. I met children, fathers, and mothers who looked so positive and strong despite their wealth and needs. I'd describe Yangtzai as 'The village that is happy despite adversity'.

Special thank you to Ms Mariah Mah, Fathima, Suhaila, Majulah Community, the Guardians of Guizhou, and all who have supported this mission. May God bless you always.

## **Project Peduli China Reflection**



When I first volunteered to be part of project peduli, I did not expect much from the trip. It really changed on how I look at it during my 9 days stay in Guizhou. Throughout the 9 days I have experienced different tasks and I am very glad to say that I had a lot of fun and it is one of the best experiences I had. It benefits me because I was able to speak mandarin and I had the opportunity to talk and know some of the kids over in Guizhou. One of the important things I've learned is definitely to appreciate what I have in Singapore. Over in china, their road and living condition isn't as great compared to Singapore. We often take things for granted and there are many people out there who will appreciate it more than us. One of the people whom I came across and respect the most is the school principal, he had carried out more than just his duties. He fetched the logistic team over to zhaotong and helped us to get all the materials needed for our activities. He came over late night to help us when we experienced electrical fault, we truly appreciate the things he had done for us. It was a pity that I did not take a picture with him, I hope that I will be able to do that some day soon. I really admire how the elderly villagers still work hard despite at a very old age. It really makes me think of life a lot and I would definitely want go back there and help them again. I would like to end of this reflection by saying thank you for giving me this opportunity to experience this wonderful trip and I will want to go back there again.

Regards,  
Darrel Choo



## PP: PEDULI GUARDIANS OF GUIZHOU - EUNICE



Nothing can replace the joy I had with these people. Loving Life together. At the start, being placed in a village of Chinese-Muslims and living together with 22 more is a big cultural shock to me, being the only 2 Chinese speaking. The first night was pure hell as I was still trying my best to adapt to the change be it environment or religion. Also, having the right mentality to accept and respect the other parties' beliefs. But some too their time in the night to calm me down and sat down talking to me, which opened up my heart to serve more and this is one I won't regret.

This 9 days with The Majulah community was surprisingly and constantly filled with fun, laughter, heart aches, heart to heart talks and a major self-check. A simple thing like washing clothes with a working washing machine and or having a mirror in the bathroom was taken



away from us in China. Something that I overlooked in my everyday life, taking it as a compulsory.

The most memorable moment in this 9 days was when we had our -Teaching of Teachers session in the night.

It made me reflect how education was given to us for free or at a cheap cost, pushing us to learn and excel and yet we are so reluctant and lazy to complete a single assignment.

During that 2 sessions, we had with the teachers, I realized how the teachers were trying their best to learn and were all so focused into the new things we taught. One of the teacher, Ms Zhang, even requested us to come back and finished what we left off.

Feeling the enthusiasm and hardwork the teachers aimed for at the age of 21-30, still have the heart and eagerness to learn and better themselves.

Coming back to Singapore, every little detail, every little thing we do in our everyday lives were so different. For example, listening to music on my earphones whilst travelling to school or back home, seems like a small thing but it is an issue that we face. Blacking out the world and not paying attention to the surroundings. To enjoy the ride to school and looking at how Singapore is beautifully built.

To the children, you are deeply loved and cared for, your joy and happiness is so contagious, it is also one thing that I crave for every morning here, one thing that I miss ever so dearly. To the teachers, you are well respected in my heart, embracing the children with love. You have my support all the way from Singapore. Jiayou!



This trip to Yang Tzai, China has been an eye-opening journey from the beginning till the end. For me, the biggest takeaway from this journey would be discovering the Muslims villagers in China.

Chinese born Muslims in Singapore are a rare find as they are usually reverts from Christianity or Buddhism. Furthermore, I have always associated Chinese as non-Muslims, and pork lovers. So colour me surprise when on my first morning in Yang Tzai, I saw a 75 year old Chinese man, with his "songkok", holding a small torch, walking in the dark, making his way up the hilly mountains to Masjid Al-Fattah (situated next to my dorm) for the morning prayers. There were several others that followed behind him. And suddenly hearing the call for prayer, in Arabic, was the final touch to this scene. It was truly a refreshing and exciting experience for me.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day, we distributed gifts of dates, moon cake and pomelo to 40 Muslim families living in the village. Visiting their homes was a

Faizah Abdullah

humbling experience for me. As a Singaporean, our views of what constitute a home may differ from them. We think of comforts, luxury and materials, they think of simple, enough and warmth. Each home that we visited, offered us to come in for a visit. We always refused saying we had other houses to visit, but there was one home where I was dragged forcefully into the house and made to sit on what seemed to be the only chair in that house. The rest were tables, beds and corn littered on one corner. Despite the scarcity, there was a feeling of warmth, love and serenity. At first I felt heartened and touched but then embarrassment crept in. Their home was just that one simple room that serves as the living room, bedroom and kitchen and yet they feel honoured that a visitor visits them. This made me reflect upon my lack of gratefulness (and warmth) for my own house back home in Singapore. It was a moment of epiphany that I realized that these villagers are indeed not poor, but rich. They are living a life full of fulfillment and contentment, and we have come all the way from Singapore to learn from them. Truly, thank you beautiful souls.

In summary, it was an unforgettable journey, travelling through vast mountains of Kunming just to witness the simplicity of a Muslim life lived by the villagers of Yang Tzai.



My trip in China was what I expected, the scenery and the weather there was amazing. Every single day every single morning I will go to the rooftop and indulge my eyes with the breath-taking view of the mountains. Those were the only thing that I looked forward to and I really loved it. I hope to visit a similar climate like how China has it next time in future.



Muhammad Firdaus Bin Mohd Ismail

## Reflection

I felt that this trip to China has been an eye opening one for me personally, my role during this trip was a programmer but most importantly my role as a camp commandant. As a camp commandant, I was tasked with a few notable jobs during the camp itself, like programmes flow, general safety, issue of instructions, etc. Before embarking on this trip, I was reluctant to take up this position as it is a heavy responsibility on a person for them to lead. The role of a leader is not meant for everyone, even though the best of people may not be fitting to be a leader. I felt that this role wasn't meant for me as I was a soft-spoken person, indecisive, not firm and easily overruled, traits that a leader should overcome. Besides the role of a camp commandant, my role as a programmer still stays, the pre-planning of the event was well done, we prepared a list of activities even though we knew that not all or probably not even half is going to be used. However, all in all the pre-planning was well planned.

When we arrived at Yang Tzai, we continued to do our task as planned however, the change in itinerary is the one that struck us the most. The programmes team had to implement new ideas and threw out the old ones, from there I learnt how to improvise in a whole new way. As my role of the camp commandant gets used to me, I learnt how difficult it is to be a leader, I learnt during the reflection night that a leader cannot truly fulfil his followers' needs or requests but rather try his best to achieve the end target, certain group of people thinks that I am a good leader because I know how to empathise and is soft spoken to people making me a soft leader, whereas the other group thinks I'm not firm enough to garner people's attention. The programmes executed on the children was beneficial to my opinion as the main objective for us is not to make them learn the alphabets or the sciences that we taught them, but rather to instil interest and make them happy. During my studies in early childhood I was taught about how play was important for children and came across this famous quote, "play is the answer to how anything new comes about". To us we may take it for granted that a child is wasting his time playing whereas he could have used those time to study, but play is the best form of study for a child.

In conclusion, the trip was a well-executed one. I learnt a lot from this experience and how each and everyone of us got closer.



### Project Peduli: China, Guizhou

To be honest, this trip was an impromptu decision. A decision made due to the need of a break from work. True, when one says, “You are only confined by the walls you build yourself.” No one, is building the walls around or within you. Its you, yourself who is building and is able to tear down the walls.

Personally, I have always been interested in humanitarian projects and I have been following Majulah Community for quite some time. However time has always not been on my side to join and commit for Project Peduli. It was only, early this year that I approached one of the Majulah members who happened to be a close senior of mine, expressing my interest to join Project Peduli. It was a normal day when suddenly I received somehow somewhat, an invitation whatsapp to be part of Project Peduli: China; Guizhou. However, upon receiving that message, it wasnt an instant yes as I have a few approvals to seek before I can proceed especially, my leave application.

All praises to Allah that, all the affairs leading towards this project were eased. From my commitment towards the workshops, to the approval for my leaves and also to the pause for my home-tutoring. All I can say, this trip was something I counted down especially during those tiring period from work.

“Thank you for pausing your life for this project.” This sentence, struck deep into my heart. Pausing our lives, to help others. Pausing our lives, to regain our energy and recharge. Pausing our lives, to understand the real meaning of contentment and gratitude. Sometimes, in our constant fast-paced life in Singapore, we forget to press the pause button causing us to be suck out, physically, mentally and emotionally. Therefore, my first takeaway from this trip will be, **the need to pause**. Only when we pause, then we can realign our intentions, our direction in life and also, recharge ourselves to give the best to others. Only when we pause, then we understand that



we actually have more than what we need. Only when we pause, we learn that there are many hands out there desperate for our help. Only when we pause, we understand the real meaning of happiness and contentment.

My close friends were quite skeptical upon hearing my decision to join this overseas trip, mainly because I know no one in the group. Truth to be told, few days before the week, the thought of backing out actually passed through my mind. It was in my consideration to back-out as the fear of being alone is eating me up. However, this trip taught me to change my focus. Everyone will have their own set of problems and fears and what differentiate me and them, is where I set my focus on. When I used to focus on the problems, when I used to focus all my energy and thoughts on my fears, that's when timidity, cowardly are the best words to describe me.

Throughout this trip, it felt different. It felt like im in a whole new social circle where every single one is on his or her route to befriend with each other, and boy, that put my heart so much at ease. **To change my focus, not on the problems but to change my focus to the One, whom I believe will facilitates my affairs, Allah.**

And with His help, I not only managed to overcome my fear of being put aside just because I didnt know anyone, but I gained new friends whom, I will always treasure. Friends whom, give me a new sight of life. All praises to Allah.

Another major takeaways from this trip will definitely be the **place and people themselves**. Despite the language barrier thus making communication critically hard, I noticed how the residents there really tried their best to serve the best for us, their guests. Although we are capable of cooking our meals and cleaning up after ourselves, they insisted on doing them on our behalf. Not only that, they even went out of their way to help us even when it means having to drive to and fro the bumpy roads.

Another eye-opener throughout this trip will be the enthusiasm and effort the residents, students and teachers portray. They are so adaptable to changes and new stuffs, and never fails to put their best foot out despite it being a routine. One significant routine, I personally enjoyed, will be the morning dance. The teachers I noticed, are still dancing with a smile pasted on their face despite deep down in me, Im sure they are bored of the routine. However, to share a bit of happiness and energy, they still continue the routine with a smile.

My hats off, to the teachers in the kindergarten and all teachers in general. I am also, deeply impacted on the creative idea of painting shapes on the field to indicate the line for each classes. Brilliant idea! Something simple but it definitely makes me more appreciative of people around me as Im sure, **every single individual around me has something to offer and something for me to learn.**

This trip, is my first Project Peduli and I certainly hope it is not my last. The people, the home team and all the committees are people I truly respect for their commitment and efforts. My deepest gratitude to all the hands involved in this trip, may this little effort of us will weigh down our balance in the hereafter. My last thanks will definitely be to Miss Mah, Sis Suhaila and our amazing translator, Fatimah. May Allah continues to facilitates your affairs, bump your roads with amazing individuals who will always help and realise your kind intentions. Thank you for this opportunity to learn and share.

Someone who learnt a lot and wants to learn more,  
Nurhanisa Yusoff

Project Peduli : Guardians of Guizhou

Yang Tzai, Guizhou, China

Muhammad Amirul Hazim



As the beautiful hillside greets me every morning, it reminds me of how gentle and magnificent His creations are. Such sights are a rarity in my homeland.

Being 3000 miles away from home has weighted my heart. Nevertheless, I know I was serving a greater purpose. I know that I'll be making a difference. I pray that He accepts it.

I've grown up learning the ways of the being empathetical. My Father. His Father. They were my role models. Guiding me to help when I can, and to give what I can. And I saw "Project Peduli: China" as an excellent avenue for me to do just that.

Alhamdulillah being granted with such youthful energy, coupled with "post-examination" freedom, there was nothing holding me back. Before I knew, my feet have kissed the soft, luscious Yang Tzai soil.

The cool wind licked my face as we drove down to Al-Falah. This was where I met such dedicated young teachers, who sacrificed their young adulthood to raise and teach such innocent young souls. Sadly, some of these children can't comprehend the words "mother" and "father". May the presence of the teachers fill their empty voids and may Allah protect them all. If 500 angelic smiles don't get you going, I don't know what will.

Being in Guizhou for 10 days could've been like any other humanitarian trip for me. What I did differently was to practice "Tech Sabbath" during the 10 days. The first few days were a struggle. Progressively, I felt like a ton of weight was lifted from my shoulders. I felt carefree. It made me use something that I've rarely used in Singapore. My eyes. I saw things that most phone-buried faces don't see. I filled my time with appreciating His creation. Indeed, I was humbled. I came to realise that we sometimes should disconnect to connect. We should escape dunya to really appreciate deen. Only then, do we realise how small we are in the vast and complex universe. Yet, our mission is simple; to pray and worship Him.

As I lay down in my sleeping bag, with the starry night as my company, I make one last prayer.





*Project Peduli: Guardians of Guizhou*  
*Yangtzai, Guizhou, China*  
Nurulhuda Binte Md Noh



China trip was a good experience. I learnt a lot of things. We did gardening, painting & education.

Have sabar in every situation that we faced every day. Think positive to find the solution and have better understanding. With our team spirit, each day filled with laughter, lessons, share knowledge and such. To witness how your team, solve the situation together as a whole and be pro - active really touches my heart.

We complete each other with our strength and weakness. Away from Singapore and be able to help our ummah it's a good opportunity and rezeki from Allah. Alhamdulillah, for all the experience given and let me to witness our ummah struggling in their life. All the more, I should be more grateful with what I have.

Special thanks to Ms Mah & Majulah community for organising this trip and let us to be part of this wonderful journey.



## Yang Tzai, Guizhou, China

Bismillah.

I went on this trip with the intention of reprieve from Singapore life, and to understand people on a deeper level. Going overseas for a community project was a first for me, yet something so foreign could feel like home to me.

One thing I kept hearing was “you’re never going to know someone until you’ve travelled, slept, and eaten together”. And that much is true. You get to know people you’ve known for years in a different light. It becomes a crash course of getting to know someone if you’ve never met them. There are struggles, of course but there are also moments that are so special, you know you’d need to capture it because it’s never going to happen again.

One fear going into this project was the emotional barrier between me and the locals. To a certain extent, the fear did ring true: it was difficult to interact when you didn’t even have a language in common. But I felt welcome. As a teacher, it struck me that the children here and in Singapore were similar. The children’s excitement over a high five, simple antics, an engaging lesson - this was the common language that we utilised.



Their bright eyes mirrored that of many bright children that I taught. The joy of getting a snack they liked, playing with no regard for safety. It all looked the same to me. I saw that glimmer of potential, how these children could grow up to be contributors to the society.

I feel very blessed for the opportunities that we in Singapore have taken for granted. We don’t choose where we were from. I didn’t choose that I was from a country

that is safe and clean; and they didn't choose a place of simple pleasures.  
I learnt most of all that though our faces look different, we are all human.

- Iffah Hannah Binte Osman



### **China Trip Reflection by Muhammad Indra bin Kamaruzzaman**

The trip itself was my second Project Peduli with Majulah Community and my first time going to China. Along the trip, I found it memorable when interacting with the children of Al-Falaq Pre-School. Despite there is language barrier between the children and I, I managed to interact with them by my actions, showing them how to wash their hands, playing chapteh and so forth. I really missed the picturesque sceneries of the Yang Tzai village especially waking up to see the mountain views from my place of stay. It was really a sight to see and I know that I cannot get these views in Singapore. On the other hand, I did not expect that I will fall sick during the trip. Even though I was feeling down because of my fever, it did not stop me from still making jokes with everyone so that I would not feel down and everyone will feel happy. So, for 10 days, I forged new bonds with my new-found friends whom I now see them as a family.





**Muhammad 'Isa Bin Anuar**

The kids. If you were to ask me for one thing that I missed from the whole trip, that would be my answer. People that I would have never ever thought I would miss, or have fun acquainting with, just a few months prior. People who had cured me of my own phobia of interacting with theirs (well, at least in terms of confidence, among other variables). People filled with faces of joy, reminding me of the happiness and contentment I once had when I was younger. But breaking my own shell of irrational fear towards interacting with the young is quantitatively only part of all the things I have learnt from the trip.

As I was intentionally given a place in the finance team under Project Peduli: Guizhou (A.K.A Guardians of Guizhou) with no prior experience, I felt unprepared and worried to be suddenly in charge of the *amanah*, or the trust, of managing hard-earned money from the community. I eventually

eased into the team and learned about the details of creating and holding fundraisers, and its functions.

Weeks passed and I eventually found myself in China. My role as a finance member then was to protect and be the custodian of a sum of money. The role is as nerve-wracking as it is simple, but *alhamdulillah*, praise God, it was kept safe throughout.

Other skills that I have learnt from the trip are gardening, teaching, and interacting with a language barrier with the kids. There are more, but will not expand the list because I believe that would make my already mundane reflection even more boring.

On to my thoughts on the trip, I feel that I am one step closer to discover myself, my strengths and weaknesses, and who I am personality-wise. After receiving feedback from the other Majulah Community members that I matured (albeit not much, I feel personally) since my last Project Peduli in Aceh, there is a sense of satisfaction knowing that all the 10 days I spent in China had not been a waste for myself at least.

If there is one word that I would use to describe my overall experience and feelings about the trip, it would be “enriching”.

Izzah Haidah Bte Osman

Reflection (20 Sep 2017 - 29 Sep 2017)



*Pictured here are some students I taught(left) and me playing with a village kid(right)*

My task for this trip as 2nd In-charge of the Programs team was to ensure programs ran smoothly and to prepare for the Cultural Exchange Day we would have with the students. Before heading off to China, I had feared that what little we did would not be beneficial for the students in the long run due to the short amount of days together and that our interactions would be limited. To overcome this, I set realistic expectations that I wanted to form a close bond with at least one student and to follow the motto; "*Wherever you are, be all there*". I would be content knowing we tried our best.

I dreaded that the language barrier would be too difficult to overcome. My vocabulary when it came to conversing Mandarin were limited to simple words like "Tiu pu chi", "Hen Hao" and "Che Suo". One girl repeated the word "Shuay" multiple times and I did not understand until she used sign language to indicate it was water. My level of immersion into the culture was lacking due to the language barrier and I felt my non-Mandarin speaking friends' frustration that we could not exchange stories with the students. However we used the resources like using sign language or translating specific words to converse. It was humbling to know that we know English, a language used worldwide and a skill we sometimes take for granted.

The last night we spent with the orphans and teachers will definitely be a highlight of my time there. The teachers are always welcoming and they invited us into their room. In a room filled with bunk beds crammed together, the 20 teachers live throughout the school year with little privacy. They care, nurture and educate the children and spend the day and night with them. Others their age have chosen other careers and yet they chose to educate the future generation instead. Their sacrifices are inspiring and definitely imparted on the students they teach.



Okay so this is my reflection..here goes

Name: Muhammad Muslih Bin Omar

Miss Mah if you are reading this ,whats up. May peace be upon you. Frankly speaking with all the planning and stuff before we make our to china, I never really thought much about the people there. Not because I have a narrow mind or what , but because I know china is one hell of a big place with many ethnicities, minorities , dialects, religion , geopolitics of it people , vast landscapes to explore and uncover. So I was like , let me see china with my own eyes and let it pick up whatever I can along those 9 days.

The first few days In china was hell for me because of the cold weather. My body can acclimatize well to super hot weather, but not the same for cold . Nonetheless, china has been the farthest I been to in any country, so the landscapes there for me, as of for now is the best and most mesmerising my eyes ever set on. The rainy weather , and me sitting inside the bus which is slowly paving its way high up in the hilly areas or perhaps mountains , through tunnels and cliffs has left me in awe as I sit back and ponder life and the creation of Allah has created around only for us to give remembrance to him.

So once in Guizhou, we did what we are supposed to do based on the plans which were made by us in Singapore. Of which some were left unfulfilled for it to be left inside the gallows for us to ponder upon the good and the bad that would come from it as Allah swt knows best. We have 3 mandarin speakers in our group, two from our side and one is the Lotus Lady Of China also known as Fatima. Which helps to facilitate our daily interaction with the locals there. For me personally, throughout our time in Guizhou, I see those three souls as the backbone of our time there.

We did many activities such as cleaning and maintaining the order of our accommodation, we did wall painting in their school, toilet cleaning or many would say, toilet purification. We did educational classes for the students there on the usage of basic English words. We did a small dance for them to play along which involves exaggerated moments. We managed to incorporate oral hygiene in our education plan, which teaches the kids on the proper technique and steps of brushing and the harm that may arise from not brushing our teeth. Some our volunteers has actually step forward to teach the local teachers on how to use Microsoft excel which can be tacky to teach.

Doing village house to house visit for me was the best and extending our hearts to them by giving them pomelos and other perishables that they would not get in china, let alone in guizhou. Or last act of gratitude to them for their hospitality was our performance on cultural day. We made a silat performance and also dikir barat which entertain almost everyone we could see. Our nights of rehearsal was well paid off. We even add in our local snacks distribution from classes to classes and saying our last few words to the kids there before we make our final departure.

With all these said and done miss Mah, this is where my reflection begins.

For the last few day of my stay in guizhou china. Longest I have ever been in any country. I continue to live amongst this villages from time to time, a group I would say , on a personal basis, an unusual group of people. Those locals there, they are an intriguing group of people, from the moment they wake, they strive to do whats best into whatever they are devoted into. Amongst the villagers way of life, I have never seen such a discipline.

With all the security and the ISD over us, I feel like im their captive and I cannot escape my place of stay. Being a foreigner in a somewhat isolated muslim locality in china, I was

expected to see me being treated as an unwelcomed guest. Yet everyone in the village smiles and gives their salams to us. But beneath that courtesy I detected a deep open reservoir of the feeling of loneliness left untouched. I felt it when I hugged those villagers during a visit. Never have I witness such a sincere hospitality and overwhelming sense of brotherhood amongst the muslim villagers here, in this part of the world. They treat us like their long lost brothers and sisters.

Living in Singapore, as much as we are being taught about universal brotherhood, yet our subconscious mind has been telling us by default, that the religion of islam is the religion of the arabs only to be passed down to the Indians and the south east asia. Im surprised by my own sense of ignorance, but I throughout my studies of islam I never gave so much thought to the 20 million muslims in china. My time and experiences in guizhou amongst the muslim locals has forced me to changed and rearrange much of my thought patterns previously held and to toss aside of my previous subconscious conclusions.

It was not too difficult for me despite my firm conviction as I see myself as man who always try to face facts and understand life as new knowledge unfolds. I have always keep an open mind which is necessary to the flexibility that must go hand in hand of my continuous search for intelligent truths that will make sense of the world as it is today. Throughout my stay in guizhou, I have eaten from the same cook, prayed amongst the same locals and looked after by the same person who are devoted in their faith which can be felt and seen from their faces.

The point im making here is that if muslims from all over the world, from every corner would to unite despite our differences, then maybe it would be able to eradicate the problems that is facing the muslim ummah today that has been plaguing us for decades. For me,that would be my goal and a point well reflected for me during my stay in guizhou. All praise is due to Allah , creator of the seen and unseen and everything in between, may He brings the much needed ease inside of us as we make our way for and towards Him. Ameen



As a traveller in this world, we're encouraged to explore beyond the comfort of our own home to witness the creation of our Lord, "Say, O Muhammad, "Travel through the land and observe how He began creation. Then Allah will produce the final creation. Indeed Allah, over all things is competent." [Quran 29: 20]. This is one of my favourite verses from the Quran. It's amazing how we can witness how great our creator is just by looking at His creations. An invitation for Project Peduli China was a chance for me to do so besides giving back to the community. Nine days in Guizhou, has been an eye-opening and enriching experience filled with love.

As a Singaporean who's been blessed with so many convenience and yet so busy with our daily routines (be it work or school), we tend to overlook all the little things that's going on in our lives. The moment I'm in Yang Tzai, away from the hustle and bustle of the city, I get to appreciate the fresh cooling air we breathed in, the fresh corns we eat from the garden outside the kitchen and the night that was filled by stars. Looking at all these, I certainly feel blessed to be where I was. The greatness of Allah can be seen just by looking at our surroundings - the mountains, the rivers, the plantations and the vastness of the blue sky.

I also learn skills that I never get to experience in Singapore. From planting seeds, uprooting trees and even scraping paint off the walls. The best part was definitely daily engagement with the children at al-Falak kindergarten. My heart melted when I was greeted by the well mannered pre-school children. Every day, I'll get a "good morning teacher" and a bow packaged with cheerful smiles. What could be better? Language barrier was not an excuse to not engage with them. Just like the quote, "actions speak louder than words", i learn to use actions more when explaining to them. The children also even taught me through actions. They taught me their morning dance routine just

by showing it to me and instructing me to do it. Besides that, exaggeration is also one of the things i learned in order to make them enjoy their lessons more. The teachers at al-Falak taught me the true meaning of passion and dedication. As young as 21, they are so dedicated in teaching the children, staying in school with them and without fail they still smile every single day.

The experience has definitely developed me into a better person. I learned a lot from the new role i was assigned to (finance) and work with a team of different dynamics. The team has taught me a lot of things, be it through their actions or even stories of their own experiences. Constant reminders and daily reflections made throughout the whole trip kept us grounded and motivated us to do better every single day. At the end of the day, we as humans who live temporarily on this earth need to always be humble and spread peace and kindness wherever we go. From Surah al-Furqan verse 63, “And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth in humbleness, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace.”





Not everything in life is binary, it is not as simple as saying that something is either beautiful or ugly but instead to look at it in a different light where there is beauty in everything, even our struggles. This humanitarian trip to China, has definitely made me realise that and be at peace with my own shortcomings. Waking up every day to the sun rays on my face, the chilly mornings, the high mountains, the vast blue sky and the endless rows of crops was beautiful. The busy city life and whatever burdens carried on these shoulders has never felt so distant and insignificant. Standing in front of a class filled with children, sharing stories, looking at the smiles on their faces and their joyful glee was beautiful. Reminds me of how important it is to find happiness and gratitude even in the littlest things. I am honestly inspired by the dedication of the teachers and it was truly an honour to share what little knowledge I have. They're practically there 24/7, teaching in the day and taking care of the orphans living there at night, being both a teacher and a parent. I found out that one of them is the same age as me, making me question what I've done with my life while she's out there, actively changing the lives of these children. At the end of the day what I came to realize for us, The Guardians of Guizhou, was that it wasn't so much about the money or infrastructure but our presence and how much of a social impact we can make, expanding both theirs and our worldviews. 🌱

– Nusaibah Sajiah

I am elated to be part of this project for several reasons.

By the grace of God, I am grateful to see China again only this time in a remote part of China where if I am stripped off all the tech items, there would probably be no way I am going to find myself home.

Being in a remote place like this obviously puts a huge contrast between life here in SG and in Yangtzai. The juxtaposition of home here in Singapore and how home is in Yangtzai makes me feel grateful for the simplest things like a functional toilet flush and a safely connected electrical wirings.

There are many other learning points that I would really love to say, but given my commitment now, I really have to keep it by the 100's. I will *spill the tea* in my blog because they were simply self-depreciatingly hilarious.

Ms Mah, if you are reading this; *kalau ada sumur di ladang, boleh kita bertumpang mandi, kalau ada umur yang panjang, boleh kita berjumpa lagi.*