




NUS Muslim Society YEP 2015

Project PuLSe

Name	Reflection
Zakiyah	 <p data-bbox="344 1039 1398 1279">It has been a valuable and blessed experience for me to be able to participate in this Youth Expedition Project Journey, Project PuLSe last year (2015). Throughout this expedition, I realized the importance of always renewing and setting your intention and purpose right as a group in anything that we want to pursue. With the right intention and purpose, our team could come as one and is able to face obstacle and challenges ahead us during the trip and also, by having and putting faith and trust in God's plans as well.</p> <p data-bbox="344 1328 1398 1496">Despite the rough road where plans and things might not work out to be what we expected before or even during the expedition programme, eventually things started to find its own way when alternative plan was being implemented and that made me aware on how important to be able to compromise within each of the member in the team.</p> <p data-bbox="344 1545 1398 1749">Other than that, being in this trip to China had also been an eye opener for me to cherish the moment that we had and appreciate things that we possessed back at our home country, rather than comparing on things that might appear better at the other side. If I were to given another opportunity, I would definitely come and contribute back to the place where Project Pulse team had went and put our efforts in the process of volunteering work in building and setting up of the pre-school there at little stone. :)</p>

Nazira



Although I was unable to attend the whole duration of the expedition as I was sick and joined in only on the 8th day, I believe I have learnt much in the the seven days I was there. Firstly, we went to Little Stone Village where Al-Fattah preschool was under construction and we painted a mural on one of the exterior walls. This painting process took about 2-3 days and involved much teamwork and cooperation. We would not have made it had we not stuck together and pushed each other as a team. I was sad upon hearing that we actually painted on the wrong exterior wall (one that was scheduled to be demolished!) but all was well after Ms Mah said that some adjustments to the building process would take place, thus not making our effort go to waste. After three days in Little Stone Village, we headed back to Al-Falah preschool, not so far away. This preschool was located on top of a hill and this made the weather there very nice and cooling. We disrupted some of their regular lessons to teach arts&crafts. Honestly, although I did feel that we brought the students some excitement and happiness in their lives, I don't think we did anything that would truly value-add their lives. But maybe that's okay, because this project is an ongoing project, with many schools coming to the same place to ensure the sustainability of the project and to ensure that this is not a one-off event. My favourite moments in the 2-3 short days I spent there was when I was alone in the mosque, in the early hours of the morning, and being able to pray subuh prayers in congregation, and being able to hear the different recitation of a Chinese imam (which I have never experienced before). I don't think I will forget those moments of peace, tranquility and serenity anytime soon. After 2-3 days, we headed back to the city for our R&R for 2 days and headed backed to Singapore afterwards.

Hulwana



The trip to China has been such wonderful one with so many unforgettable memories and a lot of great takeaways. I decided to embark on this quest with the objectives to understand the society better through greater interactions and volunteering to the needs of the society. I realized that in the spirit of helping others we in turn are also benefitted with great learnings and personally develop as a person more. The first thing that left an impression on me about China is the cool weather, it felt like a natural air-conditioning. Likewise the people there are also cool; they have welcomed us with great hospitality and showed us how friendly they are despite the language barrier. I had the most fun teaching and engaging with the kids in the pre-school. Seeing their smiles and hearing their laughter made me very happy. We also had the chance to leave a mark through our wall painting. Although the turnout for our health mapping exercise were not as great, I feel rather accomplished for the effort that me and my team have put in to create an increase sense of awareness with regards to health to the villagers there. Indeed the trip to China has given me such a meaningful experience.

Isma



Being in the part of China that is not as developed as Singapore opened my eyes to the reality of the world. The comfort and choices that fills the majority of my day-to-day life was a luxury to the people of the village.

I remember entering the first village and seeing kids walking home from school. I looked around and I saw mud and plantations everywhere. The ride continued for about 10 more minutes before we reached the preschool. It dawned on me that the students who were walking home would have to walk 4-5 times the amount of time taken with transportation. That was the start of me realising how fortunate and slightly pampered I am to be traveling in a van even when far away from my home country.

Coming from a multiracial and multilingual country, seeing a person of a different skin or hair colour may not be much of a shock for me. However, the moment we came, the kids looked at us with a look of awe and excitement. Although language may have been a barrier, the sincerity of the locals shined through their actions and kindness towards us. It definitely made me feel more obliged to repay the kindness that they have continuously shown us.

One of my most memorable experiences would be the free time we had to explore the neighbouring area around the school compounds. Two of my friends and I decided to

head towards the mosque and we saw the Imam's daughter as well as her friend playing and we decided to join in. They immediately taught us how to play a version of Zero Point, a game we used to play in Singapore in primary school, as well as a dance routine. With every step we mastered and every jump we succeeded, the girls would clap happily and smile widely. This definitely showed me that language was hardly the problem, if we are sincere, people will feel it through our body language and actions and those might just have a larger on a person than the words we say.

No matter where we are and the language we speak, the 10 days has reinforced in me the basics and teachings in Islam. This is definitely just the start of a journey to witness the beauty of His creations, insyaAllah.

Diyana



Project PuLSe was an exciting yet meaningful experience for me. From the start all the way to the end of the journey, I was able to gain new knowledge and learnt more about myself. For me, the highlight of the trip was being in China itself and seeing the plans that we have been busy laying out for the past few months materialise. Although we had to constantly make changes to our plans, it has taught me the art of being adaptable to my environment. While my team mates and I were a little bit disappointed that our initial plans could not be carried out, we did our best to ensure that the new plans we had were carried out successfully. I believe that we were also able to complete our plans successfully due to the help and support that we received from the very accommodating villagers, staff and kids from the pre-school. Looking at it from a bigger picture.... In life, things might not always go the way that we expect or plan out for it to be like but what matters the most is how we react to those changes. After all, Allah S.W.T. is the best of planners. Whatever that we might have wanted or seek out for may actually not be the best for us in the first place. It is inevitable that the YEP benefits us more than our beneficiaries. However, I hope that my team mates do not feel like their efforts do not pay off as it is the little efforts that ensure the success of such a huge long-term project. Even if it ultimately benefits us alone, it will help us to become better individuals that can better serve our community and other fellow Muslims. Overall, it was a valuable experience for me and it gave meaning to my journey as an undergraduate.

Syafiqah



The experience I had during the days we stayed at the village was a very meaningful one. It started off with uncertainty as we are so used to the comforts with have back at home. However, it was very eyeopening when i realise with what minimal they have here, their generosity and warmth still shone through. One example still fresh in my mind is when me and a group of friends were spontaneously invited by an ustaz to his humble home while we were walking around their courtyard. His wife served us tea, sunflower seeds, peaches and even offered us steamed buns which was meant for their own consumption. There are still many more encounters of such. Their kindness towards us strangers made me reflect on my own attitude to others.

Another thing that was memorable was of course the fresh food and peaceful mountainous scenery around the village. It was really a refreshing sight compared to Singapore's urban jungle and made me reflect how beautiful Allah's creations are. I really miss the clean and cool air there. Sometimes the best things in life come free to us.

Of course, our experience there would not have been complete without interactions with the preschoolers there. Most of my friends and I were awed by how at such a young age, they are taught to take turns to carry the dirty dishes from their classrooms to the kitchen. This sense of responsibility made me ponder on how pampered our children are and how much character development they might be missing out. Their eager attitude towards learning and contributing to class activities made me convinced that they are not much different from us, they do have aspirations that ought to be given opportunities to work towards their maximum potential.

Khairiah



I have learnt a lot of skills through this YEP trip and it has also enriched me in many ways. Firstly, it helped me to improve hard skills like handling administrative matters and also ways to conduct meetings, reflection sessions or even activities in China. Aside from that, it helped me hone my soft skills such as communication. This YEP trip did not only require me to communicate within the YEP team but also to the non-English speaking locals over there. It also transcends between age group , where we have to communicate with elders, adults and even the young children. All of these have certainly improved my confidence level. Lastly, as we went to a Muslim-majority region, it allowed me to experience different aspects of life and the similarity and differences in practice and culture between the local Muslims there and Singaporean Muslim. It taught me to be thankful of what we have in Singapore as we are living in a very fortunate city. I believe that if another opportunity arises, I will definitely try to volunteer for it.

Raqibah



The 10 days spent at Little Stone Village and YangTzai village were some of the most memorable experiences I had in 2015. Being surrounded by villages far from the urban city-life that we are used to forces us to rethink our perspectives on life. Time passed by amazingly slowly; there was no need to rush. We had ample of time on our hands and it was just a matter of how we want to spend it. It is amazing how time passes relatively much slower at the village than when we are home when in fact, we all have the same 24 hours each day.

This trip not only helped me realize individual life lessons, it also saw my team grow incredibly closer to each other. The shared experiences laid a foundational common ground essential for creating memories. In addition, the act of staying in a foreign land forces you to forge close bonds with those around you such that we can all depend on each other for emotional, spiritual and physical needs. The nightly reflection sessions we had as a team also helped us tremendously in understanding each other.

I cannot imagine how else this trip would have turned out if not for our team's unanimous decision to go ahead with collaborating with Ningxia-Xijia Charity Centre. Thank you for allowing us to experience Islam in another part of the world. I will remember all the little gems you shared with us. May Allah continuously bless you with good health and rizq.

Munirah



My experience in China was one that will forever be etched in my mind. The villagers went beyond their duties to make us feel at home. The funny thing was that we were the ones who came from a far distance to help them and not vice versa. The first time I set foot at Al-fatah pre school, right at the top of the mountains, I was impressed. Amazed at how happy the children were playing and learning, how enthusiastic the teachers were teaching the children despite lack of funds and their daily struggles. While we were at Al-Falah, I felt happy being able to contribute some colours into the compound, lighting up the school. Hopefully with more colours, Al-falah will continue to shine brightly in the neighbourhood. With the barakah of sincere volunteers to build the school, I hope Al-Falah will be seen shining from the heavens, insyaAllah. It was definitely a pleasure helping the villagers at Zhaotong.

Shafawati



The YEP trip to China, Yunnan, had been a fairly enjoyable experience, where we worked with the local children and families there. We have successfully completed a few things we had in mind and improvised on activities when things did not go according to plan. However, I do feel that there are more things that we can and should do for them. I was also very humbled by the kind gestures of the locals in the school we stayed in, and it felt as though they were the ones helping us instead of the other way round. Through this experience, I gained a lot of valuable lessons and I am thankful for the experience.

Raudhah



Despite the fact that the YEP trip was not as physically exhausting as I thought it might be – and even though I feel that we didn't leave much impact on the kids there – I think that I've learnt about myself a lot.

The trip has taught me how to view things in a different perspective. It made me learn to see the bigger picture (eventually) whenever undesirable things happen. It also made realize that embracing differences with others matter so much, and that respecting others' opinions is vital when working together in a group. It has definitely made me realize of all the things that I've been taking for granted, and how important it is for me to appreciate everything – even the littlest things – that I have.

More importantly, I started to view Islam in a different (but better, in my opinion) way. I think that this trip has triggered me to start learning about my religion, after years of taking it for granted; after years of realizing its importance in my life. This, in my opinion, is the biggest impact the trip has left in my life.

Fatima



From the start of our stay at Yang Tzai, we have been welcomed with much hospitality and kindness. The school principal, teachers and villagers went out of the way to make sure our stay was as comfortable as possible for us. We were treated with privilege even though we were the ones who came to volunteer our help to them. All of our meals were cooked and provided for by the school cooks as well. Although the food that we ate was different from what we have back in Singapore, it was still delicious nonetheless. It took a while to get used to it, but I felt very blessed to be served hot bowls of rice with a few accompanying dishes every time we enter the dining area. It taught me to not just be fortunate for what we have in Singapore, but to also be fortunate for the kindness that we received from the people of Yang Tzai and Little Stone Village.

Our activities included organizing art and crafts classes for the students in Yang Tzai, putting up a performance for the school, as well as painting a long wall of murals in Little Stone Village. One particular stand out that awed me was when we gave out post-it notes to the students and asked them to write down what they would want to be when they grow up. Their response mostly involved them wanting to be a farmer, which is very different from children in Singapore. It gave me a perspective on how different the environment was academically between the village and an urban city such as Singapore.

Overall, despite the language barrier between us and the Chinese villagers, it was an amazing experience and I would not trade it for anything else. The kindness and welcoming hospitality that we received from the people of Yang Tzai and Little Stone Village was bountiful, and I felt that we should be very thankful for that. However, I think that there was much more that could be done on our part, and at times I felt that the villagers were doing more for us that we were for them and I believe we have to find other ways where we can provide a sustainable positive impact. The peace and serenity of the villages is unforgettable as well, and I will miss that along with the people who helped and interacted with us throughout our village stay.

Farhan



The whole experience of being in China for 2 weeks is something that I would like to go through again. The journey to the village of the preschool in Yang Tzai itself was eye-opening. Being able to see the natural landscape which is very rare to find in Singapore, travelling on bumpy, non-cemented roads on the way to the village, seeing the mud houses, farm animals and villagers was very interesting and amazing. The school itself was very well-maintained, the teachers and preschool children were very nice and friendly, and it was especially a joy to be able to see the preschool children have fun interacting with us and also playing games with us. Being able to enjoy such an enjoyable weather not experienced in Singapore was also a good change of pace for me. Seeing how relaxed and non-hectic the lifestyle of the villagers and teachers were was something I enjoyed as well. As for the preschool in Little Stone, the painting of murals on the wall was quite a new experience for me as I've not done any artistic painting before. The mural painting also served the purpose of helping in the YEP team bonding while the team helped in decorating the school as it was being constructed. Also, the medical health check-up on the villagers in Little Stone was very enriching as we all got to experience interacting with the villagers and it was nice to be able to see the smiles on the villagers' faces while they had their vitals checked. Overall, my YEP experience in China was amazing: The villagers were friendly, the landscape of the villages were amazing, the weather was really nice, and on top of it all, it was really heart-warming to be able to reach out to people of a different ethnicity in a foreign land. 10/10, it is definitely something I would like to do again.

Saiful



One of the main reasons why I joined the OCIP was my friend, Nadiah's recommendation, who went for the trip during her time. I went for it in hopes of self-development, fun and the prospect of meeting new people.

When I received my first WhatsApp group message however, I started feeling afraid that I wasn't able to blend into this new group of Malay friends. I rarely mixed around with Malay people back in my JC or secondary school days, or at least I felt they were different. When I joined the team during the first few meetings, things were actually fine, I enjoyed myself but I didn't feel that I was contributing much to the team and felt bad for it. In response to this guilt, I tried helping out with other things and going for most of the activities organised.

Then came the period when I was teased and in a certain way, made a fool, by my friends for some reason, I was a convenient target for them to tease and I wasn't really happy with it. I was annoyed and angry whenever they did it. It usually ends up with me saying inappropriate or harsh things to them and I could never forget that. This was especially so amongst the guys, whom I'm supposed to be comfortable with and this was unfortunate since I will be staying with them throughout the whole trip.

The feeling of this discomfort with the other guys, because of what they used to do to me, persisted when we flew to China and slowly subsided, thankfully. They still poked fun at me but I think I got used to it after awhile.

In China I felt that the most significant things we did for the community we helped was the mural painting, the performance and the dialogue at the mosque. I really enjoyed choreographing the performance, because, well, even though I have quit Malay Dance, I still secretly like it. I was actually very pleased with the result of my choreography and I would say it was one of the highlights of the trip. I also enjoyed the cold weather there, which is in stark contrast with the generally hot weather in Singapore. Also, the experience of being in a village and farmlike area was very refreshing and interesting to immerse in. The food they served was also different but tasty, except one morning where they served something strange, porridge and sugar. I was quite upset when my some of my friends refused to swallow it, even though they were aware that the people of the country aren't as fortunate as them, and I gave them a piece of my mind during the nightly reflection session. This was one of the rare things I stood up strongly for, food wastage, and I felt that they were unlucky to be a victim of this pet peeve of mine.

Despite some of the negative things which have happened during the trip, I would say that I have forgiven my friends for what they have done to me, I hope they do the same for the bad things I did or say to them as well. Sadly, however I still am unable to forget those things. Nonetheless, I still am friends with the YEP peeps and I would say that I would be a pretty lonely person without meeting them during such an eventful trip.

Tajuddin



The YEP trip to china was both an exciting and yet challenging time for all those involved. It was exciting because it was the beginning of transformational journey and challenging due to the language barrier. Throughout the entire trip, we worked in small teams where we were give different responsibilities each day which includes teaching, painting and harvesting. The 14 days was worth everything. We gained and learned alot of things from planning to preparing and finally executing the plan. This trip would have not been possible without the efforts made by all the team members, Ms Mah and our sponsors.

Shahanaz



Being a part of Project PuLSe has further emphasised the importance of health and education, and how Singaporeans are truly blessed to have relatively fair and easy access to them. While there were ups and downs throughout the entire planning and executing stages, my overall experience was still a memorable one. I loved being able to interact with the students and learning and immersing into an entirely different culture. I believe that the members would have attained a greater sense of accomplishment and self-development if the communication between the organisation and the committee was better. Such miscommunications often set us back and made it difficult for the committee to stick to specific goals and objectives. There was also a lot of down time, which could have been improved with better management.

Irsyad



One of the most unforgettable events that we experienced was the Children's Day concert cum cultural exchange session at Al Fatah Preschool in Yang Tzai Village. The team had already prepared for a performance prior to the trip. We had scheduled the cultural exchange to take place towards the end of the trip. However, given the circumstance that the children's day was to be held on the 4th day, we had to squeeze

time to fine-tune our performance and had to reschedule all other programmes.

When we arrived at the school, the team was taken aback by the scale of the event. There was a stage set up in the parade square and classes were practicing their performances with music blaring from speakers. We were unexpectedly informed that we had to prepare two performances of at least ten minutes each within a time span of three days. The team learnt to adapt and decided to split into two groups. One group sang and danced to traditional songs while the other group showcased one of the traditional Malay dance forms, the Zapin.

On the day of the event, everyone had butterflies in their stomach. We were dressed in our traditional Malay costumes to showcase the Malay culture. However, with encouragement and support from one another, we remained calm and collected. We felt like celebrities when we were performing. Everyone in the audience- parents, teachers and children- were screaming and cheering for us. We also managed to watch and appreciate traditional performances from the children and the teachers that performed as well! The relief and joy everyone felt after the performance was a moment that will forever be etched in my memory.

Afiqah



ProjectPulse has definitely benefitted me a lot and made me realize to be always grateful with things that are given to us and the bountiful blessings by Allah s.w.t. Working with a team and organizing a trip to give back to the community locally and overseas was definitely not easy but at the end of the day is our sincerity and intentions matter. We may not see the end results but what matters is the way we portray ourselves as helpful and beneficial people to those in need. The two weeks in China was definitely eye-opening in understanding the differing cultures but the most heart-warming thing is that we are united under the shahadah and the love for our Beloved Rasulullah s.a.w. Personally it has made me to be more understanding of the

community and the state of the ummah and little things matters. Even though our efforts may not be big but it has definitely impacted our hearts timely. The trip thus inspires me to do more and continue taking small steps to be beneficial to other people not just to muslims but non-muslims alike.

Jannah



I felt that the trip wasn't as productive as I wanted it to be or as how we envisioned it to be. It's evident how communication plays an important role in any team project.

Even so, as an individual, this trip nurtured many personal developments. Responsibilities, meeting deadlines, representing the school and the society, and many more. If anything, this trip helped me learn more about myself and the people who worked with me. Our capabilities, how we handled stress, balancing work and friendship. The basic stuff.. Everyone probably said this.

In all honesty, I wished the trip didn't only focus on one's self but more on the help that we set out to offer. I can't help but think of the minimal work we did. This may be partly due to the fact that we didn't keep up with any updates to see if the help offered did (or did not) make any difference.

Even so, friendships were forged and it was a valuable experience. From the start in the planning stages to the end.



With students from Al-Fatah Preschool



Mural @ Al-Falah Preschool