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Transformational Perceptions of International Service Learning Projects: India and the Dominican Republic

Seth E. Jenny

Winthrop University, dr.sethjenny@gmail.com


Scot Rademaker

Winthrop University, rademakers@winthrop.edu

Geraldine Jenny

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, geraldine.jenny@sru.edu

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Transformational Perceptions of International Service Learning Projects: India and the Dominican Republic

2016 Winthrop Conference on Teaching & Learning

Dr. Seth Jenny, *Winthrop University*

Dr. Scot Rademaker, *Winthrop University*

Dr. Gerri Jenny, *Slippery Rock University*

Participant Service Learning Backgrounds

- What types of Service Learning Projects have you been involved with previously & where?
- U.S. : Homeless shelters, feeding the poor, Native American construction work, Habitat for Humanity- building homes
- International: Peru, Mexico, Jamaica, Siberia, Nicaragua, Cambodia, Chile, Philipppians, Haiti, Costa Rica: Teaching VBS, construction work, Youth Sports Camp, disaster relief, medical work and ESL tutoring

Prior expectations of working at a home for lepers' children

- “I was overwhelmed when I learned we would work with 500 children!”
- “I was very concerned if our teaching would work out well”
- “I thought the children would know English better”
- “I anticipated children would be shy, but they were open”
- “I expected to fall in love with the children and I did, more so than at any other place”
- “I wanted to be humbled by the poverty in preparation for a ministry to others
- I expected a life changing experience in making a difference to others





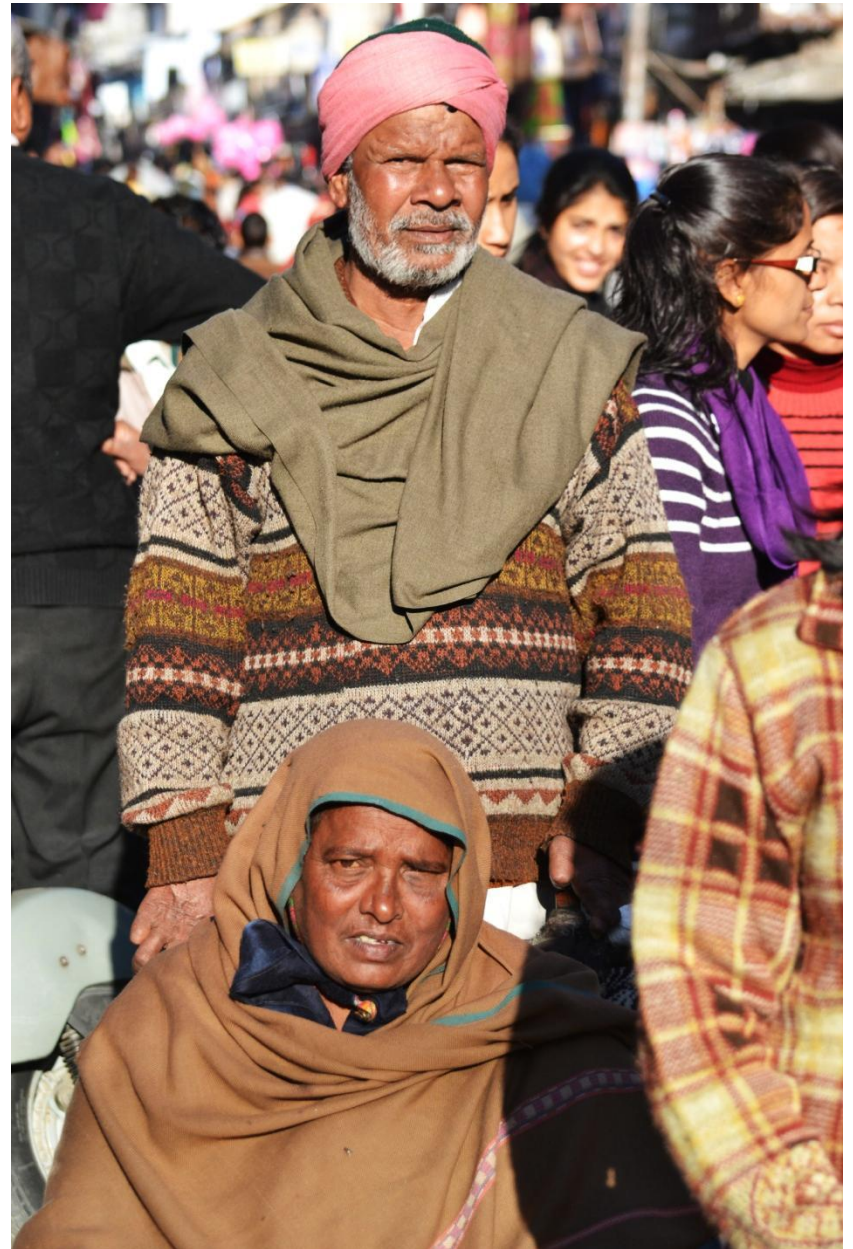








































“Were you **cold** last night?,” asked Gerri.

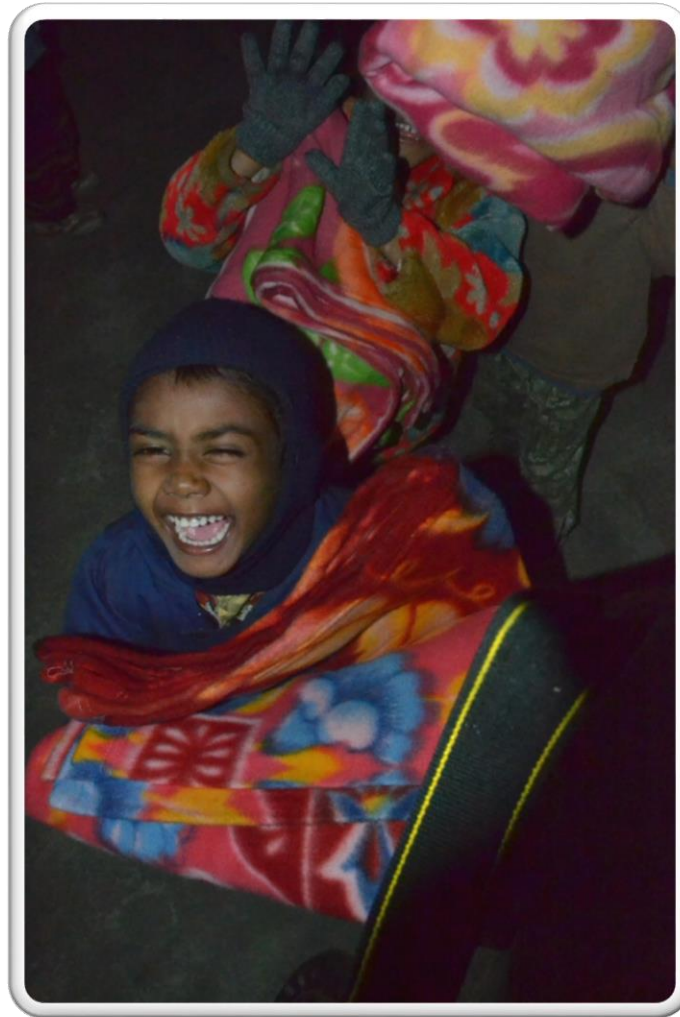
“**Of course, Auntie!**” was the reply!

**BLANKETS, GLOVES, &
SOCKS**

Bought 85 blankets at the market



What do you say to #86?...



30 pairs of socks, 50 pairs of gloves





A cooking lesson...



How did those expectations compare with what you actually experienced?

“I thought the kids would be hard to relate to, but we found common ground”

“The children were so polite, well mannered and affectionate”

“The children were so welcoming, happier and communicated more than I anticipated”

“I thought it would be hard to relate, but we found common ground”

Were there any Surprises?

- “The children had strong faith”
- “They had lots of energy”
- “The kids had so much hope for the future”
- “They were so concerned for their studies”
- “I was overwhelmed by the delightful demeanor of the children”
- “The children were so warm and responsive”

Surprises

- “I thought Hindus would be unfriendly to Westerners, but they were all friendly”
- “I was surprised by the primitive way in which people lived.”
- “This trip raised my sensitivities”
- “I learned a lot as I tried to make a difference”
- “I was surprised by the love and joy of the children”

Reality of the experience

- “ Every child was so respectful, loving and considerate”
- “I was overwhelmed by love for the children that made me want to look out for them”
- “Being in India has enriched me as a person”
- “I learned to survive on much less, I don’t need unnecessary stuff. I first need God and He will provide.”
- “I have a new meaning for the word “blessed”.
- “I will always remember the happiness of the children who were filled with God’s love and shared it.”

What life lessons did you learn from service learning in a 3rd world country?

- “The children impressed me that you can be content with nothing”
- “The widespread poverty made me sad”
- “I am now more willing to give financially since I have seen this deprivation firsthand”
- “This experience has made me question what I am going to invest my money in in the future”
- “It impressed me that this team of college students did not complain even in the difficult conditions in which we worked of no heat or hot water. They were always respectful”

How has this experience changed you?

- “The poverty makes me sad”
- “It has made me think “How can I honor God with my spending? My financial priorities have changed”
- “I have a better grasp that the whole world is part of God’s kingdom”
- I learned here that the first priority for the children is their faith, in the U.S. it is easier to get your priorities side-tracked”

Service Learning Lessons

- “It has made me question where does my peace and joy come from?”
- “This experience has given me a deep desire to do something more, I am now sponsoring two Leper’s children”
- “It confirmed for me that God is sovereign and has His people in every land helping others”
- “It has impacted me by giving me a strong desire to help needy children”

Significant Learning Outcomes

- “I learned that India is impoverished, but friendly, a thoroughly enjoyable trip for me”
- “I want to give more to the Leper Home to make the children’s lives better”
- “When you think your heart is stretched to the limit, there is room for more love, just like God always has more love for us.”
- “I was impacted that the people were so tolerant and open minded”

Significant Learning Outcomes

- “A smile is universal as a way of showing love”
- “I learned that you can have nothing and be happy”
- “This trip opened my eyes to the needs of others in the world and how far I need to make my money go”

Conclusions

- All participants surveyed responded that Service Learning in a 3rd world country with such impoverished children had been transformational in shaping their own worldviews and gave them significant sensitivity and insight into how they can better serve others, especially those beyond our own borders.

Dominican Republic



Context of Poverty in Education – lack of resources/parental support

Teaching



Teaching



Teaching



Service Learning



Ziplining











Student Responses to the Experience...

- “I really wanted a worldly experience, where I could see other cultures as an educator.”
- “After the trip I felt more prepared to become a teacher because I saw what students struggle with and how lucky I was.”
- “I think what I learned the most was to love what you do even if you don’t have a lot to work with.”
- Several students opted to go on the trip again!

- Questions?