

Expedition fund travel report for: Understanding peace in the Tamil community of Batticaloa, Sri Lanka 25th June – 11th July 2018

3rd year BA Geography 6/11/2018

Introduction

Studying Geography at Queen Mary and the opportunity to go on an expedition as part of collecting data for my dissertation has been very rewarding. This opportunity was introduced by a lecturer, where volunteering opportunities were available with the charity Street Child. I was very fortunate to be a successful interview candidate for the role as 'dissertation research role' in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka.

Straight after my exam, I was involved in a internship in London and at the same time I was preparing for the research I was about to go out and do in Sri Lanka. It was my first time travelling alone abroad and staying away from home the longest so it was a trip I was greatly looking forward to.

Research

Settling in a new town, understanding the problems and collecting interviews within two weeks was set out to be a challenging task. However, with my advantage of speaking Tamil fluently, I was capable of achieving the goals that I had set out. It was very interesting to learn about a town that I hadn't visited before as my parents are based up north, whilst Batticaloa is found in the East.

My work evolves around understanding the meanings of peace to the area and how education plays a role in influencing peace to the post conflict country. To understand this amongst the range of issues faced by Batticaloa, I had initially had conversations with volunteers from the charity and local social workers and leaders in the area. I had then formulated a dissertation title and questions to then ask during interviews and focus groups. I had also the great advantage by involving in street child's teacher training programme, by attending classroom observations and teacher training sessions. This had allowed me to conduct 'ethnographic research'.

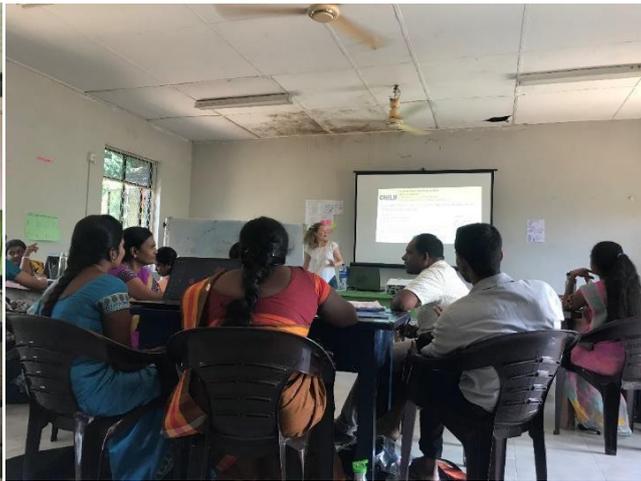
Overall, collecting data out in the field was very rewarding as applying my knowledge had me learn and extend my knowledge at great lengths. This expedition has in fact sparked further interest in more overseas hands on work.

Travelling during spare time

During the weekends I was grateful in exploring Sri Lanka alongside other volunteers of the charity, which was great fun! We occasionally go and relax at local resort in Batticaloa during the evenings after work during the weekdays. On the weekends, we went to exotic beaches, hiking up mountains, exploring tea farms, enjoying train rides through the mountains, going on safari tours, bird watching, visiting temples and shopping!

Conclusion

The entire trip was very engaging and memorable. I had made great friends from all over the world; from France, Denmark to Mexico. Sri Lanka's cuisine, landscape and people was great to learn about throughout the trip. The people were very welcoming and supportive throughout the trip, which has been very inspiring and hope to go back soon.



The first three images from the left were taken during several classroom observations, from a mix of primary and secondary schools. The image on the bottom left to this text is an image taken during a teacher training session in the village of Kayanmadu, Batticaloa. I was then able to conduct a focus group with several teachers I had been introduced to.

The image to the right is outside Street Child office in Batticalao. The image to the right of the that was taken on a safari trip in Kumana National Park. The image on the bottom left was taken at a local resort in Batticaloa. Whilst the image to the right was taken at Arugam Bay found to the south east of Sri Lanka's coastline.

