

What do mud pits, motorcycle taxis, large rats, and dead chickens have in common? All played starring roles in the recent Discipleship Training School outreach, of course. (The chicken was, shall we say, fresh, and the preparation...rather personal.) The DTS I've been working with for the past five months has just graduated, and I'm finally living back on board the ship. I have to say the day after their graduation was pretty good too. I enjoyed my first few hours off in five weeks very much.



But the outreach was an amazing time. My co-leader Elli and I had a great group to lead, thankfully. Being responsible for the care and feeding of sixteen international students in a foreign country, I discovered, is something of a 24/7 proposition. In a developing nation where the term "developing" sometimes seems optimistic, planning ahead too far was generally not worth the time.

But God provided opportunities and circumstances I would never have believed had I not been in them. Things fell together in ways that just made me shake my head at the sheer ridiculous improbability of it all. I'm pretty convinced it was a direct result of all the people who were praying—there were some pretty convincing situations. The students connected with people at the end of their ropes, women and men in need of a friendly face, a helping hand, or just someone to sit and listen to them for what might have been the first time in years. One of the group's favorite parts was simply playing with the children in every village

we visited. If you're a little kid in this country of short and difficult childhoods, the hands that play with you, the arms that hold you when you need it, will show you more of God's love than any words could ever hope to.

The students accomplished an impressive amount of practical ministry, too. The mud pit (right), after five days, became a fish pond from which the YWAM base in the area hopes to harvest as much as two thousand pounds of tilapia every year. More than that, the people in that community now have a living example of how they can help themselves. The more development projects I have the chance to see, the more it becomes apparent to me that nothing will ever matter much unless it comes from the inside.



In this spirit, the ship's work continues, too, and I'm getting plugged back in now that my role as DTS staff is in a lull. Until the next school arrives in June, I'll be filling in as the medical warehouse manager, packing the whole dockside unit and optical clinic back into the cargo hold. So far, the clinic has already prescribed and given out over two thousand pairs of free eyeglasses to people here who have no way to afford them. My friend in charge of the dockside unit (the portable hut where patients are prepped and given postoperative care) also tells me that more than two hundred people so far have been given the gift of sight through a simple cataract operation they could never have paid for. Others, including several teenagers, have undergone strabismus surgery to straighten eyes that had been crossed since they were born.



So the work goes on. Most of the time, it's neither flashy nor very dramatic when I'm caught up in the day-to-day. But lives are being changed, and when we as crew get a chance to take a breath, to step back for a moment and see with slightly more eternal eyes, or just to talk with a girl who was born with a cataract and now, at the age of fourteen, can see for the first time in her life...that's where the difference is made, both now and for a long time to come. Thanks for your help in keeping me here.

Jeremy