



Aidvolunteers

Now and Then - Lyllie Colway

Through my eyes, the newly built creation is the central focus of my vision, for all I see is the wooden fort with its glorious sky height. Trailing back to the moments builders toiled away to fabricate the magnificent tower for our imagination to let loose, I see the craftsmanship that lingers in each crook, each imperfect dent; those moments feel like seconds ago, the only reminder of their passing the gentle tick of the sun drifting in the sky, and glaze upon the wood, polished for my enjoyment, my freedom to explore.

I am not alone in the wonder, surrounding me are twenty eager expressions with hazed eyes; the excitement has already taken over their imagination, and it plays before them like television. Elated sums my feelings, delight jump-starting my heart because I am to take the first turn on this magical adventure before me. Tuesday has an eccentrically warm breeze, drifting through me like a gust on a Pirate ship, my friends to journey with me on this experience of a new travel, a new discovery. A new stamp on this prideful work of art, the first is ours, and still we stand in awe, beaten by our own fear of ruining it with a simple transgression. After gazing for a moment, one more step has been taken, the group of us shifting like time has begun again, and movement is achievable.

Like a rainbow in the blue, the high turrets stand proud and valiant, stretching as far as one could see, etched into the sky.

The adults shouting signals we are able to explore, and my legs carry me forward. I shout my glee and burst into a sprint, clambering onto the fort with fear it might disappear... this is as close as I may come to happiness and freedom. My escape into a wooden castle. I am happy...

I was happy...

The memory hits me, I see the eyes of the child that was frozen in awe, unable to process the fortune she had discovered. Finally, it had been done, she was beyond ecstatic that each waiting moment, each pitter-patter of her footsteps creeping up to see if it was finished, each ticking of the hour watching its creation from the distance of her poverty stricken village. But now. Splinters. The first thing I think of is splinters. When I see it, I am as tall as the highest turret, I need not climb. Forced to crouch to see my name etched on the underside of the wooden platform, seeing the precise detail marking my memory, that which seems impossible to me. How could this splintery, wooden stack have been exciting? Three platforms, it was a cacao plant to help our village make money. I remember I hadn't eaten anything that day nor the day previous, and I knew not how to spell anything but my name. Though its purpose had not been the enjoyment of children, we had moments of such bliss watching its creation and being the first to play on it before it was put to good use to help us along the way. I wore no shoes that day and I went home with splinters. It had been my life's pride, my hiding spot. It was a castle, I could escape, learn, discover, enjoy, and now... life has passed, and that memory is frozen. Yet now, time

has passed and poverty rests in my mind on the dirt ground. All I think of... splinters. I smile, because I had moments of freedom, and even in sadness, I am blessed.

Princewill Udom- Take it easy

A good road infrastructure facilitates the movement of people and goods. Indeed, roads are a vital part of the life of a community. The photograph is about an attempt to fix a broken road for the benefit of the people. A rural road which has suffered years of neglect has eventually caught the attention of volunteers. Unfortunately, the two volunteers can only achieve so little with their local farm implements, unlike the multinational construction companies with their vast store of human and material resources. It is apparent that the volunteers were unprepared for this mammoth task as evidenced by their clear lack of personal protective equipment such as safety boots and hard hats. Road construction is a capital- and labour-intensive business which requires a large team of highly skilled and low-skilled workers and several large equipment. However, the poor attempt by the volunteers had one instant effect: it succeeded in arousing the interest of the local boys who were left wondering what the volunteers could possibly achieve. The poor state of the road is one thing. But the grinding poverty of the people of the community is another. When children who should be in school consider being out of school more important than acquiring an education, that is poverty worth the attention of all. The poverty of the community is matched only by its rich lush vegetation and ample rainfall. While the land and climate may be favourable to bumper food production, the hazardous nature of the road poses a serious challenge to the movement of farm produce and people.

This knowledge spurs the volunteers to deploy their meagre resources to attempt to build the road. However, tackling the community's diverse problems requires a holistic approach. Life for the inhabitants of this Haitian community is one of desperation and impoverishment, and is exemplified by the deplorable state of their road. Imagine what economic transformation this community would undergo if the road is paved. Access to and from the community would become possible, enabling the supply of farm products to big supermarkets, caterers and manufacturers. Moreover, there is the possibility of building a self-sufficient community through contact and interaction with other communities.

Therefore, one major consequence of this photograph is its ability to secure some degree of attention to the community and its roads when released to the local government, the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations, which, in my view, is a key intent of the photograph. The photograph has the potential to make a strong and plausible case for the construction of the road. On the other hand, it is a devastating indictment of the local government system; probably, a failure of leadership. However, it should be borne in mind that a lack of funds can, in most cases, impede the will and commitment to act.

For this reason, the volunteers deserve total commendation for taking on such a herculean challenge for virtually no personal financial gain. Selflessness is a diminishing value in a world so charmed by materialism, lust for wealth and perverted ideologies. Having a positive impact on people can take different forms. A seeming little contribution can produce a significant result. This is a major lesson delivered to maximum effect by this photograph.

Finally, there is hope for this remote community. A renaissance of community values may occur in the minds of the boys observing the volunteers' effort. This can lead to a generational change in attitude. The message imparted in them is clear: children, take responsibility for your life.

Dženan Šabeta- Take it easy

Federico Salsi is a EU Aid Volunteer from organization Alianza por la Solidaridad. Federico is a 18 year old young man who wants to help as many people as he can, his dream job is to work in UN. It all started five years ago when he watched how Haiti was demolished by the quake and something in him said "I want to help". That day he went with his father on the flea market and sold his favorite Barcelona jersey, Federico searched for a way to send that money to Haiti and found Alianza por la Solidaridad a organization from Spain that was involved in helping Haitian people. Together they sent the money that he had collected even from family and friends.

After finishing high school Federico wanted to travel and volunteer and he contacted the same organization as before. Now he is staying in Haiti with his host family. The family with who he is living with are Emmanuel and Atabei Abbe and they have four young boys. They own a house that that was rebuilt after 2010 earthquake. Emmanuel lived in tent camp after his home was destroyed. He was hired as a driver during Federicos mission in Haiti.

It was the first day in Haiti for Federico and he was sent to meet local representatives from the government so they can visit tent camps where a 150 000 people are still living in bad conditions even five years after the earthquake. Federico and Emmanuel were going to the meeting when they came across to a huge hole filled with water in the middle of a dirt road from last night heavy rain and from passages of cars. Emmanuel anticipated this situation and brought his work tools. While he was unemployed he worked as a farmer with his wife Atabei, that day it was Emmanuel's day to take care of his sons and he brought them along with him. He got out of the car and he started to work with wet dirt road to make it wider so he can pass it on it's left side. Federico also came out of the car to help. He was swinging his pickax in the ground trying to hurry to the meeting but Emmanuel saw the young man was getting worked up and said "Take it easy" as he knew problems from the 2010 can't be fixed in one day.

The Pipe of Life- Rebecca Berry

Guilt enters into a lot of things. Half the time we try doing something good it turns into a train wreck, and we agonize over the results. Other times we just give into the desire to turn away from the suffering, and there is the guilt again. On occasion, something comes together in such a way that everyone touched by it is better off than they were before. Those experiences shine through the pain and fear to keep us connected to one another, and back on the path that was once obscured, and will be again.

Going into a place as a westerner, where westerners have wreaked horrific destruction, is humbling. Being treated as an honored guest in those places is a profound responsibility from which there is no real escape. Seeing others who have so little being so noble can crush self esteem into nano particles, but the luxury of

self loathing is just that, a luxury. Soon enough it becomes apparent that whether we deserve the gifts we are given, or whether we do not, gratitude is the appropriate response, and it won't do not to enjoy it.

When I go into a village to drill a well, you would think that rainbows emanate from my smile and the sun shines forth from my eyes. I am treated like a god. Water well drillers in the western world are not discriminated against by any means, but we are not hallowed members of our community. Putting a hole in the ground and shoving pipe in it, and then some more pipe, and some wire and a pump is not glamorous, but it is necessary.

Necessity is taken for granted by a few people at the expense of the agony of the many so often that we seem to accept it as a natural state of affairs. Going to a place without access to clean water cuts through all that pretty quick. Reality is what binds us together, and all the many ways we deny it keeps us apart.

So I go to my happy new family with my sunshine eyes and rainbow smile, swallowing down a life of remorse and accepting the beautiful gift of love that is poured on me. I get down to my dirty work with a clean slate as best I can, through the mud and the sweat and the desperate effort not to swear when the things that go wrong do.

Then something magic happens, and it never, ever gets old. News travels fast when the job nears completion. Women of all ages start to show up to the site with absolutely every container that could possibly hold water. They aren't there to get a flawless diamond ring or a new car, and they are not there to impress anyone with their finery. They are there to get clean water for their families for quite possibly the first time in their lives. No more walking to a polluted stream or puddle and back all day just to break down their bodies hauling something that will make everyone sick.

My gift for words does not begin to express the joy, the relief, and the gratitude that flows in all directions and lifts the spirits of those so desperately in need of everything. I can only say that those moments have kept me going, kept me moving forward at times when I feel all is lost, and will never be found.

Water is life.

Pipe connections- Diksha Goyal

Sometimes, a small incident can change your entire perspective of life. All the major government Airlines and agencies constantly advised me, a travel freak, against visiting Lebanon, a picturesque country situated in the Middle-East but sadly destroyed by the inhuman acts of terrorism. The weather within this country is so varied that people there say that you can ski in the morning and swim in the evening! But that particular evening in Lebanon will forever be a memory.

Engrossed in the serene beauty of the aisles along the countryside on my way back to the hotel, situated on the village side, more so because I wanted to experience the rich and varied culture and heritage of Lebanese, I was suddenly interrupted by the driver who announced a flat tire.

To kill time, I went on for a quick view of the natural scenes where, as I progressed, I was approached by a bunch of kids, hardly ten years of life carrying a long pipe along with them.

"Madam, please buy this pipe. It's as good as new. And it's very cheap", said the one in the front.

I was surprised to find someone as little as him, trying to sell a thing as useless as a pipe to me.

"But I don't need it, child", I replied.

"But we need to sell it off for our friend Nobu".

There was a sense of urgency and desperateness in his voice that made me ask that little lad to take me to Nobu who needed the money.

Those kids readily took me to a small hut, one amongst a cluster of them, where lied Nobu. He was a 7 year old orphan, his family being victims of the ongoing terror attacks and bombings.

Call it a miracle, or otherwise, he survived. With nowhere to go and nobody to claim adoption, he was left on his own. This village was a mere chance. He was deaf in one ear, suffered from severe anxiety attacks and restlessness, got startled at even the slightest of noise and bedwetting was frequent with no medication or hospital consultation even once. The villagers sheltered him and the village lads did whatever possible, even exchanged scrap for a penny for his treatment.

The story of Nobu startled me. The cruelty of terrorism and its inhuman insane effects awakened me.

I thought of those million children and adults who suffered at the hands of terrorism just because some terrorist organization wants to frighten the masses.

I was so shaken by the dreadful scene that upon returning to my country, I got in touch with people of similar minds and established several anti-terror campaigns and am now dedicated to eradicate terrorism.

As for Nobu and his sweet friends, I not only bought the pipe and gave them money enough for adequate treatment of Nobu, I promised to always stay in touch and I still have a piece of that pipe amongst my collection of favorite personal belongings as a constant reminder of my 'pipe connection'.