

Kullu Project

Portfolio

A document produced to assist in the setting up and running of Kullu project in the years after the project was initially set up in 2002.

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Introduction

The Kullu project was set-up for various reasons. The central belief on which the project was founded is that foreign students can be a useful asset to schools and orphanages in the Kullu valley. This is because of the skills and enthusiasm they can offer, exposure children receive to people from another culture and different perspectives and new experiences they can generate. The first year of the project (February – June 2002) proved that this was the case. There are quite a number of teaching projects involving international volunteers which operate in countries such as India. These usually operate through agencies (such as GAP in the United Kingdom) that arrange guaranteed placements for volunteers in return for a fee. There are various things which make Kullu project distinct from other such projects, on both an ideological and practical level. The project does not arrange pre-fixed placements in schools for volunteers before they arrive in the valley. This is avoided for several reasons. Firstly, it's believed that the project can have a more holistic impact, involving a larger number of people and a greater diversity of activities, if volunteers are not bound to one institution. Secondly volunteers will be most successful and committed in their efforts if they choose where and how to invest their time based on their own judgements after arriving in the area. This way they can tailor the project to make full use of their skills and interests, incorporate new ideas that were not conceived in previous years and be sensitive to any changes which might have occurred in the area itself. Also we noted that gap year projects which were operating in the area (organized through international agencies) tended to target the more wealthy institutions. It is hoped that organising the project in this flexible way will allow less well off institutions (whom are unable to make the long term commitments required by international agencies) to be involved.

In order to make this possible the project has a local co-ordinator who will be able to support them throughout. Also to assist groups in setting up the project each year they will be given a portfolio detailing **different elements** of the project, useful **contacts** made as well as **advice** and **ideas** from previous years. Information in this portfolio will form a solid basis and starting point for the project as it is repeated each year. It is hoped that each new group will then add to the portfolio based on their ideas and experiences so that it has a cumulative effect. While each new group will develop the project in their own way, we also believe that it is important to maintain and build long term relations with certain schools and orphanages (those considered particularly important) year after year. These will be high-lighted in the portfolio. In this way the project will be flexible and dynamic, but also have an important element of continuity to it as well. A large amount of the portfolio details the exact way we did things (such as the project structure etc). This is intended to be a good reference point although the degree to which each new group does things in a similar manner to previous years is completely dependent on their judgement and the local co-ordinator.

A second important point is the fact that volunteer projects will be most successful when they are perceived as a **mutual exchange**. Therefore the contact which occurs between volunteers and the schools / orphanages in the valley will be of mutual benefit to both parties. Emphasizing this point to the various individuals and institutions encountered during the project will ensure that they do not feel threatened or patronized by the project. The misconception which often exists is that volunteers feel that they are there to provide needed "help" in the valley which can be offensive to those who already work there, whereas the Kullu project stance is that the main justification for the project is the fact that the mutual exchange will result in new perspectives and experiences gained by all those involved. This point should be made when telling people about the project in its initial stages, but also demonstrated throughout. This is important because it will avoid any feelings of hostility from staff who already work in the institutions Kullu works with which might otherwise unnecessarily hold the project back. In essence of course this mutual exchange will occur constantly through the work, but the fact that it is not purely one-sided should be clearly demonstrated every now and again. This can be done in very simple ways such as getting a class to teach you some Hindi at the end of an English lesson, or playing a game that the children teach you at the end of a games session.

A Brief History

The project was set-up in the Kullu valley for the first time between February and June 2002 for various reasons. I had decided to take a year out from university that year because I needed some time away from the books. I worked in a restaurant in Soho for a couple of months to earn some money and was at the same time trying to organize something to do for the rest of the year. My grandfather, Dr Devichand, was born in Kullu town and later moved to Mohal (a village about 8 miles away). He eventually gained a degree in medicine (which was itself a big achievement for someone from a rural area of the Himalayas) and became one of India's leading doctors. He was perhaps best known though for his humanitarian work and the fact that he was personal physician to the then Prime Minister of India Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru. He unfortunately died very young and as a tribute to his life and work my family set-up (and still sponsors) a school in his name; The DAV Dr Devichand Public School, Mohal. The project was initially conceptualised to provide a continuous link between this school and Atlantic College, through teaching volunteers who went to the college working at the school in Mohal. This seemed like a particularly appropriate link because of the fact that the school was set-up in my grandfather's name (who believed so strongly in social service) and the fact that it was Atlantic College which instilled a belief in community service in me. At the same time a group of my first years (whom had just graduated from Atlantic College) were planning on doing the project the established project that AC is connected with in Nepal, but were unable to do so because of political problems which were happening there at the time. For this reason we decided to join forces and set-up the Kullu project together. The final important ingredient was when I re-established contact with a cousin of mine (Ankit) who lives in Kullu and I'd met a couple of years before for the first time. Little did we know at that time the partnership we would one day form together. He runs an outdoor adventure company in the valley (and therefore knows it extremely well), is a lecturer in tourism in the university in Kullu and even set up an NGO with social service aims. For this reason he was perfect to be a local co-ordinator in Kullu

who could assist us massively in setting-up the project. After I wrote to him explaining what we wanted to do he offered his full support. I arrived in Mohal and met Ankit about a week before the rest of the group arrived to get the house ready and start doing some preliminary research with him. My Uncle Vinod was also with us at the time and he and his wife were also highly supportive to us throughout the project. Then on a sunny afternoon at the end of February the rest of the group rocked up to Mohal, surprising me by the fact that they were a few days early and so the project began. Of course it grew to incorporate far more than just the DAV Dr Devichand School (as will be detailed in this portfolio) and volunteers from other places than Atlantic College. Hopefully in future years with new groups who take on the project it will grow further.

The local co-ordinator

After setting up the project for the first time with Ankit, he has agreed to remain the local co-ordinator for the project for future years as well. He has many ideas for how the project could expand in future years (detailed in the future ideas of the Mohal section). Therefore he will assist new groups in setting up the project each year with his knowledge, experience and ideas. I have also mentioned other people throughout the portfolio who might be able to offer support and advice for the project (the more people who know about it and help out the better), although nobody else other than Ankit and the group have authority in the way the project is conducted as a whole. Although obviously headmasters of schools etc will want a say in how the project is conducted in their particular institution.

Project Structure:

We all arrived in India about a month before the project started (in the beginning of February) and travelled for a while before making our way up to Kullu. We then decided to split the project into two phases; one in Manali and one in the Kullu / Mohal area. Each lasted about six weeks (including one week in the beginning of each phase to set things up before we started working). It made sense to begin in Manali first because the schools in Manali are open from the beginning of March whereas the schools in Kullu / Mohal are still on holiday. Also one of the orphanages we worked with in Manali was on holiday throughout March so we could work intensively with them, before that had to return to school. Before starting the Manali phase we spent about a week in the house in Mohal first to get used to the area and establish the house there as the project base. After the Manali phase we took about a week off (in which everyone did their own thing; some stayed in the house in Mohal, some travelled to Shimla) before starting the Mohal / Kullu phase. Each phase will not be described below in detail. Although each aspect of the project is described individually it is hope that a more general and universally applicable framework will emerge.

The Manali Phase:

Accommodation:

Unlike in Mohal, there is no fixed accommodation in Manali. We decided to negotiate a deal with a hotel. We were able to get a good rate because we were staying for quite a long time and the owners acknowledged that we were doing social service project and therefore had a limited budget. The hotel we stayed at was called Chander-Tal and was situated in Aleo (in the same compound as the Mountaineering Institute). They charged 140 rupees a day, including breakfast and dinner. It was arranged for us at this rate by Ankit. There are also many other hotels in the Manali area because it is a very touristy area. An alternative would have been to try and rent a flat in Manali which would have been advantageous because of the freedom of having our own place and it might have worked out cheaper. However, we decided against this because of the difficulty in finding a place and the energy involved in establishing our own place may have diverted time from the project itself.

Setting things up:

After arriving in Manali we spent about a week setting things up before we could begin working. First we compiled a list of all the potential places which we could work given the project's aims and objectives. This list consisted mainly of different schools and orphanages in the area. It was based largely on information and advice given to us from Ankit as well as by talking to local people, explaining the aims of the project and asking for their suggestions. The new groups should also use this method so new aspects of the project will be found, although they will also of course be able to information in this portfolio. After the list had been compiled we went about visiting each place to judge for ourselves how useful we could be there, what type of work would be best and the degree to which they were willing to be involved in the project. After this and much discussion we worked out where and what we thought we wanted to do and re-contacted different places to finalize plans. In each case we aimed to start work on the Monday of the following week. In general if a place had expressed an interest in being involve din the project we tried to accommodate them in some way, to avoid disappointment. Other places were quite disinterested in which case we either tried to convince them (if we though they would be a valuable part of the project) or left politely. Below is a description of the various places we ended up working in Manali.

Dar-ul-Fazl

This is an orphanage located on the left bank of the river. It was a highly successful part of the project. It was run as a **long term English teaching placement** by Justine and Katja. A long term English teaching placement involves working everyday in the same institution and conducting primarily class room style teaching (although of course other activities could be organized as well). Some places where these were run were English medium (i.e. Classes are taught in English), in which case our contribution could be in creative and spoken English taught in a new and interesting way. Other places were Hindi medium, in which case we obviously taught Basic English but obviously again in an interesting way which made kids want to talk to us and therefore make the effort to learn. As they involve working in the same place everyday they allow you to achieve steady and consistent progress and build up a long term relationship with the student and staff of one school. It was able to run such a placement at Dar-ul-Fazl because the children are taught at a school which is part of the orphanage. It is an English medium school. Unfortunately the orphanage now have volunteers working there from GAP and will therefore no longer be able to be involved in our project in the same way. However, it is still detailed here for the ideas which might be taken from the work that we did there and on the off-chance that it may be able to be incorporated in our project in another way (which will be suggested later). Below is a description of the work done at Dar-ul-Fazl supplied by Justine.

LOCATION:

Located a few kilometres outside of Manali just past Aleo, DUF is an incredible place with beautiful scenery and amazing kids. Not only is DUF an orphanage for children from Ladakh, Tibet and Nepal, it also houses a primary school with a number of students from the local areas. Established by a Christian mission, all children at the orphanage are extremely religious. While non-religious teachers are welcomed, I don't think it would be advisable to engage in any religious based discussions with students or members of staff. The children are extremely grateful and respectful, and becoming a part of that close knit environment was a wonderful experience.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK:

While working at DUF Katja and I organized a number of events including weekend cricket matches versus the rival schools. This was the first time that these kids had ever competed in an outside event, and despite group morale being very high we lost remarkably badly. We also co-organised a weekend camp in Pandramil for the Kalath and DUF kids. During school hours Katja and I taught a variety of games to the younger children; such as Red Rover (now a classic), Mingle-Mingle and Wink Murderer. We started a number of creative writing assignments, such as writing newspaper articles and designing advertisements with the older kids, and making story books of the 'Owl and the Pussy-Cat' with the younger kids. We read 'Fantastic Mr Fox' and 'Mr Men' books to classes II up to V, and designed a series of homework and art assignments based on the books. We wrote and performed a play (recently short listed for the Pulitzer Prize) entitled "Work Hard to Achieve your dreams" (needless to say the headmaster really enjoyed the strong moral content of our script). I attempted to teach First Aid to Class VI when I ran out of other ideas towards the end of our stay. Katja also started a series of art projects for the kids which they thoroughly enjoyed – such as making Easter cards and making a massive school wall-hanging with all of the kids decorating their own patch.

PERKS:

There were many perks working at this school. We formed a very strong relationship with the kids, and by the end of the project we really felt as though we had a place in their community – which was quite an honour as it was an intentionally isolated place. The fact that it was an English medium school made the possibilities of projects to do endless, as we did not need to overcome any initial language barriers. Class sizes were ideal, with the smallest class being four people and the largest class being eight people. Many of the things that we organized had never been done before, such as reading a popular kids book, and conducting lessons from that, as well as performing a play, which made the entire experience all the more worthwhile.

DIFFICULTIES:

I would say that the most difficult aspect of this job was the fact that it was a very close knit community, and at times I definitely did feel at odds with the strong Christian values drilled into the children. Having said that I would say that overall this feeling is trivial when the entire experience is looked at as a whole.

FUTURE:

Unfortunately (that's an understatement – Katja and I were heartbroken when we found this out) DUF had signed on four full time gap-ers (from GAP – if you don't know how we feel about that organization you soon will) a week before we approached them to see if they wanted volunteers. However, having said this, I really don't think the opportunity to work at DUF should be passed up. If there is any possibility to work here as an Excite volunteer, I think this could be the way forward. This would mean that DUF would have to be contacted to see what role the gapers play in their community, and if any extra help is at all wanted. If so, a series of Excite workshops, aimed for younger kids (such as a weekly story-telling sessions, arts and crafts classes) could be implemented. If this is not a possibility, then I strongly feel that all attempts should be made to find a similar placement – in a small English medium school – because the overall experience was really amazing.

THINGS TO BRING:

If you do want to work at DUF, I would say the most important thing you could bring could be story books. Anything by Roald Dahl, or anything with cool pictures would definitely be a priority. Also, we had a working budget while we were there, which made all of our mini-projects possible. So, you should think of raising some cash that will give you a vast amount of flexibility, because DUF like all other schools does not have the means to provide you with a budget.

Contact details: Miss J. Romawii – manager. Phone: (01902) 53751

Monal Himalayan Public School

This is essentially a Hindi Medium day school situated in Aleo (the village just outside Manali where we were staying). It had just changed ownership when we arrived there, which also involved a change in many of the staff. In many ways it seemed ideal for our project. In India a much larger number of schools are run in the private sector than in a country such as UK, where only relatively wealthy people attend private schools. Some private schools such as Monal Himalayan are aimed at low-income families who would prefer their children to go to a private school than a government school. In many ways these low-income private schools should be a major focus of our project because they do not have children from privileged backgrounds or have excessive facilities within the school. Also they tend to be neglected by organizations such as GAP. Therefore with the limited resources we can offer it would perhaps be better to target these schools than in higher-income private schools. At the same time though, the lower-income private schools do not suffer from the same rigid bureaucracy present in government schools (which also have children from low-income families) and can therefore accommodate us with ease. Many of the government schools we approached were less willing to accommodate us because in some case they were less outward looking and in other they were subject to right rules and regulations which did not allow outside teachers to work there.

For this reason we also started working at Monal Himalayan as a long term English teaching placement. This was therefore different from Dar-ul-Fazl because it was to all means a purposes a Hindi medium school, although it advertised itself as English medium. Many schools do this because of the extra prestige it offers – the reality of the situation must be judged after getting there. Myself, Dom and Jennie started working there with the intention of teaching English as well as doing different activities in the after noon. Unfortunately after two weeks we realized that it wasn't working despite the fact that the staff and children were very friendly. This is because given the recent change in ownership the school was very disorganized and under-staffed. This meant that as opposed to teaching English to different classes as we had intended, we were each having to focus on one class and teach ALL subjects (science, maths etc). For example I ended up teaching fourth grade the whole time. This was quite frustrating because we didn't feel the aims and objectives of the project were being fulfilled in this situation and particularly difficult for Dom and Jennie who had to teach subjects like maths to children who didn't really speak Hindi. For this reason after two weeks we decided that while this was a school that was ideal for our project, in the present form our resources were not being maximized there. We therefore abandoned it as a long term English teaching post and set up EXCITE (detailed below). We did, however, remain contact with the school by involving it in the EXCITE program. In the end this proved a good move because EXCITE worked very well and in doing the project yourself (without the help of an organization such as GAP) you have to be prepared for these things. Some parts of the project go smoothly, others don't work out first time so you have to adapt.

Contact details – Just go and visit them. Ask anyone where the mountaineering institute is. The school is a little further down the road.

Kalath

This was a much less well off orphanage than Dar-ul-Fazl. It was situated in a village called Kalath which is on the Right Bank of the river, about 6 kilometres down from Manali (we got there by taking a bus from the main Manali bus station). The conditions in the orphanage were very basic and cramped, although it is well run because of the hard work of the staff there. Unlike Dar-ul-Fazl which had some international funding, Kalath is supported entirely by the generosity of local people. When we worked there it only had about 15 children, although a few months after we left there were plans to move the orphanage to a new site in Vashist (which is up the valley from Manali – famous for its hot water springs) and expanding the numbers. We had to talk to the governors of the orphanage first (contact details given below) in order to obtain permission, but this wasn't a problem. Unlike Dar-ul-Fazl Kalath does not have a school built into it and all the children attend a local government school. Given the conditions of the orphanage and the warmth extended to us by all those involved (the staff, the children and the governors) it should definitely be a part of the project in all future years.

When we arrived at the orphanage (in the beginning of March) the children were on a month's holiday from school. For this reason we decided to run the project during the days with them (from about 10 am – 6 pm) not as an English teaching placements but as an **activity scheme**. This involved a huge number of songs (they absolutely loved all the AC camps songs), games, making things, jumping around – anything which involved fun. However, we did also do about an hour a day of class-room style English teaching, partly for their benefit but also because they enjoyed it as well (as long as it was kept lively enough). As they spoke almost no English at all though (which is often the case for children who attend government schools) this had to be kept on a very basic level. The various materials needed (paints, colours, paper) can be bought from stationary shops in Manali. At present it must be funded by volunteers themselves, although I am working on finding some funding for these kinds of things.

We also did a number of other activities with them as well which you may want to repeat. One day we took them to a park near the orphanage with a camera and took a portrait of each of them as well as letting them take a photo themselves. We then got them to make photo frames out of card and distributed the photos the next day – they could put their favourite in the frame. They then put these up on the walls of the orphanage. In general they loved making things which they could decorate the walls with. Another day we organized a restaurant trip for them in Manali. We booked a restaurant and arranged a menu in a place owned by one of the governors of the orphanage, who therefore gave us a very reasonable rate. She is an amazingly kind woman and was very helpful for the project (details given below). We took them to the restaurant in Manali on a bus, had the meal and then a disco afterwards. Finally, the Kalath children were also involved in the camping trip we combined with children from Dar-ul-Fazl. This is detailed separately below. Again these things must be funded volunteers (unless funding can be found which you will be kept informed of), but shouldn't work out to expensive and well worth the money.

After their holiday finished we carried on working with the orphanage by running evening sessions instead (4pm – 8 pm). This part of the project was primarily run by Laura (who overcame the language problems involved very well), but me, Dom and Jennie chipped in as well.

Contact details – The orphanage will have moved location by the time new volunteers get there. You can contact the governors in Manali to find out about it. One is R.N.Sood (or his Chachu is what people call him). He owns the Monalisa hotel in Manali. Phone number (s): Hotel: 52447. Residence: 54048. A second governor (whose name I have forgotten, which is easy to do as you call everyone "Aunty" and "Uncle" in India) owns the homeopathic medicine shop in the main Manali market. Finally, the really kind lady whose restaurant we took the children to owns a hotel / restaurant which Ankit will know the name of (its opposite Myur restaurant). She does not speak English, but her son Meshi does and is also a good guy.

Excite:

This part of the project began after we decided to leave Monal Himalayan as a long term English teaching post. It is a completely different format of running the project which involves running workshops in different activities with schools. This is not done on a full time basis (i.e. you don't work with the same school everyday) but instead with a number of different schools and classes at any one time. EXCITE is an important part of the project for various different reasons. Firstly, many places when were first approached them were apprehensive to take on a full-time volunteer because of the commitment they perceived this to involve. However, such schools were almost always far more willing to let us run activities with different classes on a one a week basis because this involved a smaller commitment to us and disturbance to their routines. Secondly, there were of a larger number of schools and other institutions in the area that we wanted to work with than we could on a long term English teaching basis. EXCITE allows you to work (and offer the benefits of the project) to a large number of places at any one time. Finally, EXCITE focuses on extra-curricular activities which are sometimes neglected in Indian schools. It is at the very heart of the new experiences and perspectives which Kullu project aims to provide. Also the intensity of workshop allows a large amount of information to be conveyed and progress made, even if you only work with a class on a once a week or every two weeks basis.

The activities chosen must reflect the skills and ideas of the volunteers in the group. They should range from more artistic workshops to more practical ones. We chose First Aid, Drama, Team Building and Discussions. As long as one person in the group has the relevant skills they can be passed on to the other volunteers. The workshops must be designed such that they become progressively advanced each week that you meet with a class. The material should be organized into an appropriate number of workshops, depending on the frequency you plan on meeting with each class and the total length of each phase. We usually organized our material into 4 workshops, although this was easier to do in certain activities. The key to EXCITE workshops is to keep them lively, interactive although organized and disciplined enough to keep on looking staff members happy.

Setting up the EXCITE program involves a lot of juggling about to get a timetable which suits the different schools and the volunteers. A leaflet should be produced – documenting who you are (mention the UWC thing and the volunteers that worked in previous years), the aims of the program (be sensitive not to sound patronizing), the relevant qualifications you might have and the nature of each workshop. These leaflets should then be given to the headmasters of different schools along with a personal meeting about the program. Those interested should then select which workshops they want to be done with each class and what time in the week they want you to come. In any particular, school a number of classes can be worked (with different workshops for different classes). As a guide each class should be limited to only one workshop at a time, but for example if the headmaster wanted you to do the first 2 weeks in team building for Grade 6 and the last three weeks in First Aid this would be fine. As I said setting things up in EXCITE involves a lot of juggling around to get things to work. Also various other things need to be taken into account. For example First Aid workshops are normally not suitable for younger classes (unless you design them so they are). Also if you are working with a school that the project has worked with in previous years and doing similar workshops, you can either switch things around (so now classes are doing different activities from what they did last year) or emphasize that much of the material needs reconciliation (so it would be useful for the same class to do workshops in First Aid again to remind them) and that this years workshops will cover new material (such as in Drama).

In general Drama, Teambuilding and First Aid workshops worked very well. Discussion ones proved the most difficult. Sometimes they really well and you'd get the whole classes screaming ideas and thoughts at you and each other. This was really satisfying. But often it was hard to get people to participate in discussion and of course they only work in schools where the standard of English was very high. Often headmasters wanted us to do anti-drugs workshops because this is one of the biggest problems in the area. Of course these can be a good idea because the project should be relevant to the needs of the area. But after

a while we abandoned these because didn't allow as open discussion as we wanted in the sessions (as this is obviously a highly sensitive subject) and we didn't feel qualified enough to conduct the workshops.

Below is some about the workshops which we ran which has been supplied by Jennie. As I said which of our workshops you choose to run and which new ones you introduce is a decision for the new group and Ankit.

First, she has written a general plan of how we organized our basic first aid sessions and some general notes.

Going through our First Aid knowledge we split it into information that we considered vital to teach and from that into more basic and advanced first aid skills. The skills we taught would depend on the age and English-level of the group we were teaching. We then gained precise information from Kai's website which we used to write lesson plans as well as handouts containing all the information of what we would teach. Below is an example of a lesson plan for a basic first aid session:

Lesson Plan for Basic First Aid Session

1) Introduction

- Who we are - names background.
- What we're aiming to do in session.

2) What is First Aid?

Ask class: first help at the scene of an accident.

Aims as a First Aider:

- Assess the situation
- Make a basic diagnosis
- Prevent worsening of the casualty
- Promote recovery
- Seek further medical assistance

Why is it important to have these skills?
With a little basic knowledge they can save somebody's life

3) Own Experiences

Ask: for own experiences

Tell: own experiences

4) Accident Prevention

Prevention is always better than a cure.

Ask the class to name some accidents that could happen at home, in the school, on the road.

Ask them how they could be prevented

BE CAREFUL

Specifically: electric shocks - don't touch bare wires, anything electric with wet hands.
Car accidents - don't drink and drive, do anything that could distract you,
drive slowly and follow rules of the road.

5) Assessment of the situation

Use one of the people running the session as casualty, other person first aider. Starting from a distance, ask the class what they should be thinking about as they approach the casualty.

DANGER

To myself and others. Emphasise that you (the first aider) are the most important person.

Ask class what kind of dangers there could be - electrical cables, knives, fire, falling rocks, snakes, and madmen.

Remove danger

RESPONSE

Ask class how can I check if casualty is sleeping?

- call from a distance
 - walk up calmly
 - gently tap casualty's shoulders
- Conscious casualty, find out what's wrong

Ask somebody to demonstrate

Get everybody to practise in pairs.

6) Cuts and grazes

Ask the class - what is a cut or graze?

- has anybody ever had a cut?
- is it life threatening?
- What is the treatment?

→ Wash with clean water

→ Apply antiseptic

→ Prevent it getting dirty

What is it important to prevent? - **Infection.**

7) Major Bleeding

Emphasise that serious loss of blood is dangerous and can quickly lead to unconsciousness and even death.

Ask the class what can you do to stop bleeding (prevent worsening)?

→ **PRESSURE** - show them how to tie a bandage.

→ Try to get them to think of **ELEVATION**. Gravity drains blood downwards. Elevate wound above heart level.

→ Seek medical help.

Get students to practice applying bandages in small groups. Remember danger and response before applying bandage.

Ask a pair to demonstrate.

8) Burns

Ask the class what treatment they should use on a burn and for how long

→ Cold water, ice for at least 10 mins or until there is no pain.

What shouldn't they do? - apply creams, pop blisters, remove clothing stuck to burn, use hot water.

Degrees of burns: what they look like and seriousness

- Why they think 3rd degree is less painful than 2nd degree - nerve endings damaged.
- Seek medical help in serious cases - large burn, 3rd degree

9) Shock

Explain that you're talking about medical and not emotional or electric shock.

Give definition: shock is caused by major loss of bodily fluids.

Ask how they think shock could be caused

- Diarrhoea, major bleeding, major burning, vomiting, heat exhaustion.

Emphasise that shock can develop after treating casualty for any of the above. They must treat casualty for shock after treating any of the above.

Explain that because the body has so little fluid it is trying to keep all the blood in the body core where the major organs are.

Ask: if the body is keeping all the blood in the body core what will the symptoms be?

- Pale, moist skin, blue lips, breathing is rapid and shallow, rapid weak pulse.

Ask: if they know what a pulse is and where to find it and how. Get them to find their and their partners pulse.

Ask: if the body is trying to keep all the blood in the body core, how can we help it?

→ Raise casualty's legs and lie them down.

→ Keep the casualty warm

→ Moisten the casualty's lips (but do not let them drink)

Get a few people to demonstrate treatment for shock.

10) Unconsciousness

Explain what unconsciousness is.

With one of the people running the session as the casualty and the other person as a first aider systematically go through the procedure for discovering if a casualty is unconscious and the treatment.

Danger – check for danger.

Response – check for response, shouting and tapping on shoulder.

Airways – open airways.

Breathing – check for breathing

Recovery position – if they are breathing

Seek Help – once in recovery position or if not breathing

Run over procedure a few times.

Get a volunteer to act as first aider.

Get the class to practice what to do on an unconscious casualty with a partner.

Check carefully.

11) Choking

Ask: what is choking?

Emphasise - if the casualty can breathe, talk or cough the first aider should not do anything, but be there for support.

If the casualty cannot breathe cough or talk:

→ Encourage them to cough

→ 5 backslaps between the shoulder blades

→ Continue or seek help

Tell them never to practice on someone who isn't choking.

12) Scenarios

This lesson plan shows how we ran the first aid sessions and what we included, but it is merely here as a suggestion. The way that you teach all depends on the group, it's age, size, level of English, enthusiasm, ability and length of time that you have, so each workshop must be designed to each groups needs. This one plan could definitely be split into more than one session and there are more things you may want to include or take out. Below are a few notes on things we realised during the time we were running sessions and other information that might be useful.

Notes

Method of teaching

Role plays, it's vital to get information across and visually is the best method, both to enthuse bored kids and to get over the language barrier. Use the silliest role play you can if necessary, laughter always breaks the ice. Dom with blood spurting everywhere was a comic genius!!

Get them involved; ask lots of questions, quizzes work really well especially in older groups and between girls and boys.

Recap at the beginning of the following session

Groups with poor English ability

It is of course important to explain everything slowly, carefully and clearly, however, here, are some more specific pointers:

We found it useful to explain a few common first aid terms to begin with – e.g. first aider, unconsciousness, casualty etc.

Use even more role play. Ask loads of questions to make sure they understand and a lot of chances for them to practice the different things they've learnt.

Don't move through the material too quickly, make sure they've understood and are having a good time first.

Younger groups

Keeping them interested, involved and under control were usually the main problems. Also making sure that they understood everything since their English was poorer.

Make them laugh, use lots of role plays, use lots of scenarios.

Don't move too quickly or do too much advanced material.

Older groups

You need to combat two things - coolness and boredom

Get onto the more advanced material as quickly as possible - the first 10 minutes are so important to capture their attention.

Be perhaps slightly more serious but still have fun. Quizzes are a good idea.

Advanced First Aid session

We made no session plans for this. Instead we followed the information in the handout using the techniques of our other sessions - asking questions, using role-plays, working in pairs, getting them to demonstrate. We would mix and match deciding what to teach when, making sure we taught mouth-to-mouth resuscitation but never CPR.

Handouts

We didn't want the students to be writing during the session so we made the handouts to give out to them with, hopefully, all the information from the session. Some schools have photocopiers, most do not but they are available in shops in the main market in Manali.

Equipment

We did buy some equipment, but were also able to get some second-hand from the missionary hospital which was really useful since it was expensive to buy.

Other groups

We did a session with the blind school that worked really well and was good fun. They learn to use different equipment really quickly; they just have to be shown through touch instead of visually.

We did a couple of lecture style sessions at the Senior Government School. These were fantastic fun. A translator was needed, and loads of energy to run through the crowds like enraged lions, but they were really enthusiastic. Use practise on a larger scale, everyone feeling their own pulse etc.

These First Aid workshops with the schools were really popular; the majority of schools wanted us to do them with two or three age groups. The skills the students learn from them are useful and can save lives, but follow-up workshops over the years will help so much. Just think how you'll feel if you've given somebody the skills to save a life.

This is a guide Jennie produced highlighting how we conducted the discussion sessions.

Discussion Session

When we first started teaching at some of the schools in Manali and Kullu we noticed that it was very difficult to make the students think their way around an issue, or to come up with an answer to a question for themselves. If they did have an answer it would very often be one they'd learned by heart. This is because a lot of the teaching that we came across is done through repetition and learning by heart, especially in English. Also, whilst studying English they have very little chance to practice their speaking skills since a lot of the focus is on reading and writing. We therefore wanted to give the chance for the students, especially the older ones, to practice speaking through discussion workshops.

The problem with drugs, especially weed, was highlighted to us by the teachers at most of the schools we visited in Manali. It's easily available and grows everywhere in the valley, a lot of foreigners go to Manali for it and so they were concerned about the image presented to their students of it being 'cool' to smoke weed. They initially wanted the discussion workshops to be focused on drugs and their effects. For our first workshop we read up a lot about different drugs and their effects on health etc. We then went through the issues with the students and had some discussions with them. However, we didn't feel that we were getting the best out of the students. With the issue of drugs, the schools seemed to want us to tell them, or preach to the students, rather than really discuss the issues. We also didn't have the time to build up trust so that they really would open up to us.

Instead we changed the session so rather than a discussion on one specific topic it was more of a series of discussion games designed to get them to talk and present different views:

1. Nuclear Shelter

Facts about approx. 16 different people are written out on a sheet of paper. These facts may include name, age, occupation, skills, health issues, married/single etc. The group is split into smaller groups of 4-6. They are told that there is going to be a nuclear disaster and that there is only enough room in the nuclear shelter for 8 of the 16 people. Those 8 people will then go on to create the future human race. Each group must decide between them which 8 people they want and why. When each group has decided bring them all back together to discuss which people they've chosen and why.

Topics of discussion which might be raised - What occupations are more important than others? Why do we think certain occupations are more important? More men or women? Whether they should value the skills of someone over their personality? Is leadership important in this situation? Age vs. wisdom? Etc
A variation on this is to tell teach group which people they've got to argue for and get to them to think of positive reasons for that person to survive - then let them thrash it out.

2. Sliding scale

A statement is given to the group such as:

'Pepsi is better than cola'

'India should go to war with Pakistan!'

'India should have the death penalty'

'All nuclear weapons should be destroyed'

'Tourism is bad for the Kullu Valley'.....etc

One end of the room is designated 'completely agree with' and the other 'completely disagree with', the students must place themselves where they think their beliefs are. Then tell them that they must persuade everybody else to move to their position.

It will often help if you join in, especially since most of them will follow each other and very often it is just a few people who will say anything at all.

3. Three truths, one false

In small groups, each person must think of four things about themselves, three things that are true and one that isn't. The other people may then question that person and must try to find out which thing is false. Just a warm-up game really to get them talking.

4. Bringing in a newspaper article with a controversial topic to start a discussion on any issue - feminism, child labour etc. Getting them to analyse the article, question it and also use facts from the article also helps.

These are probably all the different ideas we used, sometimes they worked really well, other times they didn't, but we continually modifying them to try and get them to work for each group. There are loads of other ideas that would work to get students to think about issues and to talk about them, anything that gets them standing up or talking is likely to be a novelty to them.

This is a guide Jennie produced highlighting how we carried out the team building sessions.

Initiative /Teamwork Session

With a few of us having been EMC service members or having done EMC work during the summer, we decided that we wanted to transfer some of our skills and some of the ideas from EMC into a workshop in our grand EXCITE programme.

Initiative and teambuilding exercises seemed to be the easiest transferable skill area and so we racked our brains for all those that we could remember from our time at AC.

Below is a list of all the exercises that we used in our sessions with brief explanations, equipment lists and additional notes.

Mingle, Mingle

The classic that works in any situation and with any age-group. All the students have to run in and out of each shouting 'Mingle, mingle' and waving their arms around their heads. When you shout a number they must get into group of that number, anyone left over is out.

Girls and boys will inevitable stick together.

Names on a Wall

Without verbal communication, the group of students must get into a line in alphabetical order of their names. Variation using dates of birth (be careful, they didn't always know their dates of birth).

Explaining to younger groups could be difficult, as well as making sure that they thought of other ways to communicate (i.e. using hands) – but that's what it's all about.

Human Knot

All the students get into a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder and close their eyes. They then grab hold of two

different people's hands. When they open their eyes they must untangle themselves into one big circle without letting go.

Just try explaining this one! – they didn't like holding each others hands – especially of the opposite sex.

Circle of trust

The students stand behind each other facing the same way to form a circle. They must all sit down at the same time to form a circle where each person is sitting on another person's lap. If this does actually work, you can try to get them to walk around in a circle. Make sure they are really close together before they sit down; boys will not want to sit on girls and vice versa.

Crates

The team has a certain number of crates (or similar equipment) which they must get everybody off the ground on to for 5 secs. Once it has been achieved take one crate away and try again. Approx 1 crate per 2/3 people to begin with. Crates can be found from most shops, just ask nicely and tell them you'll return them soon.

I have yet to see a group doing this exercise really talk to one another and think about how they can get everyone on to the crates, it is seen as a competition rather than teamwork exercise. 9/10 people on to one crate can be done!!

Magic Squares

The group (of 5/6) must arrange number cards (1-9) into a grid such that every vertical, horizontal and diagonal adds up to 15.

Solution: 4 3 8
 9 5 1
 2 7 6

They would all get it, but a few hints help. It helps if you understand the logic behind it i.e. 5 in the middle because as the middle number it can be used in lots of variations to add up to 15. Not having 9 at a corner – only 5+9+1 and 9+5+2 add up to 15.

Egg drop

The group (4-7) is given a set number of materials. The group must package an egg so that it doesn't break when dropped from a height of 3-4m. The eggs can be given their own names, chants etc.

Equipment possibilities: envelopes, paper, egg cups, selotape, string, paper clips, rubber bands, balloons – let your imagination run wild.

With a bit of hinting the students may think of making parachutes, others come up with really good ideas of their own. Whatever happens, this always goes down really well, especially at the climax when you unwrap the egg.

Acid River

The whole group must cross a specified area of ground, the crocodile infested acid river, without touching the ground (you have special shoes) using a limited supply of crates (make sure there are not enough crates

for the whole team to go across at once but at least 2). If they touch the ground with any part of their body there is a 10 second time penalty.

Excellent for team-building and enjoyed by all, especially as a race. Beware of those groups who will take half their group across and then back again as well!!

Crates can often be borrowed from people selling Coke and soft drinks near by.

Water cup relay

The team (up to ~8) must all lie down in a row with a plastic cup in each of their mouths. The first person fills their cup up with water and must pour that water into the next person's cup from shoulder height. That person then stands up and pours the water they have left into the next person's cup from shoulder height etc. This continues until they reach the end of the line and then the person at the end begins. This is good as a team game to see which team can get the most water.

Barrel lift

The group is given two ropes with which they must lift, not roll, a barrel out of an acid-crocodile infested circular zone from which they are excluded. It can be filled with water (they're on a desert island and need the water to survive).

It can take a while for them to work out a way of lifting the barrel – but one group did do it in 10 seconds! In one session, the girls took one rope and the boys the other – they saw it as a competition to try and get the barrel out – they didn't succeed!!

Trust circles

The group (7/8) stands in a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder, with their palms facing into the circle at shoulder height. One person goes into the middle of the circle with their eyes close and arms crossed on their shoulders. They fall backward and are passed gently across and around the circle. Emphasise gentleness, concentration and how to catch someone with a solid base for their feet.

This exercise usually begins with rowdiness, laughter and no concentration, but towards the end they were much more aware of one another.

Trust falls

In pairs one person stands with their arms outstretched and falls backwards where far as their partner captures them. The person behind should slowly move backwards as far as the person in front is comfortable with. The person catching should stand with one leg behind the other for support and catch with their elbows bent, palms flat where the person's shoulder blades are. Make sure they swap around.

Human Conveyor belt

Two rows of people should lie head-to-head with their arms stretched up in the air. Another person is passed along this row of hands as though on a conveyor belt. Just getting them to lie down in the right place can be a feat in itself; if it's sunny don't make them lie in the sun. Tell them not to tickle or pinch the person coming along, and make sure you watch out for their head. Usually getting one person across is enough of a challenge!

Two hands, three feet

In small groups (5/6) the group is told by you a certain number of body parts, within the whole group, that they are allowed to have touching the ground. E.g. four feet, two hands, one back and a nose. The group must try to do as you ask.

Be careful what you ask the girls to do at schools where they don't wear trousers or shorts. A classic is nothing on the floor.

Plans for the drama sessions are not available at this point.

Also below I have written a list of the schools that EXCITE worked with and given a brief description of them.

Day Star School: This is one of the wealthiest schools in Manali. The higher-income schools are ideal for EXCITE because they do not take up a huge amount of time away from lower-income ones, and a lot can be achieved there because of the openness to new ideas and organization. They should definitely be ruled out of the project – there is still a lot the project can offer and gain from them. The school has GAP volunteers working there the whole time, but as EXCITE was completely different from the work that they do they were quite receptive to the program. We worked with classes 5-10 in different activities. The school (along with a hospital next door) was originally set-up by a Christian Mission, so many of the staff are Christian but it still had a modern and dynamic attitude. The contact person is Rekha George – the music teacher. She was really friendly and helpful to us and would be a good person to speak to for general help in the area, if Ankit is not around. **Contact details:** Rekha George, Day Star School. Phone: 01902 53714. E-mail: coloursrekha@yahoo.com

Manali Public School: This is another of the low-income schools described earlier but we found them to be organized and friendly to the project. For this reason it may be worth approaching them for a long term English placement. It is located between Manali and Aleo.

Delhi Public School: This is one of the higher-income schools in the area but were still good to work with and we felt we achieved a lot. It is located on the road which goes past the Hadimba temple; quite far up. Obviously the first point of contact would be the headmistress, but also Rahul (the English teacher) would be a good person to talk to if you need help.

DAV: This is a medium-income school situated down the valley on the right bank, in between Manali and Kalath. The headmistress was also the owner of the hotel we stayed in. In terms of the general attitude from staff and students, it was one of the more difficult places to work with. We worked with classes 6 – 10.

Monal Himalayan Public School: Described earlier. You'll have to judge whether to include them in EXCITE or try again to set up a long term English teaching placement.

The camp

Something like this was another aspect of the project which would not have been possible without the knowledge and resourcefulness of Ankit. The camp was organized as collaboration between the Kalath orphanage (from whom all the kids came) and Dar-ul-Fazl (from whom only selected classes came). It lasted 2 days and one night and was done in Pandra Mil – a place on the Right Bank, in between Kullu and Manali. In order to pull it off a huge amount of organization was required. Tents, sleeping bags, cooking facilities all had to be rented and set-up before the children arrived. Food, drinks, balls and bats etc were purchased from shops in Manali. Permission has to be sought from the people who own the land where you

want to camp. Then transportation had to be sorted out. The Dar-ul-Fazl children were dropped off by their own school bus and the Kalath children were brought by public transport. Once there the children must be extremely closely supervised – if anything happen to anyone it would reflect very badly on the project as a whole. But despite all the work required, this was definitely one of the most worthwhile aspects of the project. It was amazing to share different aspects of the camping experience with the children. There were organized games, walks, a camp fire, sing-songs, and stories – the usual stuff. The Dar-ul-Fazl children (who were older than the Kalath ones) taught me more songs and useful tips about camping than I gave them. It was a great experience, especially seeing the children from the orphanages mix together. If possible, this should be repeated in future years although remembering the huge amount of organization and supervision required. If appropriate a scaled down version of the camp could be carried out. As I said none of it would have been possible without Ankit.

Living and working in Manali

When projects are run by organizations or involve working only in one institution volunteers will have an instant feeling of being “looked after” by that institution in terms of support outside (and inside) the class room. However, it is possible to gain this support (and friendship) by building up good relationships with the staff members who work in the schools and orphanages and people in the local area (both Indian and foreign). There will still be many big challenges in convincing people of the merits of the project and getting into Manali life. One important point to stress is that one strong prejudice which exists in Manali towards foreigners is that they are there to smoke marijuana. It is sad that this exists but is due to the fact that many foreigners do undertake such activities when they go there. Nevertheless it is a stereotype which must be overcome in order for the project to work. The way you do this is of course your judgement, but I made an attempt to dress reasonably smartly when turning up at work (particularly when meeting headmasters for the first time). Of course in my case it is my Welsh accent which gives me away as a foreigner more than my general appearance. Manali is used to having foreigners around because of tourism and a reasonable number have chosen to settle there. This has given it a relatively outward attitude which (despite the various challenges) may make living and working there easier than in Kullu / Mohal in certain ways. In general I do think that setting up the project yourself as is done in Kullu project is worth it (due to the reasons high-lighted in the introduction), but full of challenges in getting the project to work. The whole thing (from where you work to what you do) is entirely created by volunteers. Sometimes you feel great but sometimes you feel deflated if things do not work out at first, but just stick at it. Remember you have not simply filled a GAP place, which would otherwise have been done by someone else. ALL the stuff that you do just wouldn't be happening if you hadn't taken up the project.

On a subjective note and with danger of sounding a bit like a guide book, I liked Manali a lot. It is not too big which gives it a community feel to it. There's lots of interesting people around (Indian and non-Indian) to get to know. There are good places around Manali when you need some chilling time on the weekends. Also there are some great restaurants to hang-out in Manali itself. One word which will have meaning after you get there: Chopsticks!! The biggest draw back the feeling of congestion from tourism which can distract from the natural beauty of the place. However, in March and April it is still not quite in season so it's not too bad in this respect.

Future Ideas

As mentioned earlier aspects of the project should be sustained, but new volunteers can add dimensions which were not even conceived of by previous ones. Apparently there is a Tibetan school in the area, which we did not investigate. There was also a Nepali children's home which were meant to do some EXCITE things with but didn't get around to. Ankit will be able to tell you more about these places. Also there was talk of starting evening classes for adults (as we did in Mohal). However, for various reasons (described in the Mohal section) this would be a brave thing to try and do.

The Mohal Phase

In describing the Mohal phase I will refer a lot to the general formats described above. It may be easier in certain ways to set it up because a large number of places are definitely aware that the project is happening this year and keen to be involved. These will be described below. However, as I said certain things may be more challenging in Mohal / Kullu than in Manali. These are also described below.

Accommodation:

Most likely is that accommodation will be in my family house in Mohal. It is located just a few minutes away from the bus stop, next to the river. The headmaster of DAV school (the school my family is connected with) lives upstairs, so the downstairs portion was where we lived. Sitting on the balcony at the back of the house, with a few beers and Katja's mini disc player pumping out the tunes was a very relaxing thing to do in the evenings. The accommodation might have to be re-located in future years but volunteers will be kept informed of this.

Bharat-Bharati

This is exactly the type of low income school which should be targeted. The headmaster is very open to experimenting with the types of education and optimistic about what volunteers can bring to the school. He is idealistic about providing low cost yet high quality education in the area. He was very supportive to the project and can definitely be approached for any help or advice needed. It is my opinion that this should definitely be involved in the project in future years – despite difficulties high lighted below, I think a lot can be achieved in the long run. Justine and Laura worked there in the mornings as a long term English teaching placement. Justine wrote the following about the work which was done in the school:

LOCATION:

Bharat – Bharti sits on top of a hill in Dhalpur, overlooking the Kullu valley. A Hindi Medium government school that is struggling to become English Medium, Bharat-Bharti has an incredibly open-minded almost revolutionary headmaster. Not only did most of the funding for the construction of the school come out of his own pocket, but he is also responsible for providing some poorer members of his community with a very high quality education.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK:

The class sizes in Bharat-Bharti are typical of any government school, with the average class consisting of about 30 enthusiastic kids. Because the classes were larger than at DUF, and the level of English was much more basic, Laura and I concentrated mainly on spoken English. We played a number of games (see below) with the kids. The one time I attempted to give a written homework to Class VII was a dismal failure, with all of five people in the entire class actually doing their homework. I persevered, let the class know how mad I was at their blatant lack of respect for me, and made the entire class finish their homework. They were extremely apologetic and did it, although my advice for you would be to ease yourself into any written English, as their level is very low and they are quite reluctant to write because of this. Because most schooling in India is rote-learning (DUF and Bharat-Bharti aren't exceptions to this) individual thinking is rarely encouraged. I would say that the biggest accomplishments of our work at this school was initiating independent thought, which is definitely difficult – not so much due to class size, but due more to the training of teachers and general approach to lessons. The headmaster is a real advocate of the more independent-thought approach, and is extremely keen to start implementing changes into their school syllabus.

Examples of word games played with them:

'I'm Alan and I'm a Carpenter' (or whatever you want to call it)

The first person in the class stands up, says their name and states their imaginary profession. The next person stands up, introduces the first person and says their profession, then introduces himself and states his

profession. This continues around the whole class, every time the list of people to introduce increases, until finally the last person needs to introduce everyone in the class, remember all of their professions, as well as introduce himself and state his profession.

This game is really good because it allows everyone in the class to say something, which is rare in large classes. Also, it forces people to pay attention, which is even rarer in big classes. Games like this are never played with their real teachers, and this more light-hearted fun approach to English goes down well with the students.

We lead group interviews with some of the older classes, where the kids found out each others favourite singer, hobby, likes, dislikes etc..... and had to introduce each other to the class in pairs. This was also very good as it made the kids make class presentations in English; something that I think is rarely done in this school.

Teaching songs like ‘Sitting on the Fence post’ or ‘who stole the cookie from the cookie jar?’ go down really well.....

Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar?

Laura stole the cookie from the cookie jar

Who Me?

Yes you

couldn't be

Then who?

Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar?

Dom stole the cookie from the cookie jar

you get the idea...continue until everyone in the class has had a turn.

With Class I I picked a theme a day and lead the class like that. One day it was weather, the next day it was in/on/under/over, one day it was animals and colours. The class was massive, but there are many kids who are extremely extremely enthusiastic and pick up English really quickly (and they give you fresh roses every morning) which makes it all ultra-rewarding.

With the older classes we picked a theme every few lessons. Like verbs, adverbs, adjectives – and made quizzes and class competitions based on these topics – a fun, new way to teach them the much needed basics.

PERKS:

I think the main perk of this job was being able to work with the headmaster who is a very dynamic, open minded man. Another perk would have to be the fact that unlike in Manali, volunteer work had never been done in Kullu before us, so in that sense we were the pioneers of it, which is a pretty cool feeling. Just the fact that you are the first white person that these kids have ever interacted with is really special, because you feel that you're providing them with a different image of all the white people they've ever seen – be it the loose western women on TV, or the spiritual groupies in Gandhinagar. That in itself, I always felt, made it worth it. And last but not least – in fact most importantly, working here allows you access to the most amazing momo places in Dhalpur – Laura and I went every day to get our fix of steamed veg momos for only 10 rupees. If that isn't reason enough to work here, then you are in the wrong project...

DIFFICULTIES:

As great as the whole ‘venturing into the unknown’ is in terms of pioneering the project, the same reasons that make Kullu great, can also be its downfall. The fact that it is a city that really isn't used to foreigners volunteering, working in town, riding the buses into work etc... I definitely always felt watched and under a great amount of pressure not to draw more attention to myself than I already was. In Manali however, because it is such a tourist hotspot, I felt this to a much less serious extent. Also, as a girl, I would really not recommend doing too much walking around by yourself – as this is always likely to lead to some

interesting, but not particularly fun event. In Kullu you definitely have to cover your self more in terms of clothing than in Manali.

Another challenge would have to be the other teachers at Bharat Bharti. Many of the teachers didn't quite understand that we were volunteering and helping with English – we were not there with the intent of relieving them from their work – we always declined their friendly requests to take on their extra classes. Also, I think discipline would be another challenge at this school. Some of my best classes were with Class V, despite the fact that they were the class that all of the other teachers had given up on in terms of running a normal class. Picture a class full of forty ten year olds, bouncing off the walls (I had the added thrill of teaching them the last class before lunch – so they were also starving by the time I pulled around), crammed into a room that wasn't nearly big enough for all of them. Now add one of their teachers – a very nice woman - but she yelled all the time, so they eventually stopped paying attention to her – to the class and give her a big wooden stick. Now picture her running around the class hitting everyone on the backs trying to make them listen to the lesson your holding on adjectives. MAYEM... But, the fact that you have the ability to stop them in their tracks and actually make them interested in those adjectives is pretty wicked. Just ask for a volunteer to write something on the blackboard and you have instant attention. So anyone working with this school have fun with class VI!

PEOPLE TO WATCH OUT FOR:

Mrs Nair – she was teaching Class I while I was there and she was by far the coolest woman there. She was the only teacher who was actually interested in collaborating with me – and all of the lessons were a mixture of my ideas and hers. She's very interested in new forms of teaching, and was a definite sweetie-pie.

The computer teacher – watch out for her. Not only does she get paid to do nothing at this school (she had every lesson free), she also developed a rather frightening obsession with Laura while we were there.....so watch yourself.

THE FUTURE:

I think Bharat-Bharti has a lot of potential and is a good school to be stationed in. Laura and I did it as a morning thing – from 9-12:30, with the blind school in the afternoon. I think doing whole days every day at this school would be too much, and so perhaps the ideal thing would be either to do alternating full days or alternatively, permanent morning posts which keep the afternoons free for another post, just to add a bit of variety. Unlike DUF, we had no spending money for this school, but that was no problem because we never needed any – classes were classes and we didn't ever need to buy any materials or do any extra-curricular activities.

Contact details: Niranjana Dev Sharma – Principal. Bharat-Bharati school, Dhalpur, Kullu. Phone: 24992

Asiana – National Association for the Blind

This is a school for blind children. They generally live at the school as well. Justine and Laura worked there every after noon, as a long term English teaching placement. In this way it can be seen that long term English teaching placements can be organized such that they only take up part of the day (i.e. a morning or an afternoon), to fit more things into the project. The school is very keen that volunteers work there again. We also involved the school in the EXCITE program two afternoons a week, allowing the EXCITE crew to take over from Laura and Justine during these sessions. The EXCITE sessions obviously had to be adapted for the children and were therefore challenging, but very satisfying at the same time. One day we took them to a local park and had ice cream, which was also goof fun. I think we could have done more kalath-type activities with this school and developed our relationship with them more in this way. Justine has the following to say about the work that and Laura and she did there:

LOCATION:

Right beside the main bus-stop, the NAB is located in the very heart of lower Dhalpur. It's hot and busy,

but on the walk down you pass amazing fabric stores and tailors, which is great (except if you're Alope and Dom who just didn't learn to appreciate the whole world of shawls and Indian dresses). The NAB complex consists of living quarters where the kids live as well as their school – which is only a one-room school with 7 students. They don't have many facilities and their school is quite inadequate, as the seven kids range from age 5 to 15. The school is split into two halves of the room – and the younger kids just have to sit and listen as the older kids are taught their lesson.

JOB DESCRIPTION:

Laura and I worked there three afternoons a week – from (I've forgotten what time we worked there) The other two afternoons a week, The Excite crew rolled in and entertained the kids with first aid classes, dance lessons, and drama workshops. Laura and I worked on mostly conversational English, as neither of us could read Braille and therefore we couldn't check over their written work to make sure that it was correct. We had many role-plays, from typical conversations just introducing themselves, to more complicated role-plays (made even more complicated by Gulzar...more on him later) about restaurants, or buying food at the market. We would have about an hour and a half of hardcore conversational English, followed by more relaxed time afterwards, where we taught them songs and played games with them.

PERKS:

Working here is a great experience, especially if you've never worked with blind kids before. Most of them are really eager to learn, because this is something new to their normal boring school day, and once again, it's the first time that they've had foreign volunteers. The younger kids are incredible – they absorb info really quickly, and pick up on things really well – so even if you're talking to the older ones, the younger kids are learning at the same time. There never is a boring moment at this place, and I'd really recommend it. Also, you get to work with the cutest little boy on the face of this earth – an adorable extremely intelligent boy named Chotta Pankaj. He definitely makes it worth it. Oh, and all the boys (including Gulzar) will develop crushes on their teachers, which is quite amusing.

DIFFICULTIES:

The most immediate difficulty is the lack of teaching support available to you. This sometimes makes it difficult to teach, although role-plays help get over this hurdle. Another obstacle would be the lack of material available to you. I found myself running out of ideas very quickly for interesting lessons and games to play with them. No matter how creative you think you are, I would really really really recommend trying to contact a blind association before you come out and asking them for teaching aids – little workbooks, puzzles – anything aimed at beginners in English – that would be a really good move.

GULZAR:

This man needs his own little category in an attempt to do him justice. He's the 28 year old head of the school, who had an accident and became blind as a result a few years ago. Watch out – that's all I can say. While we were there he was in search of a wife, and would frequently interrupt lessons to tell us all about his love life, and his ideal future wife. Some of the more bizarre incidents Laura and I had were when he decided that it wasn't safe for us to walk around by ourselves, and wanted to teach us self defence (he's a karate black belt) to protect ourselves. His so-called lessons rapidly turned into him just showing off his extreme skill and might. It was entertaining to say the least. He once also stopped a lesson to make me pray to God for a better singing voice. Saying he's weird would perhaps be the biggest understatement ever made but he's definitely an interesting character. At the same time though he is committed to the school, optimistic about what the project can offer and easy to get on with (if you overcome his weirdness). You need to learn how to handle him and ensure that his high energy levels don't interfere with your teaching.

FUTURE:

This school could really benefit from some volunteers. Like Bharat-Bharti, I think it would be overkill to teach here on a daily permanent basis. We did three afternoons a week which was a good amount – but bring extra material and ideas so you don't run out. We didn't have any budget for this part of the project – but if you do, then that would always help.

Contact details: Chandera Abha – manager. Asiana, National Association for the Blind (Himachal Branch), Kullu. Phone: 24859 (office). 30035 (Residence). As usual though, rather than phone them the best thing to do is go down and speak to them.

Trinity School

This is a school in Mohal as well, just up the road from the house. Katja worked there as a long term English teaching placement during the mornings and me and Jennie alternated every week to work with her. It is an English medium school, so once again we were concentrating on creative writing, spoken English and critical judgement (of Newspaper articles etc) with the older classes. This is a higher-income school in the Kullu area but it is still highly recommendable as a long term placement because the attitude of the school and staff make it possible to achieve a lot. This is definitely one of the schools we would prioritise in building long term relations with and they are keen to take on volunteers again this year. As well as the morning teaching sessions, we also involved the school in the EXCITE program (detailed below). Finally, the school has a large founders day event (which is a big show) some time during May. We wrote and directed a drama performance with class nine for this event (which included a samosa-eating competition, the queen of England singing Bollywood songs, an arm-wrestle between Bin Ladin and George Bush and a back-street boys dance routine). This was very successful and should be repeated if possible. The headmaster (Mr Abu Sidu) and manager (Mr Sood) of the school are both really good guys and both believe strongly in the benefits of having foreign volunteers at the school. They will be good sources of advice and support if you get to know them, despite seeming a bit intimidating at first. Unfortunately we did not get to do this on personal level until the end of the project when the headmaster invited us (along with some other members of staff) to his house. It was a really fun night and we were wishing we had got to know them earlier. Some of the other members of staff (such as Mr Cherrie) were really friendly as well. They also have a sister school in a village nearby which they would be keen for you to work with if you wanted to. One thing to be careful of is to make sure that in their enthusiasm to be involved in the project they do not try and monopolize your time.

EXCITE

EXCITE was set-up and run in very much the same way in the Kullu / Mohal area. It involved both morning and afternoon sessions. Dom preferred working for EXCITE (and therefore teaching extra curricular activities in a workshop format) to classroom style teaching. For this reason he did EXCITE full time. Jennie and I alternated weekly to work for EXCITE with him in the mornings, so it would either be Jennie and Dom working for EXCITE in the mornings with Katja and me working at Trinity or me and Dom working for excite in the mornings with Katja and Jennie working at trinity. Then in the afternoon Katja, Dom, Jennie and me would all switch over to EXCITE sessions. This meant that with 4 people working on EXCITE in the afternoons we could run 2 sessions simultaneously (with 2 people running each session). This was useful given the amount of demand which we had for EXCITE. Also, EXCITE sessions (as mentioned earlier) we run at some places where we were also doing long term English teaching placements such as Trinity and the Blind School. Below is a list of the schools which were involved in EXCITE during the Kullu / Mohal phase and a brief description of what they were like:

Trinity School: As mentioned above.

Bharat-Bharti: As detailed above.

Blind School: As detailed above.

DAV School: This is the school that is connected to my family and named after my grandfather. It was this school that the project originally began around, although its involvement in our project was mainly in the EXCITE program. It probably isn't highly compatible for a long term English teaching placement but given

the family connection you should try and involve it in the EXCITE program in some way. The headmaster (who lives above the house in Mohal) is a bit difficult to communicate with and organize things with, although he is very well meaning.

Arya Samaj School: This is a Hindi medium, low-income private school and again the type of school we should be targeting for the project. It is in Akhara Bazaar (in Kullu), just next door to Ankit's house. We had some great EXCITE sessions with them and it could be a possible candidate for a long term English teaching placement. There are obviously communication difficulties in teaching something like first aid given that this is a Hindi medium school, but the head master of the school was very helpful in helping us overcome them. In general, I as a Hindi speaker went along to the sessions at Hindi medium schools. If there is no Hindi speaker in the group, special attention will have to be given to these sessions. This can be done either by arranging a translator for the session or by designing them carefully to try and overcome the language barrier as much as possible.

Peidmont School: This is in Bhunter, a big town down the valley from Mohal. It is again a low-income private school. The level of English there is medium so communicating (especially with the older classes) isn't too much of a problem. Unfortunately the staff at this school were not too helpful to us and occasionally we turned up and were told that we couldn't take the session for some reason or the other. Saying that though, the kids were cool and we had some good sessions there.

The senior government school, Mohal: There are two government schools in upper Mohal – a junior and senior one. The junior one would have been very difficult to involve in the project given the fact that no one spoke English there and class sizes were enormous. We were unable to do any class room teaching at the senior one or even arrange EXCITE sessions with individual classes given their tight regulations. However, after negotiating with them they allowed us to do one EXCITE session a week there with the whole school at one time – 600 students!!! This was done on Saturday mornings after their weekly assembly. Somehow though we managed to do these successfully by adapting the session considerably. It was done on the stage in front of the whole school with microphones making it more of an interactive stage-show than anything else. We concentrated on first aid and did lots of role plays, pulling out volunteers from the audience to try and apply the techniques we taught. This worked well with first aid sessions but we also tried to do one drama session in this way which didn't really work (although they seemed to enjoy it). In order to run these sessions it is vital to take a Hindi translator with you as none of the staff speak English either. One of my cousins (Rahul) kindly offered to do this for us, although you should be able to find other people as well. When going to meet the headmistress and organize the sessions it is also necessary to take a translator with you. If you're up for it this session is well worth doing – although a lot of nerve and planning is required, and you should again focus on something practical such as first aid.

Getting around:

The bus stop in Mohal is on the main road, just a few minutes from the house. Buses come regularly and are a good way of getting around. They play Hindi film music on the buses which make them especially fun. It is possible to get a bus to Bhunter (where Peidmont School is located) and to Dhalphur (where Bharat-Bharti and the blind school are located). From Dhalphur it is necessary to take an auto-rickshaw to get to Akhara Bazaar.

Evening Classes:

This was a new aspect of the project that we introduced in Mohal. It was intended for adults who wanted to learn English (for people who worked in the tourist industry or who had a general interest in learning the language). We borrowed class rooms from DAV during the evenings in order to run the classes. It was advertised by making loads of posters (written in Hindi) and sticking them up all over the village and in neighbouring areas. We had one specific date which was the enrolment day (advertised on the posters) before the classes began. Classes were split into beginner, intermediate and advanced levels and each volunteer was assigned to a different class. They ran between 5pm – 7pm three times a week. Anyone over the age of 16 was allowed to join the classes and numbers weren't huge and many dropped out in the first

few weeks. Nevertheless we managed to establish a fair number (between 4 and 10) of people in each class, making the exercise worth it. Arranging and sustaining the classes was possibly the most difficult part of the project to organize and in order to do so you will need some dedicated bi-lingual local people to help you along the way. It's a very bold move if you want to do it, but also what made our project ambitious and unique compared to other social service projects. We literally had set up our own school effectively!! Another consideration of you want to attempt setting-up the evening classes is that by the end of the day (doing EXCITE and English teaching) we were normally very tired so doing an evening class after it all was sometimes a big effort. There are some points in the future ideas section below about how the classes might be run differently in the future, if someone wanted to set them up again.

As we were not allowed to teach English in the government school (due to their bureaucracy) we also started putting up evening classes for children from the senior government school, organizing them according to what class the children were in. For example grades 4 and 5 were one class, 6 and 7 another etc. We thought it was important to put these classes on because we wanted to extend more of our project to involve children from the government school. They were advertised by the headmistress of the school making an announcement in their assembly. The result was – extremely hard work!!! Demand for the classes was huge with well over a hundred children turning up on most days. Organising them into classes and getting them to stick to their own classes was extremely difficult. Some days the school was just crazy with children running around all over the place, as we chased them around trying to organize them. Also classes themselves were often very rowdy, seeing as none of their own teachers were around to discipline them. It was definitely the hardest bit of the project. Nevertheless we kept them going the whole time for the simple reason that there were some really decent children who really worked hard and wanted to learn. But they were amongst a crowd of children who were very hard to control. These government school classes are probably the part of the project most imprinted in my memory; amongst the craziness and huge discipline moments were also some really amazing moment. At times I felt a real connection with my class (I took 5 and 6) and felt I was getting stuff across; especially with a handful of really dedicated students. We did by the end have to get people from the adult classes to come along and help us organize things because it was too much to handle. Even given the benefits, I would be very weary about recommending this part of the project to be attempted again. If you have enough dedicated people to help you (and could perhaps convince some of the teachers from the government school to come along) you could possibly attempt it. But I would be very cautious indeed. The last day of these classes was possibly the craziest. The children were excited to give us a good send off that they almost swamped us, almost tore up the surrounding DAV garden in trying to give us flowers as presents and surrounded us as we tried to leave in asking us to write them individual messages. Many turned up mainly because of the novelty of interacting with foreigners – this as part of the cultural exchange which is the heart of the project is not a bad thing, but at times like that got to much. In not doing the classes it is shame to not be able to give the government school children the same benefits of the classes, but as I said I would be extremely cautious about doing them again in the same way. If an alternative way can be found to involve them other than in the EXCITE session, go for it.

Living and working in Kullu / Mohal:

Mohal is a small village in Northern India and is not used to having foreigners living there in the same way that Manali. This makes the cultural exchange and integration that goes on there especially valuable but also very challenging. At times local people took very well to us and it was great. But some simply did not act very warmly to us. This is the reality of genuinely living and working in a new culture, not used to being in contact with westerners. In many ways it makes it all the more worthwhile but be prepared for the hard parts. People invited us into their houses sometimes or showed us around different areas. For me one of the most amazing days was when we made friend with two guys from a village called Bhullang (a 3 hour trek from Mohal) and they took us up there. The views were amazing, as well as being introduced to their family, eating with them (and dancing afterwards) and being shown around the village. However, in other extreme cases people shouted abuse at us on the street – simply because they don't know how to relate to foreigners. However, working with so many people in the project (especially children) does do a huge amount in breaking down cultural barriers and learning new perspectives. One thing to remember is to be

security conscious and street wise. We didn't have any serious problems but it's still worth taking precautions. For example, girls walking around on their own late at night is probably not a good idea (as it isn't in various parts of London either). As I said it is important to form relationships with the staff members in schools as a source of support and friendship in the local area – special effort must be made as this doesn't come as naturally as if you were just working in one place the whole time.

Mohal itself has a few well stocked grocery shops from which you can buy supplies. There's also an off-license and other such essentials. There a café there as well, but we normally cooked in the house or went to Dhalpur to eat. Dhalpur has some great restaurants to hang out in and interesting markets too (as well as in Akhara Bazaar). Upper Mohal is a really beautiful place to wander around, especially if you have someone to show you. Also Bijalle Mhadev (where there is a temple on top of the valley, directly opposite the house on the other side of the river) has amazing views. Ankit will be able to tell you much more about all of this.

Future ideas

The focus of our project was teaching orientated – the long term benefits being the memories, knowledge, new experiences and new perspectives gained by the people worked with and the volunteers themselves. This should remain the focus, but Ankit suggested that in addition we should try and incorporate some material long term benefits as well. He has also suggested an environmental / ecological aspect to the project should be established. This could be from an educational or direct action perspective. He is particularly knowledgeable about this because he is a lecturer in Tourism (and sustainable Tourism) at the university. Environmental issues are certainly very important in the valley, given its enormous natural beauty but huge amount of tourism it attracts. There are various environmental organizations which the project could work with operating in the valley. He will talk this over with you as well as his many other new ideas when you get there as the local project co-ordinator. He also knows of teaching possibilities in Tibetan schools in other parts of Himachal, which you may want to look into.

The evening classes were adults could continue in a different way. When we left Kullu, the principle of Bharat-Bharti was thinking of starting up a similar program in Kullu (involving homeless people as well). New volunteers could join forces with him in some way in this project. Or if the classes were to continue in Mohal the headmaster of Trinity suggested that we could use their classes instead and volunteers could ask him for his support in setting up and running the classes. Also the same centre where the blind school is also conducts a variety of other community service activities. We did not investigate these fully, but there is a chance that the project could contribute something to these as well.

Finally, as I have emphasized throughout the essence of this project is that it combines building long term relations with certain institutions year after year (such as the Kalath orphanage, Bharat-Bharti, Trinity and the Blind School) with a dynamic element (from the new ideas generated by each group which does the project). Many of these ideas could not be written in a "future ideas" section because they haven't even been conceived yet – that's what makes Kullu project exciting.

Cheers

I would like to use this opportunity to thank various people who helped Kullu Project in its first year. This includes the staff of the various places we worked, various relatives of mine in the Kullu area such as Rahul and Dr Raju and most of all Ankit – without whom it would not have been possible. Also I would like to thank Uncle Vinni and Arti Thai for the continued support and advice they have given. Finally of course the volunteers themselves (Justine, Dom, Katja, Laura and Jennie) for taking me up on my offer, and their enormously hard work that followed in setting the project up. It was great to work with them. I would also like to wish best of luck to the new volunteers who are taking Kullu project into its second phase. If they hadn't taken up the challenge and without Ankit's continued dedication, there wouldn't be a second phase...so cheers. Long live Kullu Project.