

## Member's Story - The Dhaka Project

It isn't very often that you get to be part of something as special as The Dhaka Project.

I was so impressed by a story in 7 Days about the efforts of just one young woman, Maria, an Emirates Airline cabin crew employee, who had started a school in Dhaka, that the proceeds of the VIP Opening and Closing event for Gulf Photo Plus were earmarked for The Dhaka Project

Australian photographer Matt Hoyle, opened the event and donated 14 prints from his Archibald Prize winning series, The Icebergs for silent auction.

Together with the fund raising efforts at Dubai College by Penny (my 14 year old daughter) and her friend Sophie we raised around Dhs 22,000.



Maria is a living example that despite all the terrible, overwhelming and seemingly endless list of problems in the world one person can make a difference to many lives. She has placed 700 children in school and helped more than 50 families.

When you visit Dhaka you realise that there is so many people to help and that this Project is only a drop in the ocean – but imagine if everyone could contribute what a huge splash we could make!

Penny and Sophie, visited Dhaka and spent a week helping at the schools and nursery at the Project. This very positive experience balanced the overwhelming numbers of people begging and living on the streets. The slums they visited and the complexity of the poverty problem. It gave the girls a real sense of purpose and achievement to be involved with The Project and they realised that despite the enormity of the problems the right type of assistance can make a difference.

The one thing that I think we were all struck by was how happy the children and families we met at The Project were.

They don't have the latest mobile phones, the right brands of sunglasses or a cupboard full of clothes but they have been rescued from conditions that we cannot even imagine and they have a much brighter future to look forward to than one they were born into.



The Project welcomes visitors and we were also able to arrange for Genevieve Foskett, the wife of the Australian High Commissioner, to come to The Project on our last day. It was great to hear that Maria's project is like no other in Dhaka! She marvelled at the cleanliness of the streets and the facilities, the level of care given to the children through meals, clothing and school uniforms, shoes, vaccinations and daily medical monitoring.

While Maria has managed remarkably on minimal funds and ad hoc donations



When The Dhaka Project takes in a child it also takes in the family. The aim of the Project is to break the cycle of poverty by providing the parents with English and other skills to ensure adequately paid work. The Project has expanded its objectives to the community and opened a general store, internet café and carpentry workshop where it employs the parents of families and also provides quality services to the community at subsidised prices.

from Dubai there is still much more needed. Our funds bought so much. The dirham, unlike in Australia at the moment, goes a long way in Dhaka! The bulk of the funds went towards a new dental clinic but with the monsoon season coming we also bought a TV and DVD for the preschool and nursery to help entertain and educate the kids.

We are now desperately looking for DVD's suitable for young children up to the age of 7. DVD's such as Play School, Sesame Street, The Wiggles etc. The kids love singing and dancing and we hope through these sort of



The Dhaka Project employs a doctor and nurse to give the children regular check-ups and treat burns, head lice, skin diseases and other common ailments.

DVD's that we can help the children with their English learning and also help give teachers craft and other 'creative' ideas they can arrange for the kids to do.

Also needed are educational toys, computer games and early learning reading books to help with English language learning, simple math skills, artistic development and creative thinking for all age children.

If you have any educational items to donate please email [karen@friedkoala.com](mailto:karen@friedkoala.com) for a location map to the drop off point in Umm Sequiem.

Penny and Sophie also commissioned the sewing school to produce some 'trendy' bags that are the flavour of the month with teenagers at the moment and are looking for retail outlets and other avenues to sell to.

All profits are for the benefit of The Dhaka Project. If you have an outlet interested in selling these bags or would like to look at the samples please email Penny on [midgetfly@hotmail.com](mailto:midgetfly@hotmail.com).