

Chamila Stern came to Shree Mangal Dvip School after completing her International Baccalaureate at the United World College of the Adriatic in Italy. Here are some of her reflections on volunteering at SMD.

Despite the fact that I had had no experience in teaching I somehow managed to cope with my new responsibilities. One of the reasons that I did manage was because of the children. I was scared to death that they would be difficult to control like any other Danish school kids would be, but instead I found a group of children completely dedicated to the idea of learning and being good students. Sometimes I had to push them in order to get them to speak up and contribute. But as time passed and we all got to know each other better they started to lose their shyness and we had a great time together.

After the ordinary classes I played soccer with the girls from the school. Among the girls were those student who had taken religious vows. It was great that they wanted to play and especially that they did not care about the fact that all the boys would stand there and look at them. I had the job of being their coach and teacher, but I quickly realized that main thing that these girls really wanted to do was just to play, and not to learn any difficult tactics or impossible combinations.

Once in Denmark I had attended a sports college so of course I tried hard to be strict and really insist that we would at least warm up. Another important job was to chase the boys off the court so that the girls could have their one practice time, twice a week, all by themselves.

One thing is for sure: If you go to Nepal, alone as I did or with a friend, you must be able to take care of yourself. You have to be independent and creative and willing to set up different programs, educational as well as leisure-wise. You have to show cultural sensitivity and mostly you have to demonstrate a total commitment to the cause.

I think that one of the most difficult things about living in Nepal is to see children living in absolute poverty. The only thing you can do is to get yourself involved in one of these projects around the world that do aim to make a difference. If you ever have the chance, don't hesitate.