

Small change

What can we do with our small change, the coins handed to you after paying for a cappuccino, a can of coke or a can not do without item

My small change falls to the abyss at the bottom of my handbag, which I am sure, are also lost pens and lipsticks!

What if small change could make a difference in people's lives?

My husband and I four years ago decided to use our small change to sponsor a child through world vision. A little girl Thi, she lives in a poor farming community In Vietnam.

A picture of Thi is proudly displayed on our fridge as part of our family; we talk about her all the time.

We were surprised by comments made by usually compassionate people;

“The money doesn't make it to the child”

“The money is wasted”

“Small change can not make a difference”

This year we traveled to Vietnam and met Thi in her village with World Vision.

It was dry, dusty and hot when we arrived at the village in the big white World Vision four-wheel drive. We saw basic stone buildings with dirt paths joining them together. In the centre of the village was a long stone building with bright blue timber windows. This was the school. Dry and dusty dirt was the playground with sounds of laughter and games like anyone other schoolyard.

World Vision had told us, the village was poor because it had been in draught for many years, poor farming practices from a lack of education and a government struggling to provide basic infrastructure still recovering from years of war and invasions from so many different countries including America and its allies that is us.

We were greeted by Thi's mother, teacher and school principal with a prepared spread of local fruit and bottled water on a decorative tablecloth it all looked out of place like silver service at a homeless shelter. This was a big occasion.

Thi walked into the room so shy and nervous with a prepared welcome for us.

Thi took us to her classroom to meet her classmates. I had wondered before leaving Australia and had even joked that we will probably be morning talk, we were. We sat at the front of the classroom with Thi on a long rickety wooden

bench. The building was an old stone building very clean and bare with only the essentials. Worn Wooden tables and chairs for each of the children lined up in rows facing the front of class with a large blackboard at the front, for us it was like looking back in time for them it was looking to the future.

The children sang songs with smiles beaming at us. We clapped with as much appreciation as we could and in English spoke to the children about our travels and Australia translated to Vietnamese so we made sense.

The children were asked what are your dreams they proudly stood up one at a time. To be a teacher, to be an interpreter, to travel.

We saw the water purification project; a cement tank with layers of sand and rock, filtering polluted water from the nearby river to give clean safe water it was their stone age Puratap.

World vision coordinates a monthly women's group, here the women discuss better farming practices and community issues. I was included in the meeting without speaking the same language we spoke through gestures, smiles and laughter. The woman had strong community values in fact could teach us all a thing or two.

They work each day to feed their families for the next day only just surviving. Not only do they work for there own survival but that of the community as well. You could see hope and gratitude from the women for world vision. World Vision is their lifeline.

The woman talked to me in their language like I understood, I did, the words were foreign but I heard there message through their eyes and their faces.

It was time to leave time to say our goodbyes

As we drove off the children ran behind our big white world vision 4 wheel drive laughing and waving, we waved and laughed with them.

We sat silent for a long time; we could not find words that could describe how we felt so we didn't say a word we didn't need to.

Our small change along with many other people's small change was making a difference

Our small change will give the children a chance to live their dreams

Our small change is giving hope for a better life

Small change does make a difference I have seen it for myself. It may not all go directly to the cause or the child you are sponsoring it's much more complicated than that. Small change provides an infrastructure of people and resources to make a difference, to empower people to help themselves.

I hope that next time you are handed small change after buying a cappuccino, a can of coke or that cannot do without item I hope you remember my story and donate your small change to a charity or sponsor a child yourself.

Small Change Does Make a Difference!