

Construction work

It was the first time for most of us to participate in a construction project. We assisted in building an artificial swimming pond in Vietnam. As the beginners to the site, the building experience was arduous. Exposed to hot weather exceeding 35°C, we had to perform hard work such as mixing cement mortar and transporting construction materials. However, we did not make a single complaint about the tiring work, as the project brings benefits to both the Vietnamese people and us.

Child drowning has been a significant issue in Vietnam. In response to the drowning accidents in Vietnam, the swimming pond was designed to provide a safe environment for Vietnamese children to learn swimming, thus prevent more drowning cases from happening.

To us, we had better grasp of the construction process and building techniques. We learnt the ways of mixing cement mortar, plastering, tile-laying and suchlike. The practical skills were essential for engineering students in their future careers. Apart from learning how to build, we were given opportunity to communicate with the contractor and client. Progress meetings were held on a weekly basis to discuss on the construction progress and problems encountered during the work. It was a rare opportunity for us to cooperate with foreign people.



Child Injury Prevention (CIP) Lessons

As the project focuses on minimizing child injury cases, 6 CIP lessons were held to teach Vietnamese children how to avoid potential dangers. We taught the kids the causes, consequences and preventive measures of several types of injury, such as drowning and traffic accidents. Some icebreaker games were brainstormed in order to draw the attentions of the kids, which inspired me to think in a creative way.

Comparing to other classes, my class was always loud and naughty. It might be a trouble to most teachers. However, the children were attentive when we were conducting the lessons. They reacted actively especially during the games. The link among us and the Vietnamese children was strengthened soon after.

As the children were not fond of using English, we had to rely on interpreters when we were teaching. This made me feel powerless at first, however we were able to communicate through hand gestures and body language. Language barrier should not affect the relationship between people from different origins.

I learnt to respect the cultures in different places and try not to change the usual practice of the people there, as the children had already accustomed to it in the daily life. For example, they seldom wear shoes when they were going out, instead they wear sandals.



Living in Vietnam

It was a surprise to me that Vietnamese locals do not talk English. Therefore, hand gestures or body language were necessary in expressing ourselves. Sometimes I had to take pictures of the food menu to order specific meals. It was so grateful that the interpreters taught me some basic Vietnamese words, such as greetings and numbers, which I could at least understand some expressions. I also tried a lot of new things in Vietnam, such as having insects for dinner, playing water bikes and going on a cruise to Ha Long Bay. The Vietnamese cuisine was good for health. The mesmerizing scenery there also worth mentioning. The life in Vietnam was adventurous and eye-opening.

I will never forget the amazing journey to Vietnam!

