



The newbook corner

Ecuador summer

Kevin Quillien

Kevin Quillien is a Shell child (teenager). He has been on previous postings with his family but is currently boarding at Sevenoaks school in Kent. Kevin is French, but was born in England. His parents Karine and Yvon are based in The Hague, the Netherlands.

I have recently returned from a month in Ecuador where I participated in a community project in the small rural community of El Pedregal (located at a 3,600m altitude in the high Andean Paramo grasslands). Our job was to update the work done by expedition groups many years ago, at the local primary school, and to design and build a brand new book corner, with the hope it would become a friendly place for the children to enjoy reading. Thanks to the generous sum of money we had been able to raise beforehand through concerts, quiz nights and a multitude of car washes, we had sufficient funds to complete a very good project as well as buy lots of books.

The project was part of the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award and I was fortunate to be selected (along with 20 other

Sevenoaks students). Especially since the trip included most of the things I love doing: discovering a completely new country with its unique customs and way of life; mixing amongst the local population; participating in a community project; and experiencing a large variety of scenery and eco-systems. We spent a year and a half year preparing for Ecuador and carefully planning every single detail of the expedition - including arranging transport, housing and food; managing our very limited budget and of course determining the size of our backpacks! We were to be self-sufficient and had to rely entirely on our own capacity to understand and adapt to our surroundings. Team spirit was vital.

We divided into sub-groups to design and paint the book corner, to fix and repaint other things around the school and to renovate furniture. Some took on the delicate task of repainting two large murals; one with a map of the world, the other with a map of the surrounding area, as well as drawing flags of nations with names written in English and Spanish.

When we had finished, the book corner looked beautiful with red and yellow bookcases and Noah's Ark surrounded by animals covered all the walls. Brightly painted tables and chairs added a cheerful note to the ensemble. It was a tremendously rewarding experience and the local people were amazed at our result.

After working hours, we would meet a group of local kids at the football pitch in front of the school (complete with its two resident grazing cows), and play until sunset.



El Pedregal Primary School

On other evenings, some of us would teach English to the village children while the class mums and local women cooked us quinoa soup and fresh trout. Quinoa is a native crop made of tiny, straw-yellow kernels, which look like plumped sesame seeds. The soup was served with potatoes (the main crop grown by the Ecuadorians), corn, and garlic and we ate it with large slices of the local cheese. The food there was surprisingly easy to adapt to. We all stayed in the school where we camped in one of the classrooms. We were the only ones staying there but during the day, the younger children from the village joined us and would gladly 'contribute' to the painting.

Our expedition also included several one-day adventures

such as riding, rafting, jungle trekking, wilderness camping, and climbing volcano Ruminahui (4,631m). We were initially to have climbed the Tungurahua, but while we were in Ecuador Tungurahua erupted so we had to make alternative arrangements!

I am now back at school, but my memories of the trip are as vivid as yesterday, the friendly locals, the intensely flavoured food, the work, the independence. I gained greatly from my experience. It reinforced to me how much I love being part of the wider world and how important it is to challenge yourself and do what you can to make a difference, no matter small, in our world.

Raising funds for Indonesia

Dianne Thorstensen

Dianne is a New Zealand expat and has been in Abu Dhabi for eight years. She is also the focal point for Abu Dhabi Outpost and has two grown up daughters - one an engineer in New Zealand and the other doing her OE from London.

In January 2005 Outpost Abu Dhabi had planned a fun morning of Indonesian fashion, food and culture. But the Earthquake and subsequent Tsunami of the 26th January were to change the whole focus of the event. Our cultural extravaganza was to become a major fund raising activity to help the Indonesian survivors of the disaster.

We had a local Shell Abu Dhabi family involved directly in the tragedy and the Indonesian community lost a number of friends and family in the earthquake and tsunami. So while we could certainly not celebrate with a fun event in the face of such tragedy, we could go ahead with the event and use it to raise vitally needed funds and to provide resources for those in the affected area.

The Indonesian Embassy and Yati Cranfield, who was to host the event at her home, were also keen to continue. Yati is Indonesian by birth and also a Shell Abu Dhabi (SAD) spouse.

Outpost Abu Dhabi called in advance of the event for donations of clothing, household goods, canned and dried foods and money. All the goods were collected and taken to the Indonesian Embassy after the event and the planeload of cargo was flown to Indonesia, free of charge by Emirates.

Yati's home is full of Indonesian art, crafts, pictures and furniture so the setting was very authentic. The event was a success and we also had had a great morning. There was a fashion parade where traditional Indonesian costumes from the various provinces were worn. We had dancing and music from 4 different Indonesian provinces, including from Aceh, where most of the devastation occurred. We had an expert on Indonesian batik material decoration take us through the various stages of batik making, and the members of the Indonesian Embassy treated us to a wonderful spread of Indonesian food from the various regions.

Shell Abu Dhabi raised a significant amount of money for the people of Indonesia and Dr Mohamed Defrawi, the Managing Director of Shell Abu Dhabi, matched the amount! Dianne Thorstensen, Focal Point for Outpost SAD, handed over the donation to Mr Novan Ivanhoe, Head of Consular Section, Indonesian Embassy at the event. The SAD contribution was handed over in a separate ceremony.

On page 24 of this issue Mega Suwito (An Indonesian expat based in the Netherlands) writes about visiting her family in Indonesia after the earthquake.

Vegetarian abroad

Teresa Waldin

Teresa lives in the Hague with her husband Adrian and their three children, Nicholas (4 yrs), Timothy (5 yrs), and Cathryn (1 yr). Teresa has a PhD in biochemistry and is studying towards an early childhood education qualification.

"You'll never cope." "What will you eat?" "Everything ends up in the stir-fry." These were just some of the comments I heard before we moved to China, followed by "I think it's time you started eating meat now", from my tad over anxious mother. But after more than twenty years of being a vegetarian I wasn't about to start eating meat again just because Shell had decided to move us to Beijing.

And I didn't have to. Beijing was filled with pleasant surprises and vegetarians were well catered for. In fact it was easy to get just about anything in Beijing. I know that you don't have to go far from the capital to be quite unable to get things I consider basics - cheese, milk, gin and tonic - but in Beijing, for a price, it's possible to get a close approximation to anything you are looking for. Familiar meat substitute products such as textured vegetable protein and Quorn were

the hardest thing to get, but pulses and grains were plentiful so I made my own veggie sausages and experimented with tofu. The Chinese are masters at using tofu, wheat gluten and fungi to make imitation meat dishes with excellent Chinese flavours. Despite what some of my meat-eating friends say about tofu, it doesn't have to be white and slimy.

Another big surprise to me was that everything doesn't just get thrown in a stir-fry. My Chinese friends were adamant; some flavours can go together, others most definitely can not. So you get used to variations on a theme appearing on many menus and soon get an idea of which dishes are great for vegetarians. My particular favourite was Xiao Qie Zi - aubergines fried with green peppers, garlic and spring onions and plenty of soy sauce, vinegar and sugar - delicious, and my maid made the best version of that dish I've ever tasted. I spoke a little Mandarin which helped immensely with shopping and also in restaurants where I was able to explain, "Please, no meat, no fish." I was almost always asked, with slight amazement "Why don't you eat meat? Are you a Buddhist?", but after that fantastic food generally arrived. Incidentally, all over China some of the best vegetarian restaurants I found were tucked away next to Buddhist temples. They are generally unassuming places, quite basic and always noisy, but the food - yum, yum, yum. Having said that everything does not go into the stir-fry, some of the things that did go in were too exotic for wobbly Western sensibilities. I've been to banquets where I was grateful to hide behind my diet and when a rather too exotic dish was presented say, "I'd love to but I can't. I'm vegetarian!"

The big plus being a non-meat eater in China was that vegetables were incredibly cheap, especially if you were willing to give the expensive shops catering for the expats a miss and venture forth into the markets. You really need to be able to speak at least a little Chinese if you are going to try this, but if you do you will find stalls piled high with an amazing variety of vegetables (many of which I still wouldn't have clue what to do with). I would often return home from my 'market days' with my bag stuffed full and feeling very pleased with the low prices, only to be told by my maid, "You paid too much, tomorrow let me go."

Of course there are always a few things you import from home, and the most memorable for me was tea! Yes I know, tea to China, but coming from Wales where I was brought up on nice strong black tea with lots of milk, I missed it, and although I enjoy Chrysanthemum tea, Jasmine tea and Eight Treasures tea, they are just not the same.

Now tea was one thing I didn't need to import into Australia, where a nice cuppa seemed to take its place quite happily alongside trendy Flat Whites and Café Lattes. Funnily enough, before my husband and I first moved to Melbourne many friends said much the same as they were later to say when we announced the move to China, "What on earth will you eat?"





Teresa with her husband Adrian and their children in China.

and "Australia is the home of the barbie. Everyone eats steak". Undeterred off we went. And it's true, barbies are popular and steaks are huge, but Victoria market (indeed every market) does a roaring trade in fresh, tasty, cheap veggies and almost every restaurant offers at least one, if not more, great vegetarian alternatives to their meat dishes. I didn't starve....I put on weight. Although I can't blame the veggies, this was more likely due to the coffee and cake with my friends several times a week and our visits to Australian wineries at the weekends!

After one delicious year in Melbourne, we moved again, across the continent to Perth and this time even my Melbourne friends were saying, "It's all meat over there you know. There are no vegetarians in Perth." Not true. The restaurants were just like those in Melbourne and the supermarkets stock just as many meat substitutes, pulses and tasty vegetarian treats as those in Melbourne. However, travelling around Western Australia was a bit trickier. Restaurants in the more remote towns do not have extensive vegetarian menus and it was often a vegemite sandwich for me while my husband tucked into what appeared to be a whole farmyard. So imagine my surprise when on one long road trip, way off the beaten track, we stopped at a roadhouse for lunch and saw 'Veggie Burger' chalked up on the blackboard alongside, 'Stuffed Sausage' and 'Steak Sandwich'. I ordered the veggie burger of course, and what arrived? A round bun topped with sesame seeds filled with a lovely crisp leaf of lettuce, a few slices of juicy red tomato and some onions. No veggie burger at all. And when I

looked questioningly at the counter staff they fell about with gales of laughter, "That's a veggie burger love, a burger with no meat!". Sometimes it pays to have a sense of humour.

So here I am back in the Netherlands, and I admit, when we moved here it was me this time wondering what on earth I would eat! You see, I spent a few years in The Hague prior to moving to Australia and back then, most restaurants (with the exception of Italian ones) didn't have no-meat options on their menus, there were very few vegetarian restaurants and as for shopping, quite frankly I imported most of my veggie products from the UK. How things have changed. I can now buy all manner of soya-based meat substitutes, and just a few weeks ago some good friends convinced me that I should visit a renowned fish restaurant with them for dinner. I went full of trepidation, a fish restaurant, what on earth would I eat. But the chef cooked a five course vegetable extravaganza especially for me, each course on a similar theme to whatever the rest of the party were eating. By the end of the meal they thought I'd had the better dinner!

Some things in The Hague really have changed. Not, however, the Dutch tradition of giving a teabag a bath in lukewarm water in lieu of a nice strong cup of tea with milk. So guess what I still import from Wales? Nice cup of Glengettie anyone?

International Adoption

In recent decades the number of families adopting children from a different country has steadily increased, and in the “nomadic” Shell expatriate community this type of adoption is even more likely to occur. Zella gives us an overview of the history of international adoptions, some information on ways to prepare, and insights into the most common medical and developmental problems that may present in these children.

HISTORY AND TRENDS

Adoption has been included in legal writings for many centuries, as early as in Roman times. Nevertheless, legal adoption was still relatively infrequent until the end of the 19th century. As a sign of the times, many people then feared that poor, abandoned, or illegitimate children would grow into troubled adults. Infants in particular were undesirable because of high mortality rates and the lack of readily available breast milk. Following World War I, the demand for babies increased. This was due in part to the sharp drop in population caused by the war and the influenza epidemic of 1918, and also to the development of a successful feeding formula.

International adoption (IA) grew as a result mainly of World War II, when thousands of children needed new homes. Military personnel occupying affected countries were the first to step forward to adopt these children, despite not being locals. After World War II, other conflicts and natural disasters also occurred, providing additional “waves” of adoptees from different parts of the world.

Since the 90's a different sort of IA scenario has arisen. As a result of political changes in Eastern Europe and Russia, and of more liberal adoption policies in China, the number of adopted children from those areas has seen a significant increase and so has the demand to adopt internationally. In 2004, 22884 children were adopted in the USA from abroad, up from around 8000 in 1992. In Spain, in 2001, 3428 children, up from 93 in 1988.

With fertility rates decreasing in developed countries, partly due to the increase in the number of women having their first child after 35 years of age (when their chances of conceiving are significantly reduced) and with more countries permitting adoption by single parents and gay couples, the demand is likely to keep rising.

GETTING PREPARED

Adoption is an evolving life long process. Before adopting it is important to seek specialised advice from health professionals and organisations that work in the field so that you are able to set realistic expectations and get expert information on how to care for the child after adoption. Contact with other families that have also adopted children from a different country can help. The aim is to decrease post-adoption disappointment and stress and enable the child to achieve his or her full potential.

ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE LOOKED AT INCLUDE:

Medical and social history

Many of these children have suffered abandonment and long periods of deprivation, resulting in emotional difficulties, developmental delays, and health concerns; they could have had a troubled birth or a maternal history of extreme poverty, poor antenatal care and substance abuse. Previous information is usually difficult to obtain and incomplete. If available, an evaluation of possible long-term complications and assessment of what the child's needs might be, should be made. Prospective parents should therefore also consider the availability of healthcare facilities near their home.

Initial attachment

Learning about strategies to facilitate initial attachment is important. One of the adoptive parents should be the main caregiver if possible for the first 6 months after the child joins the family.

Different ethnicity

The family needs to discuss how the different ethnicity, identity and culture of the child will be dealt with. For example, a Shell family adopting in a country where they are posted for some years might initially have an easier transition in this respect, but when in another country how will parents assure that they will enable the child to maintain ties with the country of origin? Or should they instead “assimilate” the child into the parent's own culture? The right to preserve a child's own identity and culture is articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and several studies have indicated that exposing these children to their own culture will help them to develop a sense of positive self-identity leading to better adoption outcomes. This can be achieved by providing opportunities to experience their heritage through food, national and religious celebrations, having family friends, books, games, art work, music from the child's own country, and language studies.

COMMON MEDICAL ISSUES

➤ Poor growth

This can be a consequence of mainly poor prenatal conditions, chronic disease, foetal alcohol syndrome, malnutrition or extreme emotional neglect. Even in the presence of enough food, emotional neglect alone can cause growth failure, but affects above all height.



Dr Zelia Araujo-Muggli graduated from medical school in her native Portugal. She is a member of the UK Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, and has worked as a paediatrician in Portugal, the UK and Oman. She is a Shell spouse and mother of two children.

Mild to moderate growth delays can be overcome with good caloric intake and attention from a loving parent; these delays usually do not affect the child's cognition. But if severe malnutrition is not corrected before the age of 2 to 3 years, we can see long-term learning difficulties.

- **Developmental delays**
In some studies developmental delay occurred in 3/4 of the children on their initial evaluation after adoption. From these 75% were able to catch-up but 25% went on developing more sustained delays requiring treatment.
- **Medical conditions**
Different diseases can be detected depending on which region the child comes from. Anaemia, intestinal parasites and rickets are often found. Infections like Hepatitis B and C, AIDS, tuberculosis and congenital syphilis also need to be tested for. Adoptees from Russia have a higher risk to have tuberculosis and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), caused by alcohol abuse by the mother during pregnancy. Children with FAS have growth deficiencies, facial deformities, brain damage and heart defects. There is an increased risk for Chinese adoptees to have lead poisoning. Previously this was an effect of leaded petrol, nowadays it is mostly from pollution and coal burning used for heating homes. Lead poisoning causes behaviour and learning problems and anaemia.
- **Incomplete or non effective immunisations**
Two main concerns arise regarding immunisations. The first is the accuracy of the records in terms of dates and if the immunisation was actually given. The other is did the immunisation develop protection against the disease? Inappropriate storage conditions and dosage, poor immune response due to growth failure, stress or chronic infection,

all may cause an immunisation to fail. Most experts will recommend to repeat immunisations for young infants and toddlers, for older children it is recommended to test for antibodies first to check if the immunisation was effective.

- **Transition and attachment difficulties**
Some children can temporarily have problems eating (poor or voracious appetite, refusal to take solid food), sleeping (early or frequent awakenings), toileting and bathing. Depending on their own temperament, developmental stage and previous life experiences, children may be withdrawn, shy or overly friendly to everyone. Some will present self-stimulating and self-soothing behaviours, like head banging, rocking and biting. If they had little previous experience of having their needs attended by caregivers, they lack the sense of feeling safe and secure. These children tend to have greater difficulty trusting others in relationships and they can grow up feeling anxious, resentful and angry.

OUTCOMES

Available data indicates that the difficulties experienced by children who are adopted are far outweighed by the significant benefits that they receive from having a family. However, some of the vulnerabilities originating from a previous history of neglect and loss may, in some cases, be lasting in subtle and not so subtle ways and can have a profound effect on children and their families. Nevertheless, most children will recover and become functionally and emotionally competent adults.

If you have a personal experience with international adoption and would like to share it with our readers please send your story to the Destinations team at JanetCarson@shell.com

On the News

MODERATE EXERCISE MAY LOWER COLD RISK

In a new study published in The American Journal of Medicine, postmenopausal women who exercised regularly lowered their risk of coming down with colds compared with more sedentary women.

By the end of the year-long study, non-exercisers had three times the risk of colds than women who exercised regularly. 30 to 45 minutes of brisk walking, 5 days a week appears to be the key, possibly by boosting the body's immune system.

FAILED VACCINATION CAMPAIGNS MAY LEAD TO POLIO RESURGENCE

A worldwide eradication campaign launched in 1988, spearheaded by the World Health Organization, has failed to meet the target date of 2005 to eradicate the polio virus. Although the total number of cases in 2005 (1973) was considerably less than in the 1980s (around 350 000 a year), polio remains endemic in Nigeria, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. From 1 January to 10 October 2006 the number of confirmed polio cases worldwide stood at 1403, of which 888 were in Nigeria (up from 489 in the same period last year), 360 in India (37 last year), 24 in Pakistan (18 last year), and 28 in Afghanistan (four last year). Experts say that the failure by these countries to wipe out the disease could cause a resurgence of more than 250 000 cases a year.



Surveying the damage.



Cooking outside after the quake.

I also visited the King's palace. My guide told me that the King's residence was barely damaged by the quake. She pointed out the Chinese potteries in front of the King's residential palace, which were amazingly still in their places and completely intact. I saw those potteries and couldn't believe my eyes, how could they survive a 5.9 quake without anybody holding them tightly. My guide told me calmly that the locals believe "the invisible spirits" held them for the sake of The King and that this was probably true. It is believed that the King of Yogya, Sultan Hamengku Buwono X has supernatural powers. He is also the head of the local government and there is great respect for him. However scientists would say that the location was not passed by the quake's line and therefore affected the palace only lightly.

In the museum (a few hundred metres from the King's residence), my guide explained that the wine glasses, ceramics, and the porcelain all kept in a glass cabinet remained in place. Most of the King's Palace buildings were also still intact. The only building in the King's palace area, that was completely destroyed, was the Justice building!

Many believed that the condition of this levelled building reflected the poor justice condition of local society nowadays. Another damage was the broken wall of the Prince building. This similarly seemed symbolic in that the King has no sons, or princes, rather 5 daughters (princesses).

I wondered during my visit how so many people survived the earthquake, and why some houses that were in the affected zone were fine while others were completely flattened. I don't know the answer, but it seems to me that destinies were inextricably tied to a mixture of quality design and building materials and fate. Amazingly, plants have been the real survivors. Everywhere, plants are finely intact. And the safest places seem to be in the rice fields, among the plants. It's where many local people put their tents to live now. Amidst the tragedy it was heartening at least, to see that the green friendly nature of my country was caring for and feeding its survivors.

For tips about surviving an earthquake visit the following websites

http://www.stanford.edu/dept/EHS/prod/general/erprep/brochures/quake_saf/BQ_ua_ka_Sa_f_2002.pdf

Global Earthquake/Tsunami forecast/report
http://tsunami.geo.ed.ac.uk/local-bin/qaques/mapscript/demo_run.pl

See page 19 to read about the fund raising Abu Dhabi Outpost to support those in the affected area.