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Reaching out to poor children around the world

Article contributed by: Girish Shivanand

"When you are on a bamboo raft you're on your own and your survival instincts will be sharpened."



Come July every year and its time for me to dedicate a bit of my time to the uplifting of poor children around the world. After supporting the mountain kids in Peru (2009) and the village kids of Tanzania (2010) this July I took up the demanding

challenge of Kayaking, Biking, Rafting and Hiking to the summit of Mt.Kinabalu in Borneo. This challenge was arranged by Dubai based adventure charity organisation Gulf4Good www.gulf4good.org. I needed to raise 19,000 AED and my effort was recognised by Unilever NAME R&D Team and they contributed the initial amount to pep me up. Having got the impetus I raised the remaining amount from large hearted friends around the world.

On 7th July 2011 I joined another 10 other enthusiastic likeminded challengers from around the world (all based in Dubai though) and we set off to Kota Kinabalu (KK) in Borneo. We Kayaked 25 km around the KK coast seeing some magnificent marine life and getting a thrill of what could happen to you when you're out there in the sea with only a Kayak and a life jacket to depend on. We then set off to the Sabah Tea Plantation for biking amidst the lush green tea gardens. The slopes were a delight to glide down and became extremely arduous taking away all the fun while climbing back. We got to taste some local cuisine cooked by the locals and later met the beneficiaries of the challenge – the kids from HUMANA a children's education arm of www.borneochildaid.org. We mingled with the children and had fun dancing with them and later watching their traditional dance exclusively made for us.

The next stop of the challenge was the toughest yet, climbing the mammoth peak of Mt.Kinabalu at 4095m. Mt.Kinabalu also called as Low's peak stands majestically amidst lush greenery in the form of a massive boulder. For an aspiring mountain conqueror the previous night is very important and we had the luxury of sleeping in clean beds at Laban Rata base camp which also had a great café serving hot delicious meals. We set off at 2 am for the conquest which ended up at 630 am on the summit. The arduous task of climbing the massive rock face was made easier by a huge rope which has been fixed by the

Malaysian Adventure Tourism Authority. After enjoying the astonishing views and meeting Mr. Sun eye to eye we returned to the base camp and then descended to the park entrance by around noon. We immediately set off to meet the beneficiary kids at the Don Bosco Orphanage. We greeted the kids after their school session and painted the school's main wall which needed refurbishment. We had lunch with them and taught them how to play frisbee. We visited the dorm's and toured the school along with the staff who have dedicated their lives to help the orphans who come from various sections of the society even in a country like Malaysia which is doing much better in the developing world.

To end the memorable trip we enjoyed a home stay with friendly Malays for a night in a mountain village, got to know their culture, tradition and enjoyed their home cooked food. The next day we rafted down the rapids on a bamboo raft and then later glided down the river on a solitary bamboo which was tremendous amount of fun. Anyone can raft on an inflated raft with life jackets and a guard on board, but when you are on a bamboo raft you're on your own and your survival instincts will be sharpened.

I recommend that everyone must do a charity adventure atleast once in their lifetime as it gives you a sense of satisfaction while your survival instincts are tested. Please visit www.gulf4good.org for more details and there is an adventure coming up in the UAE in November to help the kids of Al Manar School, Ajman and this could be your best opportunity yet.

What's next on my list? I will be on a personal mission to climb Mt. Aconcagua in Argentina in December 2011. This will be the toughest test so far for me as the mountain stands at 6092m (My previous highest has been 5895m which is the top of Kilimanjaro) and I'm undergoing serious training at the moment. I'm also trying to link this conquest to a charity and so far haven't had any success. Kindly pass the word around and help me in my cause of supporting children's education around the world.

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