

Totally a cultural shock

By Josephine Mann

Who would imagine seeing a magnificent city that stands in the middle of the desert and looks just like any city in a tropical island country?

Yep, that was my reaction when I first set eyes on Dubai. Extraordinary buildings that can never be seen in any other parts of the world were there, just before my eyes.

Not that I have been to many other parts of the world, this eye opening experience for me was just the beginning of a whole week full of new experiences for me and a whole new view of life for me.

After leaving Port Moresby (capital of Papua New Guinea) the trip was long for me as I had to transit through Singapore to go to my destination which was definitely the land of the unexpected.

Changi international Airport was beautiful and had a familiar aroma in the air. Of course the airport was huge but as I was sitting by the window side waiting for my flight to go to the United Arab Emirates, I could see that the place was green and it brought back the memories of my country Papua New Guinea.

See, Madang is surrounded by sea and the weather is tropical like any typical tropical island setting. So the vegetation around Singapore was similar to that of mine.

My stay there was brief but it was when I actually arrived at Dubai international Airport that I felt like it was another world altogether.

Walking out of Dubai terminal at around 6:00 am in the morning after a whole day of traveling, one could expect me to go straight to the pick up cab to sleep, but that wasn't the case for me.

The first sounds I could hear was the call for prayer in the morning coming from one of the mosques near the airport and I thought to myself, this is truly going to be an experience of a lifetime.

Driving down the streets of Dubai and heading to my destination Abu Dhabi was a breathtaking experience as you could imagine the sun rising up in horizons and endless miles of desert.

The first reaction I got when arriving at the Emirates Palace was, an open mouth, eyes bulging out and the only words I was able to say was "Oh my God."

Who could expect to walk, work and dine in a palace that was made of gold? Some would think I'm exaggerating but as for me it was a total culture shock.

I came as a media representative for the conference to publish the Education Without Borders magazine so that too was another experience for me.

Back in my home country I have worked for several newspapers like the Post courier, The National and the Sunday Chronicle, but the experience that was gained by working with students from all over the world was a bonus for me. Queensland University of technology and the Abu Dhabi women's College has surely produced great upcoming journalist who I enjoyed working with for the three days of conference.

Attending different sessions and learning about the culture of other people was truly a fascinating experience for me. Although In PNG we speak over 800 languages and the culture and ethnicity is so diverse, learning from delegates from all over the world was truly a life time experience.

The conference has really broadened my understanding of the world and also created a network for me to bring development to many unfortunate people.

This brings me to my research topic which I hope to present at the next EWB conference.

As I am doing my final year in bachelor of Communication Arts (Journalism) it is a requirement for me to do a full research on the in order to get my degree. There at the conference I was challenged to write something about where I come from and what I really experience from observation and participation.

At the conferences the sessions that I attended were mainly focused on e- learning and what the world has been and is about to be with the use of computers.

Say for instance the ***one laptop per-child policy is a god step for the nations that have the capability to achieve***, but right now countries like mine are trying to face bigger challenges such as combating HIV/ Aids, poverty, child mortality and other serious issues and with an economy like ours currently, it is it is unrealistic to live up to the standard of such new approaches. Not to consider the fact that the bulk of the population of the world live in such economies and so people like me and those who come from such areas have to live up to the realities of life back in our societies.

As I was thinking to my self the conferences had really broadened my way of thinking toward my topic which is ***'the channels of communication of Awareness for HIV/ Aids: Is it effective?'***

I intend to help fight HIV/Aids in my country because this is a major issue that is affecting a lot of people now.

So all in all within this short one week of experience an extraordinary learning for me and I would like to challenge all who have learnt something from the conference that they should try to make a difference for their communities because through learning without Borders, surely helping your own communities has no borders too.



Josephine (centre) dining with other participants of the EWB conference at the Emirates Palace.



**Above: Josephine with newly found local friends enjoying some time in the desert.
Below: At the conference are with friends.**