



The Sonada Experience

TEXT: Karolina Radó

I was lucky to be able to visit a boys orphanage in India and teach children about oral health. I was with my dear friends Nadja Uncianschi and Pál Radácsi. But how did we get to this particular place? Why did we choose Darjeeling and then Sonada?

Starting the Journey

Let me start at the beginning: the three of us decided to travel across India for two weeks, before we attended the annual IADS congress in Delhi. We started our journey in Darjeeling, as this place is well known for its beauty, its tea and its people, who are more than kind and hospitable. Darjeeling is in the Northwestern part of India, very close to the border with Nepal. People here are mostly Nepalese, they speak Nepali and they are mostly Buddhists. Before we were leaving for India, I contacted a local guy, Nim, via CouchSurfing. His family was running an orphanage for children who are without parental care in this border area. Only on the plane did we realize that we would like to do something for those children. As we met Nim, we told him that we would like to do prophylaxis in his orphanage. We bought the children tooth brushes and tooth pastes.

Off to Sonada

On the next day, we traveled to Sonada, which is 45 minutes away from Darjeeling. We traveled by shared jeeps, which was also a big adventure on those rocky and exciting roads. The name of this orphanage is Bethany Children's Home, it is in Christian hands and run by a family. The children are from the surrounding villages, the Pastor (one of the sons of this family) is collecting them as soon as he hears of children in need. At the time we paid our visit, there were two new boys. The boys are from the age five to seventeen. These children get a new family, love and not least: education. The best example to describe the efforts they put into the children is that the eldest, who is 17, will go to college next year.

A great experience

We had the warmest welcome there. The kids prepared a little show for us and



gave us a white silk scarf, which is the symbol of welcoming and honor. After this little ceremony, we separated them in two groups—an older one and a younger one—and talked about oral health, healthy diet and the importance of a good brushing technique. Then we brushed our teeth together: one of us was brushing, the others were explaining. The children were very attentive at all times and interested in everything we said to them. We were talking in English, and Nim or the eldest boy were translating for us. This orphanage, as Nim described it, is a low-budget place. They have problems with buying clothes, particularly uniforms for school, and toys. This prophylaxis was a big thing for these children. They were so happy to get new

toothbrushes and we got the impression that they were happy to get the knowledge as well. I have never felt so honored in my life as I felt there with these children.

// INFO //



Vilma Karolina Radó is 22 years old, was born in Budapest, Hungary, but spent her first nine years in Austria. She lives in Budapest, studies dentistry at Semmelweis University and is in her second year. Karolina is the LEO of Budapest, likes travelling and being active in IADS.

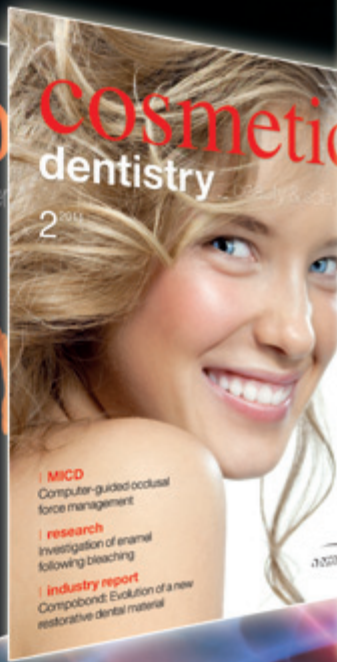
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