

An Amazing Trip for Local Volunteer

Volunteer Becky Fleming has just returned from Ethiopia where she had a rare opportunity to see the projects run by Save the Children in the mountainous central Amhara region.



Becky is the chair of Maybole's Save the Children branch, a partner in an architect firm in Ayr and mother of 4 children.

'We found little children at work: five year olds in charge of driving animals, and children posted as look outs in the fields to keep birds off the crops. I gave this little boy in his lookout a Save the Children balloon and he was delighted,' said Becky

'We also took a football to a school but the children had never seen one before and didn't know what to do with it. We showed them and within five minutes all the children were playing,' said Becky. 'We also took them bubbles – the children, and even the teachers, were scared at first, then it became a great game to burst them.'

Save the Children took 5 few specially selected volunteers to see the well established programme health projects in Ethiopia to show them how the money they work so hard to raise is spent on the ground.

Becky visited schools in South Wollo region of Ethiopia where Save the Children is training local people to build latrines.

'Most schools in Ethiopia do not have safe water supply or basic sanitation facilities and yet, this is where children are supposed to spend their day. As a result many children defecate in the open on school grounds and many children, particularly girls, avoid going to school at all.' said Becky.

'The children are involved in the project too, working out what size septic tank they need and Save the Children teaches them about sanitation and hygiene.'

Pneumonia is the biggest killer of children under 5 in the world today, more than HIV, malaria and measles combined. Vaccines can prevent the illness and treatment can be effective when identified early enough by community health workers.

'The women cook on open fires in the house and it's very smoky,' said Becky. 'This contributes to the high rates of pneumonia. Save the Children is training health workers in Ethiopia to treat pneumonia and it's saving lives.'

At a rural Maternity unit provided by Save the Children, Becky gave Dr Beyene some of the blankets and hats knitted by local people in Maybole for newborn babies.



'Ethiopia has one of the highest mortality rates in the world,' said Becky. 'Mothers living in remote parts of Ethiopia don't have access to neonatal units for special care babies so Save the Children encourages what's known as the kangaroo method. The baby is wrapped in a blanket with a nappy and a woollen hat, this helps baby hear its mother's heartbeat and keep warm and survive when otherwise it might perish.'

For Becky it was an amazing trip:



'Most families have so little – living in traditional thatched huts with only a few crops, some chickens and a cow. They have one family plate to eat from. What's important to them is getting clean water every day and caring for their animals,' said Becky.

'But we had so much appreciation from everyone we met,' said Becky. 'They recognise the Save the Children logo and know we are there to help. It really brought me face to face with the reality of how the money we raise is spent.'

Hundreds of volunteers across Scotland raise thousands of pounds for Save the Children's work every year.

'By sending volunteers to our overseas programmes it allows our supporters to witness first hand what Save the Children does and how successful we are at saving children's lives. Becky is already a great ambassador for Save the Children and we know that she will continue to be so after she returns from the visit, but she will now be able to reflect on our work from a personal level which is extremely powerful when trying to engage new supporters and communities,' said Dorothy Parker, Save the Children's Community Fundraiser for the West of Scotland.

If you want an interview with Becky please contact her by email at becky@cadie.f9.co.uk or through Dorothy Parker d.parker@savethechildren.org.uk