

## **Anna Pallesen New Zealand Journal**

I heard about GEEbiz last minute, over my weekly coffee date with my rather fantastic friend from kindergarten. She was talking excitedly about an leading an multicultural team in an international competition, with the aim of making business sense whilst improving the living standards of our poor.

A few frantic emails later, and projecting that idealistic excitement of one taking another baby step toward the Greater Good, relieved that one is not yet disillusioned (always with that fear in the back of the mind that disillusionment will come sweeping through, wrecking destruction on the belief that one woman can make a change), I found myself leading a team of seven intriguingly distant and elusive young men from countries from which I was far flung. One promised in his personal introduction that he liked to make everyone happy, and especially women, and I grinned, wondering exactly what he could mean by this, but thinking it sounded ok to me. I wondered what the next three weeks would bring.

Time sloughed by, as it tends to, and I spent time trawling through humanitarian websites, and the business section of the news papers. A smattering of replies from my team mates punctuated the first week, which was gone before it even began. We all politely sidestepped each other through cyberspace, and I wondered if someone else would join me to take the lead, as I felt a degree in biology and most of a degree in law was not rushing to my aid in trying to create a viable business venture.

The enthusiasm and confidence in me from my team pushed me into action, as well as a pointed email from Bangladesh inquiring “where is Miss Idea and Mr Action?” So we crunched into gear, I felt like the blind leading the seeing. The excitement at the workability of our project, and the opportunity to look closely at the positive effect that could be had on a pocket of humanity pulled us through the last frantic days.

I felt myself drawn into the project, even in my dreams I was hunting for money to give to Bangladeshi businessmen, who were jostling me and telling me they’d found the key to stopping all the kids from picking over a rubbish dump. That is an image seared across the memories of every kiwi kid from the documentaries on tv, and was one of the many things that hardened my resolution, even as a child, to do *something* worthwhile with my years, to make a smile in the eyes of those kids, to try and match my own perfect childhood here in small town NZ. This longing to ‘help one’s fellow man’ in an innate human desire, almost ridiculed as clichéd these day... but still as necessary to take action as it ever was, and the less arrogant and ignorant we can be in our attempts, the more likely we are to make real changes. I am honoured to have done this competition and experience another taste of the hardship of most of the world, and to look at practical, realistic ways of making it all go away.

It was disappointing to lose team members along the way, but the thrill and gratitude to receive quality work in my inbox for others made the anxiety of getting dumped with the entire project evaporate, and made it all worth while! I wish I could meet my teammates, in person, what a great opportunity to work with such interesting people from so far away from me!

I have learnt incalculable things in the last three weeks, substantive information about the living conditions people in the world, about the initiatives in place battling for a fairer world. I have also learnt a lot about business planning, as it was a relatively undiscovered field, and about leadership and the dynamics of leading a team so distant in space and life experience. We did it!!