

DO GOOD, FEEL GOOD

RESEARCH says that helping others makes you feel good. While Joan Redmond and Sue O'Neill, of the Rotary Club of Woy Woy, NSW, say personal happiness was never their motive for volunteering, they found that feeling good is indeed a flow-on effect of doing good.

"Volunteering has the power to change you in unexpected ways," says Sue, a Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) volunteer, who does four or five overseas trips a year. "Immersing yourself in a different culture and a drastically different environment challenges all your senses and has a profound effect. Seeing how others live with limited food, unreliable water, basic housing and falling ill to easily preventable sicknesses truly helps you understand how much we have to be thankful for in Australia.

"Your perspective changes. You view the world in a different way. You are constantly inspired by the resilience and optimism of people in challenging situations."

While not quite as seasoned a traveller as Sue, Joan was quick to put her hand up when the opportunity arose to visit their club's Pure Joy project – a women's empowerment project in Uganda.

"This was my first overseas volunteering experience. I was out of my comfort zone, shy, nervous and anxious about whether my efforts would do good or not," Joan said. "It's one thing to raise funds at home, but a



Volunteers Diane Schwarzl, centre, and Joan Redmond, right, helping empower women through vocational training at the Pure Joy project, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Woy Woy.

completely different scenario to deliver aid to a doorstep 12,630km away."

From the moment she set foot on Ugandan soil, however, she was overwhelmed by the miles of smiles, the hundreds of hugs and handshakes and the over-the-top thank-yous from humble people grateful she had crossed the world to help them.

"I cried when I met the wonderful women at the Pure Joy workshop and saw the real difference seed funding had made to their lives. My anxieties vanished. We were women working together to *Do Good*; the notion of 'We Are One' ticked all the boxes.

Would she volunteer again?

"One hundred per cent yes. I met and worked with the most extraordinary, dedicated people. No blood, but lots of sweat, many tears of joy and plenty of fun along the way. Did I come home feeling good? No surprise that the answer is yes, and I will volunteer again and again so long as I can make a difference."

Likewise, Sue says volunteering draws you back time and time again.

"Children greet you with the widest, beaming smiles. It is hard to imagine these happy, content kids live in communities with limited water and no electricity.

"To link with a network of international Rotarians and work together to deliver support to communities is a positive and powerful thing.

"Volunteering abroad leads to more concern about certain social issues. You become more aware of what's going on beyond our own borders. Development is a large and complex process, but as a single volunteer you can make small impacts. It is powerfully rewarding to know you made a positive difference in someone's life.

"If you are considering volunteering I strongly recommend you embrace the opportunity with open arms. You will get more than you give."



Students and staff on the steps of Buwampa Primary School, where Sue O'Neill, of the Rotary Club of Woy Woy, volunteered.