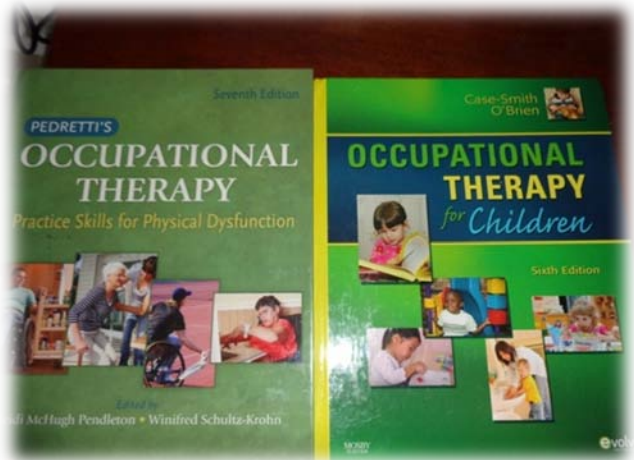




The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad Cambodia

January 2013

Issue No. 51



What's Inside...

- **Two Week Special**
- **Article from Laura M.**
- **Volunteer Story about Nicola Melino**
- **Care volunteer from Siem Reap**
- **Cambodia Conservation project in Dec 2012**
- **Dirty Weekend at Our Home**
- **Donation from volunteers**
- **Photo Page**
- **Social Media**

Projects Abroad in Cambodia

House 101, St 122, Sangkat Teklaok 1,
Khan Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Tel: +855 (0) 23 881 250

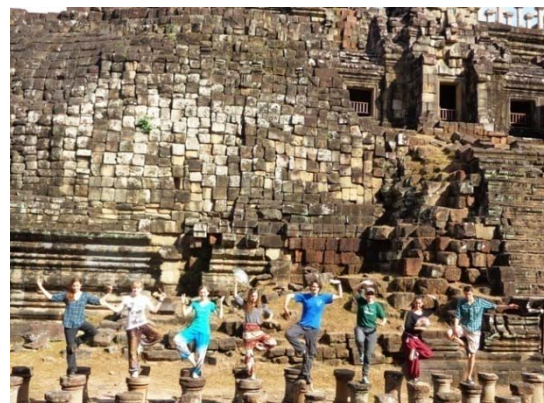
www.projects-abroad.net



Two Week Special in December 2012 – By Jessica Warner

On December 8th, 2012 we welcomed our Two Week Special volunteers at Phnom Penh International Airport. With months of preparation spent on the program, we were all keen to get started. Everyone was exhausted on their first day but soon found their energy! After a day of orientation around Phnom Penh and our placements, Tuesday meant the start of work at Home of Hope. In a small village 40 minutes from our city apartments, we worked with a community who blew us away with their openness and strength. We worked on several different projects during the two weeks in Home of Hope and Home of Peace. Mainly volunteers painted and worked with children at Home Of Hope. We also did outreach donations to rice field workers, some of us trekking through the countryside to give these machete-yielding men and women fresh bread.

It wasn't all work and no play though, and as a reward for a long week's work we all went to Siem Reap on the weekend, to see the renowned temples of Angkor Wat. These ancient structures hint at Cambodia's powerful past and amaze modern visitors with their scale and design. Following recommendations, we all got up at 4am to see the temples at sunrise. We stumbled to the lake at the main temple to take photos and soak up the glory of the temples. We had a full day of temple-exploring ahead of us after breakfast. There is so much to see and we were keen to make the most of it but the 4am start was beginning to take its toll on all of us and only half the group made it to the last temple, Ta Prohm, where Angelina Jolie famously frolicked in Tomb Raider! With 16 girls and two boys, shopping also featured heavily on the schedule. We all explored the Russian Market in Phnom Penh and the Night Markets in Siem Reap to haggle our way to some bargain souvenirs!



For Christmas, we helped in the distribution of essential gift buckets from Home of Hope to over 200 families. All the volunteers tore up and down the grounds of HOH carrying these donation buckets for the recipient families. This was an eye-opening day for us all, and it meant a lot to us to be able to help the village.



I must say that everyone gave 100% to every aspect of the work; it was so appreciated by the placement, the teachers, the children, the villagers and us at Projects Abroad! We are incredibly proud of everyone's efforts and hope they are too!

Hope, Emily, Zane, Kate, Alexandra, Lara, Madeline, Lauren, Maggie, Georgia, Jessie, Andrew, Jess, Calista, Steph, Soraya, Kate, Kathryn; we miss you all and hope you enjoyed the trip as much as we did! Thanks again for being such a great group!



Le Cambodge, mon pays de coeur – By Laura Maillard



J'ai toujours voulu voyager, vivre une expérience enrichissante, partir et m'immerger dans la culture d'un pays lointain, découvrir de nouvelles choses, de nouvelles coutumes... A la fin de l'année 2011, j'ai senti que c'était le moment de concrétiser mon projet ; j'ai donc commencé à chercher une association avec laquelle partir et j'ai découvert Projects Abroad. L'idée de pouvoir réaliser mon voyage tout en me rendant utile

en tant que volontaire m'a tout de suite séduite ! Ensuite, est venu le choix du pays... et, sans vraiment savoir pourquoi, j'ai choisi le Cambodge, ce pays qui semblait m'appeler.

Mercredi 15 août 2012, c'est le départ ! Je suis très anxieuse, je ne sais pas à quoi m'attendre et le fait de partir seule et si loin pour la première fois me fait un peu peur... mais je suis très excitée de découvrir ma nouvelle vie pour deux mois !

Le jour suivant, j'arrive à l'aéroport de Phnom Penh et je rencontre Chammy qui m'accueille avec beaucoup de gentillesse et un immense sourire. Dès ce moment, je comprends que mon séjour au Cambodge sera une magnifique expérience. En fin de journée, je rencontre les autres volontaires, nous passons une très bonne soirée sur le toit de l'appartement et j'apprends à connaître les gens, je parle anglais, même si ce n'est pas facile, j'ai vraiment envie de tout faire pour profiter au mieux de cette période de ma vie.



Le lendemain matin, je rencontre Sophourn et nous allons ensemble visiter l'office de Projects Abroad et faire un tour de la ville en tuk tuk. Je suis émerveillée à la vue de cette ville où grouillent tous ces gens, ces motos et ces tuk tuk. C'est fou ! Je suis vraiment dans un autre monde ! L'après-midi, nous nous dirigeons vers l'orphelinat dans lequel je vais travailler durant deux mois dans le but de rencontrer les enfants avant mon premier jour de travail. Arrivée à l'orphelinat, je suis heureuse de voir beaucoup d'espace et des enfants qui crient, rient et courent partout ! Le Directeur est actuellement à l'étranger,

donc je rencontre le sous-directeur qui me fait visiter l'orphelinat. Les enfants sont très intrigués, ils me regardent beaucoup mais ne viennent pas vraiment vers moi... A ce moment-là, j'espère que tout se passera bien et que j'arriverai à me faire accepter par tous ces enfants.

Dès mon premier jour de travail, je me rends compte que tous les enfants sont adorables (bien que je n'en aie jamais douté !). Ils sont très drôles et très malins ! Ils jouent beaucoup, sont très vifs et s'entendent tous à merveille. Je comprends donc rapidement que si je veux me faire accepter et intégrer la grande famille de UNACAS, c'est moi qui dois aller vers les enfants. Et c'est ce que je fais ! Je me joins à eux, essaie de comprendre leurs jeux, joue



et parle avec eux et, déjà, je sens que quelques enfants se rapprochent de moi. Je crée rapidement des contacts avec les enfants. Évidemment, certains sont plus démonstratifs que d'autres et ont besoin de plus d'attention ; j'essaie donc de jouer aussi avec les enfants plus timides afin qu'ils ne se sentent pas exclus et, gentiment, je gagne leur confiance.



m'attache à eux tous les jours un peu plus. Je sens déjà que le départ sera dur ! Ces enfants sont des amours et méritent tant d'affection.

J'essaie aussi d'amener quelques jeux avec moi et certains fonctionnent mieux que d'autres ; le dessin et le coloriage sont des activités dont les enfants ne se lassent jamais ! Nous partageons donc de magnifiques moments, ensemble, à colorier, dessiner, jouer au Pictionary et faire des origamis. Plus les jours passent et plus je me sens à l'aise dans l'orphelinat, j'apprends à connaître les enfants et

Je donne également des cours d'anglais aux plus jeunes enfants, deux fois par jour. Au début, j'appréhende beaucoup ! N'ayant pas un excellent niveau d'anglais et aucune expérience dans l'enseignement, cela me paraît difficile. Et effectivement, les premières leçons ne sont pas faciles, mais, au fil du temps, je prends confiance et je commence à vraiment aimer ça. J'achète quelques livres au Book Shop et essaie de monter un programme adapté à tous. Les enfants sont adorables ! Ils ont envie d'apprendre, sont très intelligents et apprennent vite. C'est un véritable bonheur de leur enseigner l'anglais et j'apprends également beaucoup d'eux. Les deux mois passent trop vite et il est déjà temps de dire au revoir à ces enfants et à mon pays d'adoption... C'est dur, mais tellement beau de voir tous mes enfants réunis pour me dire au revoir. Eux sourient et rient, moi je pleure ! J'ai l'impression de les abandonner, mais heureusement, d'autres volontaires prendront la relève d'ici peu de temps. Plus le temps passe, plus je réalise ce que cette expérience m'a apporté. Tellement de choses ! Un si beau pays, des gens si gentils, je n'aurais jamais pensé pouvoir vivre ça un jour ! J'espère avoir apporté du bonheur à ces enfants, mais une chose est sûre, eux m'ont apporté beaucoup plus ! Tout l'amour qu'ils m'ont donné, leur confiance et leurs sourires resteront à jamais gravés dans mon cœur. C'est au Cambodge que j'ai connu la véritable gentillesse et la vraie beauté de cœur.

Je remercie tous les gens qui ont fait de ces deux mois une expérience unique et magique.

Laura Maillard

Care project (15 août – 15 octobre 2012) Phnom Penh Cambodia

*Thank you so much Laura Maillard, We really appreciated that you have a lot of
contributes for Cambodia kids.*

A volunteer story about Nicola Melino – Occupational Therapist



After graduating from university, occupational therapist Nicola Melino (24) wanted to use her skills to make a difference. She signed up with Projects Abroad to travel to Cambodia where she volunteered at Veterans International, helping with the rehabilitation of people with physical disabilities.

“I have always had an interest in exploring different cultures. I wanted to go to a developing country to improve on my personal development by helping other people.”

She loves that Projects Abroad has sent lots of volunteers to help at the Veterans International centre and hopes that there will always be volunteers that come to contribute their skills.

The majority of Nicola’s work revolved around working with children who have cerebral palsy, adult neurological patients and hand therapy patients. She worked in a team with physiotherapists, providing occupational therapy assessments and interventions to the patients. She had many responsibilities that kept her busy and she felt helpful; she also received support from the head physiotherapist at the centre.

Working in a culturally different environment increased Nicola’s confidence. She learned how to provide a range of occupational therapy services including where to source information regarding current practices.

“I feel that I have made a difference, but the longer we [the volunteers] stay the more experience we get and more differences we can make.” She found the Cambodian culture to be completely different from where she is from. She took this in a positive way as the experience encouraged her to be innovative and forced her to learn many new things and research the current best practices surrounding cerebral palsy.



Nicola loves Cambodia, especially the happy and smiling faces that the people always have regardless of the hardships that they face. Her most memorable moment was when she discharged a traumatic brain injury patient after a month of rehab where he re-learned to walk.

Nicola advises future occupational therapy volunteers, “Build your own caseload, and tell the physicians where your skills are so they know who to refer; be creative, innovative and consistent with research if you don’t know something.”

Thank you so much Nicola Melino, We really appreciated that you have a lot of contributes for Cambodia kids.

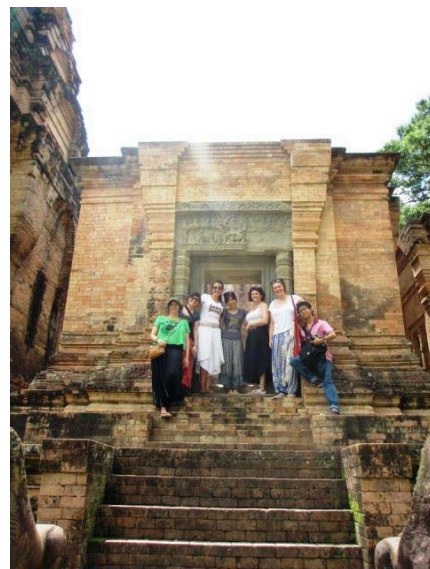
Care volunteer from Siem Reap tells of her time

Hello, My name is Margot, I’m volunteer with Projects Abroad in Siem Reap for 3.5 months. I took care of orphans in AOEO. My work as a volunteer was really nice and the life around was amazing.

Cambodia is a beautiful country; the people, culture and way of life are fascinating. Everybody smiles and welcomes you. There is a real community spirit and that is beautiful to see. Even though the people are not rich and can’t speak much English, their generosity and expression is amazing. It’s a poor country, but it’s so much more than that. I will never forget this experience and I recommend everybody to visit Cambodia.

Thanks.

Margot Mercadal



Thank you so much Margot Mercadal, We really appreciated that you have a lot of contributes for Cambodia kids.

Cambodia Marine Conservation Project – December 2012

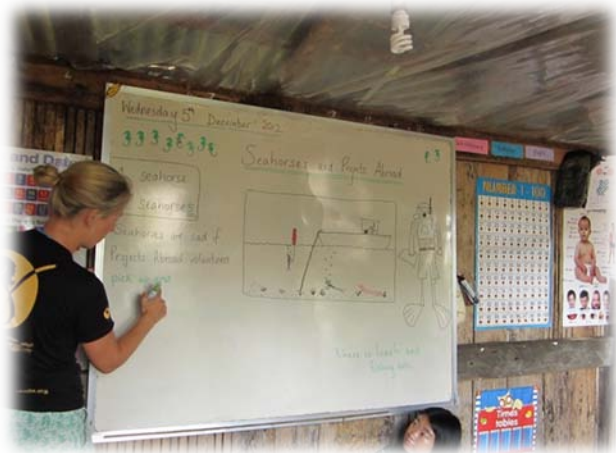
This month the volunteers continued to survey seahorse populations, as well as surveying our reef sites. Last month's reef training really paid off as we were able to repeatedly survey each reef to monitor fish and invertebrate populations as well as reef health. The community fishing area has successfully increased numbers and sizes of fish populations.

Conservation Projects

Seahorse Surveys

Seahorse surveys, as well as training new volunteers, were a success this month. Increased populations of juvenile seahorses meant everyone wanted to get out there and find a baby seahorse. 29 seahorse surveys were completed.

Our marine biologist trialled new seahorse holdfasts this month, where five small concrete blocks with rebar were placed out on the corral in an attempt to determine whether artificial holdfasts will attract more seahorses to the area and make them less susceptible to current movements. We hope to check on these in the coming months to determine the success of encouraging seahorse populations to stay in the area.



Reef Surveys

The changing weather patterns allowed us to continue diving on the reef. Although we still focus on seahorse population assessments, we are now able to access the reef again and start to monitor fish and invertebrate populations, as well as substrate composition and reef health. Training for identification in both seahorse and reef surveys is time consuming, but all the volunteers have been especially keen in trying to learn everything in time to survey this month.



Working concurrently with this is extending the current list of species found in the area around the island. The volunteers are keen to help out and have been participating in species identification dives in order to recognise new or rare species. Sightings of rare species have also encouraged the volunteers to learn what's out there.

Clean Ups

With some unexpected wind late in the month, the volunteers had their work cut out for them. Daily cleans on Longbeach and Sunset Rock kept them busy, with constant upkeep around the project site as well. The wind brings in rubbish from everywhere, so the volunteers were great at setting a good example for the village.

Community Projects

Teaching



This month the school had a special week about Projects Abroad and the seahorses. The volunteers were keen to educate the kids as much as possible about the work we do on land and in the water. Helping them to understand the importance of the environment at a young age tied in nicely with other themes including nature and geography. We also had a special Christmas theme where the kids got to create different decorations for the bungalow, helping everyone to feel at home.



Other stuff...

Christmas meant all the volunteers got involved in a special meal and different traditions from all over the world. We gave our kitchen ladies the day off so we could make pancakes and sausages, where all the volunteers pitched in for food and cooking. We also traded gifts on Christmas Eve to make everyone feel special.

Ali Barlow

Diving & Marine Conservation Project Coordinator, Cambodia

Thank you so much to all Diving & Marine Conservation volunteers and staff, We really appreciated that you have a lot of contributes for this project.

Dirty Weekend at Our Home – By Evy Dufoor

Every month Projects Abroad organises a Dirty Weekend, it is the time to wake up early for a good cause and do some dirty work on the weekend. Projects Abroad offers you the chance to apply for a Dirty Weekend at your placement. I took that chance with both hands to renovate my placement, Our Home.

And lucky me, Seang from Projects Abroad who arranges the Dirty Weekends had organised the weekend at my school at my request.

There were six classrooms which all needed to get a new layer of paint over the orange one. With around 20 volunteers to help paint and because the school is next to an orphanage, children helped us paint too; we had successfully re-painted all the classrooms.

They were so excited, we had to look out for our brushes or they (the kids) would steal them right under our nose and start to paint themselves.

Benches were moved, buckets were filled and brushes were dripping with paint. Two layers were done before lunch time and after a delicious lunch we got to do the third layer. And the result was amazing. No more dirty orange walls but pretty white ones.

Because we could only do the lower part (we were too short) the upper part is still slightly dirty but for next the Dirty Weekend, I hope we are going to draw pictures on the walls.

This way we will have really nice classrooms where the children can enjoy learning.

On Monday, the children were really happy with the result. Big hugs and thank you all for your great help, I hope it was a great day for you too

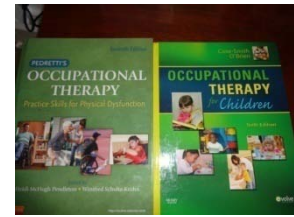
Thank you, Projects Abroad.

Evy Dufoor – a Teaching volunteer at Our Home



Donation from our volunteers

Many thanks to Jonathan Armstrong who donated two occupational therapy books to Projects Abroad for further volunteers' benefit while they do their project as a occupational therapist.



Many thanks to Leslie Muller that she donated some useful medical things so that the next volunteers are able to use them.



Many thanks to Ty Langford and her mother, Johanna Paddick, for donating two drinking water tanks for their placement.

PHOTO PAGE



Lisa's last day with her students at Asia's Hope.



Sam being a Cambodia Master Chef



Tess was with her kid at VCAO.



A group of Khmer project volunteer doing puppet.

Thank you *all* of our volunteers who spent their time volunteering in Cambodia.