



The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad Cambodia

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NEW COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR PROJECTS ABROAD IN CAMBODIA

Our New Director



Mr. Mao Pises

Our previous country director, Mr. Mao Pises, decided to resign from his position at Projects Abroad in Cambodia for a new, challenging next step in his working career, after working with us for five years. We really appreciated all his contributions towards Projects Abroad.

We are deeply honoured to welcome our new country director, Ms. Jessica Warner from Ireland. She used to be one of our volunteers in Costa Rica and has been working in various Projects Abroad destinations.



Ms. Jessica Warner

MEAK BOCHEA – BUDDHIST CEREMONY



One of the main religious ceremonies in Cambodia is called Meak Bochea. We celebrate it on the full moon and holy day of the third lunar month. On this day, most Cambodian people, especially the elder ones, will go to pagoda to pray and to remind themselves not to commit any sins. At each pagoda, they celebrate this religious ceremony by merit and walking three rounds of pagoda.

This day is counted as a public holiday.

A LIFE TRIP FOR VOLUNTARY WORK

By: Henry Kehr (Siem Reap volunteer) from UK, Gap Year student

I volunteered at the New Hope Children's Association (NHCA) in the Siem Reap province in Cambodia for one month. My project involved teaching English to underprivileged children at the school which offers them free education and therefore more opportunities for the future. A typical day of work



would be waking up for breakfast at 7am, then taking a 30 minute Tuk Tuk ride at 7:30am from the Projects Abroad accommodation to my placement at the NHCA School. The timetable was split into morning and afternoon classes. The first lesson started at 8am and finished at 9am; the children then got a 30 minute break before continuing with the second lesson at 9:30am until 10:30am. The students in my morning class were very young and lessons involved teaching

them vocabulary by going through the letters of the alphabet and then teaching them the numbers from one to 20. To make this more fun and to keep the students interested, I played games with the class such as hangman, bingo and many others, as well as creating gap filling activities and various exercises for the class to do. I found that the more creative I was with activities, the better the students remembered the content. They also had art and video classes twice a week. I then got a Tuk Tuk back to the Projects Abroad accommodation for lunch. However it was very flexible as some days I went into town for lunch and walked around the market to do some shopping or to an internet cafe.



The afternoon classes only started at 2pm therefore I got a Tuk Tuk from the accommodation at 1:30pm. These classes were older and more advanced. In the lessons I used a textbook many Cambodian schools follow called "Let's Go" with the difficulty levels from one to six. I was teaching them "Let's Go 4"; this included focused topics such as hobbies and health. Each unit had a reading and comprehension exercise, as well as speaking and answering question sections. I

also did regular dictation tests as they generally struggled with listening to words and writing them down. Both classes had the same time structure and this lead me to taking a Tuk Tuk back home at 4:30pm on most days, arriving there just after 5pm.

There is a reasonable amount of spare time in the evenings and plenty to do. I enjoyed going to the night market, relaxing by the pool at one of the many local hotels, going to a Cambodian circus, eating out when you fancy something different to local cuisine and even having a good night out on the town at Pub Street. The standard price for Tuk Tuk's to and from the accommodation to the centre of town was three dollars even though the local Tuk Tuk drivers will cheekily try to charge you four; this is very cheap when split between three to four people.



During my first weekend in Cambodia, the NHCA was in need of volunteers to start a huge vegetable garden and plant seeds with the idea to eventually feed the students. It was a long hard day of manual labor but extremely rewarding nonetheless. The weekends are also a perfect opportunity to go and see the beauty of Cambodia. I spent a day visiting the temples around Siem Reap, the highlights being, sure to be wonder of the world, Angkor Wat temple,

especially at sunrise. Another stunning temple was Ta Phrom, where they shot some of the first Tomb Raider movie starring Angelina Jolie and famous for its magnificent tree roots. During another weekend with some other volunteers, I took the night bus from Siem Reap to the coastal town of Sinahoukville and spent two nights there. We took a two hour boat ride including snorkeling from Sinahoukville to the island and hidden paradise of Koh Rong Samleom. We were able to have a coconut on the white sandy beach and a relaxing dip in the warm, crystal clear, turquoise sea, the perfect way to unwind and rest after a long week of work. We also spent one weekend hiking in the jungle to go to a waterfall which was beautiful.



The volunteer work has made a phenomenal difference in the lives of the children that attended this school. Having only been there for one month, I can still see the improvement in their English. The more volunteers that participate in work like this, the more the children have the opportunity to improve. There definitely is something for everyone during the Projects Abroad experience in Siem Reap, Cambodia, as there is so much to do that I haven't even mentioned. This certainly was the trip of a lifetime and I've met so many amazing people and made friends for life!

THREE-MONTH AS A JOURNALISM VOLUNTEER

By: Alison Smith (Phnom Penh volunteer) from UK

The life I imagined I would have in Phnom Penh and the reality of it were two very different experiences - but not in a bad way. I first came to Phnom Penh in 2011, only to be there for 24 hours. It was from that moment that I knew I had to come back. The wide avenues near the Royal Palace, the soft evening light, the kind people - I couldn't wait to come back and experience this for a longer period of time. When I did return last November, I found the country had changed massively in the past two years - and is continuing to change at a rapid pace.

I chose to do a journalism placement because I wanted to improve my skills in writing. The Southeast Asia Globe magazine is an English-language magazine about the whole region and they also have a business magazine called Focus Asean.

The best thing about my placement was that in order to do a great job, I had to read widely. I got to know the politics and issues that are affecting Cambodia really well. The country is in the middle of a political crisis and it was fascinating to learn about, and see, the struggles of the locals and how they are trying to change their lives.



One of the record covers from the 70s

As part of my job I also got to interview different people, one of these people was the country director for the documentation centre of Cambodia, YoukChhang. The centre is responsible for the collection of documents and information about the Khmer Rouge and piecing together the events of that terrible period of Cambodia's history. Youk's latest project was a film about music, called 'Don't think I've forgotten - Cambodia's Lost Rock and Roll'; a documentary about the artists and songwriters of the 60's and 70's. I went to his office to talk to him about it and I got invited to the film premiere in Phnom Penh.

Many of the people here lived through the Khmer Rouge and to see interviews with singers who had to lie about their profession in order to stay alive; to hear stories about celebrities of that time and how they dying were one of the most moving experiences I have ever had. The film really showed how resilient Cambodians are and Youk is documenting a piece of history that is important for the

education of young people. The Khmer Rouge is such a prominent part of history that to hear and watch what life was like in Phnom Penh before the genocide was completely uplifting.

Work life in Cambodia is different to Europe of course, and even though the majority of people in the Globe office are European, it had a typically laidback Cambodian atmosphere. I didn't start work until 10 am. This surprised me at the time as to how late that was but my boss put it simply: "Creative people need more sleep!"



Our office Christmas party - a BBQ cruise down the Mekong River

As I was only in Cambodia for three months, I planned out my weekends very carefully. As a country with the most public holidays in the world, there was a lot of time to visit different places and the most popular mode of transport is by bus. It generally takes five to seven hours to get to most places in Cambodia, on some of the worst roads I have ever seen.

Aside from the typical traveller destinations - Siem Reap and Sihanoukville - there are some beautiful places to visit. I would highly recommend going to Mondulkiri, a province in the eastern highlands near Vietnam, and Koh Kong, a city on the south coast near the Thai border were some of my favourites. Mondulkiri is fast and open with rolling green hills and country sides that are different from anything else in the country. Koh Kong has wild jungles, stunning waterfalls and deserted beaches.

STAFF UPDATE

Staff Update

We would like to congratulate Ms. Suon Kanika, our Health Care coordinator, on her graduation in a major in Economic Bachelors degree.

Kanika has been working with us since 2010 as a General Assistant and was promoted to Health Care coordinator in 2013.



PLACEMENT UPDATE

Launch Party



We had a party with Khemara Organisation to launch our Care Management Plan for the Care Project in Cambodia. All local teachers and staff from the Khemara's daycare centre as well as the Projects Abroad staff in Cambodia were invited.

We were in a cheerful mood and ready to implement plans for many more benefits to the children and community.

Care Management Plan Update

Following the Care Management Plan, Projects Abroad will set up four mini campaigns in a year to promote general knowledge of the local placement partners. Our first campaign is about fire safety.

We have provided fire safety equipment such as smoke alarms, fire blankets for children and adult as well as fire extinguishers. On top of that, we have trained the local teacher and care giver on how to use the equipment.



We really hope that this would protect and provide more security to the children and teachers in case a fire breaks out.

In response to the request of our partner organisation and our volunteers, we have donated 12 classroom dividers to the Phsar Lech centre in order for the teacher to split the children into either two or three classrooms for easier teaching and learning.



VOLUNTEER STORY OF CHLOE GREENLAND

Pacific Lutheran College graduate travels to Cambodia to volunteer for three months

“I have always had a great passion for helping those less fortunate than myself. Dealing with both disabled children and adults from a very young age, it comes as second nature and I consider myself lucky to have had this opportunity. It is the best thing in the world seeing the difference you make in their lives.” said 18-year-old Chloe Greenland about her decision to travel to Cambodia with Projects Abroad to participate in their Care Project.



Chloe's placement was at National Borie for Infants and Children (NBIC), where there are 113 children and babies living in the centre, 65% of which are physically and/or mentally disabled, whilst 26% are HIV positive. Only 9% of the children can be considered to be without mental or health problems. “I remember my first day visiting the center, I was honestly taken back. It's seriously different from home as the children are really in some of the worst condition. Nothing like I had ever seen before. I determined myself that I had to do all my best for them.”

“Use your initiative!” Chloe's advice to future volunteers who come to the placement. “The Mama's won't ask for your help, so make it up to yourself to decide when something needs to be done. It's completely up to you how much work you do.”

At the centre, Chloe's daily tasks included dressing the children, bringing them from their room to the playground room, singing songs, do a brief massage, provided sensory stories, feeding and playing with them, brushing their teeth twice a day and sometimes walking around with them. “Feeding the

children is a challenge; that is for sure. There is such a wide range of disabilities. Each child is so different from the last, so you have to learn to accommodate within that regard.”

The three months working at NBIC has not only benefited the centre, Chloe has also gained a lot from the experience, “My time in Cambodia has honestly been the best 3 months of my life. I couldn’t think of one thing I’d change. It has opened my eyes, my heart and my arms even more to the world and the people less fortunate than us. Now more than ever, I feel so confident in knowing this is what I want to do with my life. I will continue to work with several charities and plan on going to TAFE to get my Diploma in Disability.”

To add on, I would like to recommend Projects Abroad to everyone who wishes to do voluntary work, it is well organized for you and supports you in any circumstances. You really do need to be open-minded about it all, don’t be afraid to get to know everything around you. ASK QUESTIONS! In return listen to other volunteers and what has worked and not worked for them. I wish you all enjoy your work and meeting the happy faces of Cambodian who is willing to help each other.



Chloe plans to visit Cambodia again next year with her parents and she has a plan to support a child to go to school. The nanny at the placement, Roth, said that “I am sad that Chloe will leave the centre, she is the best volunteer in my heart.”

SPECIAL EVENT

Global Shark Conservation

It is extremely sad to hear that “Humans kill 70 million sharks each year for shark fin soup! That's over 100 every minute!”

“There are over 500 different species of sharks in our oceans and each one contributes to the health of the planet by acting as an apex predator. Without them the whole eco-system could collapse.



The stigma of sharks being man-eating monsters is simply wrong and created by Hollywood! In fact, we are more likely to die from a falling coconut than a shark attack.

The choice is easy, beautiful oceans full of life or shark fin soup? You decide!

Please help us end this horrible practice by signing our petition and putting the United Nations Environment Management Group under even greater pressure to take action. "

Please [click here](#) to sign our Petition. To be protected, they really need you.

We thank you in advance!

Monk Blessing



Do you believe that the superstitious treatments exist in this world? This kind of treatment is considered to have no basis by both professional doctors as well as scientists.



A group of our volunteers visited and were blessed by a monk who is well known for curing cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure at the Botom pagoda in Phnom Penh.

This is seen as worth a try as a last option for survival after professional doctors say that they have no ability to cure your diseases.