

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Cambodia 



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Editor Note

According to the World Tourism Organization, about 4.2 million tourists visited Cambodia, the capital of Cambodia. They experienced the city that we are so proud to name the Kingdom Of Wonder as there are many places to see and find the paradise on land.

There are many public holidays which calculate up to 27 days of a year, this all falling during the end of October and in November 2014. The Cambodians were delighted to celebrate so many public holidays. These included the 10th Anniversary of King Norodom Sihamoni coronation day on 29th October, followed by the Water Festival, which took up three days of celebration and the last one is Independence day on 9th November.



We, as the Projects Abroad Cambodia team had a long holiday. Before that we also excitedly had a Staff Retreat at Koh Ouknatey, located along the Mekong River; where we spent the entire day enjoying the atmosphere and growing as a team. It was a fantastic time to meet everyone including our cook, cleaners and guard.

I would summarize the events happening in the country with that, and draw your attention to what our volunteer have done. 38 volunteers have arrived in November. Including the current volunteers there are about 50 volunteers in destination. The Care volunteers have devoted their time to help at the Khemara Charity Day to which we donated educational material and breakfast to more than 450 children. Two of our volunteers had joined the Book-Tuk Library where we offered some time to the children living in the slum to get access to education. We would like to thank you all so much for all your time and effort.

Finally, I would like to update you about our local staff: We are wishing farewell to our Medical Coordinator Suon Kanika, and welcome our new colleague Ek Sokhema. She will fulfill the position of the Medical Coordinator and we are happy to welcome her to the team.

Thank you for reading this newsletter and please look out for the last issue of 2014, coming in December: We will feature a special report and news on the December event celebrations.

King Coronation Day

This year marks the 10th anniversary of our King Norodom Sihamoni. We had a public holiday on this day and there was a big celebration in front of the Royal Palace.



Independence Day

Every year since 1953, we celebrate our Independence Day on the 9th of November. In 2014, it is our 61st year since we gained independence from France. France colonized Cambodia from 1863 to 1953. Former King Norodom Sihanouk was our great King who achieved the independence for Cambodia from France.

To read more detail of the Cambodia Independence please [click here](http://www.projects-abroad.net).

Water Festival

The Water festival is one of the most exciting ceremonies of the year in Cambodia which is celebrated annually. However, due to some reasons such as natural disaster, the King's Norodom Sihanouk funeral was not celebrated in 2011 to 2013. In 2014, it was official celebrated in Phnom Penh. Everybody, locals as well as tourists were looking forward to it. It is celebrated for three days. One of the main events is Boat Racing. There were many teams from provinces and cities around Cambodia who came to participate in this public competition. What's more, there were many concerts and exhibitions in the Riverside zone.



Photo from Abigael Duval

It is a great time for family and friends gathering for having a party or trip.

Our current volunteer, Lauren Vardy, also experience in that event, please read what she says below.

Water Festival 2014 - By: Lauren Vardy – Journalism project

Cambodia. A country, as I'm gradually learning, of round-the-clock public holidays. Did you know there are 19 public holidays in a time period of 27 days this year? Marvelous!

Don't get me wrong, I enjoy a day off as much as the next volunteer but a three-day holiday? Now that's something worth noting.

What seems like limited days off has become the subject of mirth among friends back home, who are forever querying whether anyone works a full five-day week here.



Photo from Lauren Vardy

Though this small holiday quirk may appear an eccentricity, (Australia has 10 this year, incidentally), it was with aplomb and relief that Phnom Penh welcomed in the 2014 Water Festival without any major incident.

The Water Festival, a spectacle to behold, is likely the most extravagant holiday held each year. It ushers in the fishing season and marks a change in the flow of the Tonlé Sap and the ebbing wet season.

I wasn't sure what to expect from the event, especially given the absence of any online information or, indeed, a festival held in recent times.

We are four years removed since the tragedy of Koh Pich, and following the cancellation of three festivals since, it was exciting to see the colour and energy returned to Phnom Penh over November the

5th to the 7th. The future of this revered festival has been in doubt since 2010. Apprehension ahead of the event was palpable - News headlines cried “Can our rowers swim? Will there be enough security? Is Phnom Penh ready for such an event?” but crowds were not as overwhelming as in previous years and all went according to plan.

Less people on the ground meant more space to walk along the streets; no complaints here as any chance to walk somewhere without fearing for your life against speedy moto and tuk tuk drivers was a plus. The festivities were what made up the atmosphere over the three days. Pageantry was displayed to its full extent - with food and gift stalls, traditional boat races and music.

Eight of the 245 boats; each carrying dozens of rowers; won awards for overall racing and appearance. Their presence proved an inviting spectacle for the early crowds lining the Sisowath Quay riverfront.

A group of us moseyed down to the riverside to watch the start of the boat racing on the first day and were surprised to find room to sit back and enjoy the festivities amongst an interested crowd. We returned hours later to delight in the fireworks display before dinner.

Spotting the brilliant light displays we were enticed back to the river edge and enjoyed the work that had been put into a number of illuminated floats.

On day two the crowds grew a bit in number and in spirit. There seemed to be more people out on the street at midday and significantly more out after dark. The enthusiasm of the crowd also seemed to be up several notches with a lot of cheering, more revelry and excitement.

Locals and visitors alike crowded the riverfront streets, markets, made their way down vacant closed-off streets in search of transport, in some places shoulder to shoulder.

I've been following media coverage in the lead up to the festival with interest. Against continued reports of pre-event apprehension, it was, by all accounts, worth roundly applauding the positive work put into an event held dear by all Khmers.

Staff Retreat

Established in 2005, Projects Abroad Cambodia started off with only two volunteers and just a few staff members. Having grown from year to year, Cambodia has become one of the most well-known volunteer destinations.

To strengthen the sense of team work and to thank everyone who has contributed to this growth by working hard and dedicated; we organized a Staff Retreat for the 23rd of October 2014. We decided to go to Koh Oukna Tey island and spent a whole day for our Staff Retreat. We left on the boat at 8 am and it took an hour to reach the island. Once we arrived, we walked around to see how to produce

natural silk as Koh Oukna Tey is a well known place for silk production. The atmosphere was great: joyful staff teasing each other made the event full of laughter and happiness. Relaxing a bit after lunch time, we danced and played games until around 4 pm before we left the island.

It was a great day for us to spend time with our team aside from work. We believe that this event gave us more motivation and encouragement for pursuing our work for the sake of the destination.



Khemara Charity Day

Khemara Origination is one of Projects Abroad Care Project partners. In collaboration with other organizations and other institutions, especially with Projects Abroad, Khemara Organization aims to provide education, care support and protection to vulnerable women and children.

On Friday the 24th of October, Khemara Organization in cooperation with Projects Abroad organized a charity day. The Khemara organization invited children from the kindergarten and primary school to the charity day. The main goal of this event is to provide educational material to 450 children, including 87 children who have completed the Kindergarten class at Khemara Organization Daycare center and are to pursue the next level at the public primary school.



Ten volunteers from Projects Abroad had the honor to assist during the event. The day started at 8 am at the Khemara Organization office. When the volunteers arrived, they gave breakfast to the children. After this the officials and the Director of the organization spoke to the children in Khmer and thanked their teachers. Next, Three monks came to pray sing a song and throwing flowers. Then, three little girls performed a traditional Khmer dance show. We finished the morning off by giving school books, backpacks, food and others useful supplies.

We would like to thank all volunteers who eagerly helped in the event and to congratulate the 87 children who passed the Kindergarten class and are ready to attend primary classes at the public school.

Here is what our volunteers had to say about the event:



primary school.” **Vivi Aarkrong and Signe Poulsen**

“It was very beautiful to see the joy and happiness in the children when they received the backpacks and the school supplies. I hope that the children will use the supply to create a better future for themselves.” **Caroline Bendixen**

“After all the officials’ speeches, they took time to take pictures of the children in their costumes with teachers and staff. It was a great experience for all of us. Beautiful to see how happy the children were with the staff.” **Eva Vos and Abigael Duval**

“By all accounts an interesting experience! It was an eye-opener to hear that 99 of the more than 400 children in attendance were HIV positive, a shocking ratio. Hopefully Projects Abroad’s presence was a positive one for the people at Khemara. **Lauren Vardy**

“Difficult to say goodbye to the children from our placement but it seems like a great start for the

Book-Tuk Library



On Friday the 24th of October, staff and two volunteers from Projects Abroad passionately spent the whole afternoon organizing an event to provide an opportunity to access education and enjoy time to learn to the vulnerable and poor children in the We organized the Book-Tuk Library, also known as Mobile Library. The purpose of the Book-Tuk Library is primarily to promote the importance of education and to provide less-fortunate children with time to learn.

Below is the article from one of the volunteers who was actively involved in the event.



Event in My Life - By: Sophie Hollins

I come from a land that for decades has been referred to as "The Lucky Country". Spoilt with sun, surf and sand I've never doubted this to be true. However, maybe it takes an afternoon such as the one I experienced with Projects Abroad Cambodia this week for it to really be put into perspective. The word "lucky" is an understatement. When signing up to visit the children living in the slums of Phnom Penh to deliver books, toys and clothes, I had a vague idea of what I'd be in for. However, nothing would prepare me for the conditions we were presented with upon arrival. Homes that looked like run down sheds I would be used to seeing in someone's un kept backyard, battered, rusting and barely held together. Stray animals roaming the muddy and garbage lined streets. Yet in the midst of all this, slowly one by one, the most lively and high spirited children you could imagine begin to approach the mats we have laid out with books, posters and puzzles to name a few.

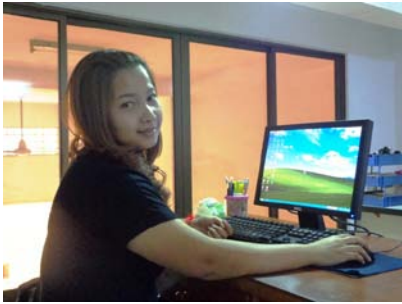
The language barrier seemed challenging at first, but it didn't take long to realise that it was the simple things that made these children smile. Whilst some were engrossed in books and puzzles, others just wanted a hug or a high five. I became one with the face paint crayon and soon enough the children were covered in body art. I would draw stars, suns and hearts and after a while the children would pick up on the words and request them themselves. Perhaps the most endearing moment was when I heard a request for "I love you" to be written on one child's arm. When the child then took the crayon and wrote the same words on my arm, well, it is a moment I won't forget.

This day is one that is hard to describe. I found myself emotional when it was time to say goodbye for many reasons. I may never get to see these children again. I may never get this opportunity again. Did I do enough? Did I help at all? All I know for sure is that during our time with them, I witnessed children



living in poverty smiling, laughing, playing, reading, socializing, and just generally looking happy. If I can say that I had even the smallest part in helping to make that happen, then I can say without a doubt, that it is the best thing I have ever done. I know I will be doing everything I can to be more active in these projects around the world, and I can only hope that there are many more people out there wishing to do the same.

Staff Update



Soun Kanika, our previous Medical project Coordinator resigned in October 2014. She had been working with Projects Abroad for about four years. We would like to thank her for all her hard work and dedication. We wish her good luck for the next step in her career.

We would like to welcome Ek Thysokhema, our next Medical Project Coordinator. She has started working with us from November 2014. We

look forward to working with you.

Below is the brief introduction from her.



I started working with Projects Abroad in November 2014. I've been voluntarily translating for Global Health Outreach (GHO) from America and Home Christian Fellowship (HCF) since 2010. Once in a while, I helped taking patients to Hepron Hospital and CSI Hospital for the treatments. In addition, I also participated in Community Mobile Clinic to Kandal, Takeo and around Phnom Penh. I am currently completing my Doctor Degree in Pediatrics at

the International University (IU) in Phnom Penh. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my family, reading books and singing songs.

Thank you for reading.