



*The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad Cambodia
August 2013 Issue N° -58*



2WS-August



2WS-July

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➤ *Over view Projects Abroad in Cambodia During July*



We've welcomed over one hundred volunteers last month. Even though Cambodia is not the biggest destination of Projects Abroad, the number of volunteers increases from time to time. For instead, July was the busiest month because there was over one hundred volunteers came to volunteer in Cambodia. From year to year, the number of volunteers who come to work in Cambodia increase more and more. To get this achievement, we are always trying to improve both our service and our projects. Volunteers in Cambodia stay in apartment with each other in both Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. Every apartment has welcoming, friendly and helpful cooks, cleaners, and guards who could be

their family members during their mission in Cambodia. Moreover, we have also provided our volunteers with amazing local food which is prepared by the cook three times a day. For transportation, we also provide the volunteers with tuk-tuks for traveling to work and coming back to the apartment. All our drivers are so friendly and are able to speak and understand some English. We have placement partners in more than 30 placements which work in different projects such as Caring, Teaching, Human Rights, Journalism, Physiotherapy, Medicine, etc... both in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap for our volunteers. Any placement to which we send our volunteers is well-structured and very good with friendly staff.

By these reasons, our volunteers always appreciate with what we have arranged for them, and after they finished their Projects, they said that they have learned a lot of thing from the Projects and they also experienced new things from the projects. Ms. Sunna, a July 2 Week Special volunteer, said, "Thank you for all the arrangements" I felt that I have done something meaningful this summer, the memories will stay with me forever." Not different from Ms. Sunna Wong, other volunteers in the same group also added that, "It was a life-changing experience. This project changed me as a person. It's an unforgettable sight to see the children so happy and excited when they see us arrive at the placement and to see the joy of the locals when we donated rice," by Yingyao Wu from Canada.

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Overview 2 Week Special-July in Phnom Penh

In July 2013, a total of 18 volunteers, aged between 16 and 19, signed up to undertake a two week period of voluntary work in Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia. The volunteers were working at Home of Hope, a center which provides care and help for mentally and physically handicapped children, along with patients who are HIV positive. During the first week, the volunteers helped improve the outside appearance of the center by painting pictures on the outside walls, which brightened up the buildings. Whilst the volunteers were busy painting they received much needed help from some of the children who lived at the center, an activity which the children greatly enjoyed helping with. Most of the children ended with more paint on themselves than on the walls! During this time, the children were able to practice their conversational English by speaking directly-



-with the volunteers which they found educational and fun. They enjoyed asking the volunteers questions about their respective home countries, life ambitions and their expectations for their time in Cambodia, and finding out the differences between a Western standard of living and the living conditions in Cambodia. A well-earned lunch break saw the volunteers eat traditional Khmer food, typically consisting of rice and meat and vegetables, with some fresh tropical fruits for desert. The children at the center usually have a sleep after their lunch. and take a break for a couple of hours, and this period of time allowed the volunteers to take a break and chat amongst themselves

to build and develop new friendships In the grounds of the Home of Hope is a school for local children from the surrounding village. Most of the children who attend here are from poor families who, in a lot of cases, cannot afford to send their children to the local public school, further the parents work from early in the mornings until late in the afternoon and so the children would otherwise stay at home all day on their own. By attending the school on a regular basis these children would be able to gain an education and a chance to make a better life for themselves. Furthermore, it gave them ample opportunity to meet new friends and, due to Projects Abroad sending volunteers to work here, the

chance to speak directly to foreigners so they can practice speaking to native English speakers. During the afternoons, some of the volunteers helped teach these children some English, although the children were more interested in playing with the foreigners than learning! Other volunteers were looking after the handicapped children by massaging them, and playing with them to bring some happiness into their lives. They especially enjoyed blowing bubbles and playing with balloons, such simple items managed to bring so much pleasure to these disadvantaged children and it was a wonderful feeling. They looking so happy and content with the love and affection they were receiving from the volunteers. On the Friday evening the volunteers went to see a traditional-

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Cambodian puppet show which they enjoyed, and this gave them a chance to experience some Khmer culture which they would not have otherwise had the opportunity to do so. For the weekend away, the group visited the city of Siem Reap, home of the magnificent Angkor temples. After arriving there on Saturday evening, the group had the chance to climb to the top of Bakheng Mountain, to visit a temple situated on the top of a hill. From there, views over the surrounding forests were had, although the promised view of the sunset did not materialize as it was very cloudy. After coming down again, the group relaxed in the hotel for a short while before heading out to a restaurant for some dinner and a visit to the night markets to buy some gifts for family and friends. The following day saw the group visit a few more temples, including the world famous Angkor Wat. The weather was incredibly hot and many of the group quickly became tired of walking long distances all day, although the beautiful temples they were visiting more than made up for this. In the evening the group had a delicious meal, they were all extremely hungry! On the Monday the group made the journey back to Phnom Penh, before having the afternoon and evening to take a well-earned rest. During the second week, some of the group taught in the school in the mornings, while others were working in the school helping provide care to the disabled children. A few members of the group even helped in the kitchen with cooking the lunch for the children. When it was the lunch time for the children, some volunteers assisted with feeding them which was a job they enjoyed. In the afternoon more care and affection was given to the children. On the Thursday afternoon, the group visited the Killing Fields and then S-21, the security prison used during the Khmer Rouge regime. Many of the volunteers were humbled by this experience and incredibly sad afterwards, but felt they needed to visit them to gain more of an understanding as to what happened during the Pol Pot regime. The group went out to a traditional Khmer restaurant on the Friday evening for a farewell party, and many friendships had been formed during the two weeks. The group were very sad to be leaving Cambodia and they had wonderful memories to take back with them, it would be no surprise if they were to return.

By: Robert Parker, Pro-Volunteer Coordinator

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My Most memorable experience in Phnom Penh with 2 Week Special Programme



Hello, I'm Eleanor Atkinson; I am 17 years old and from the Guernsey, Channel Islands. During the summer of 2013, I participated in the July 2 Week Care Project, an eye opening and amazing experience! I love travelling, embracing different cultures and experiences what countries offer. Having lived in Asia for 11 years, I was keen to return particularly to Cambodia, which offers a rich history, vibrant culture but sadly heart breaking poverty. Approaching Projects Abroad was surprising easy and very efficient, after one phone call I was booked for the 2 Week Special Programme! When travelling to Cambodia, I was a ball of nerves with three flights to catch and new faces to meet. When reaching Cambodia, I was warmly greeted by Nafy, who would be leading the 2 Week Specials. I arrived in the evening and as we drove through the city of Phnom Penh, it was buzzing with night life,

the streets were jammed packed with motorbikes, some carrying 5-6 people. The shops were busy while the restaurants were serving delicious and unusual foods. There was an energetic and lively atmosphere, which was very exciting but totally mind blowing at the same time. However, I was shocked by the poverty, people sorting through the rubbish for food, the beggars, the homeless and the number of brothels was very sad. When arriving at the placement, I was greeted by 16 other volunteers; they were so welcoming and incredibly chatty and friendly! There were many different cultures: French, Canadian, Norwegian and Asian. I was worried about jetlag; however with work the next morning and a structured routine throughout the week, I soon got over it. It took a while to adjust to the heat with no air conditioning, only fans, but soon we acclimatized and soaked up the sunshine. The food was delicious and I really miss it now! Stuffed full with rice, chicken, beef and pork with exotic spices, sauces and vegetables. It was an hour's bus ride to the placement every day, which was very bumpy but enjoyable, chatting to the volunteers and people watching. When arriving at the placement, at first it was quite distressing to see many of disabled children and those suffering from HIV/AIDS. During the first week, in the mornings, we painted and decorated the walls and a little boy called Ponleu was very enthusiastic and a great artist, painting and drawing with me. In the afternoon, the volunteers eagerly launched themselves into playing games, singing and drawing with the disabled children and the older boys. As the week went by, we formed strong bonds with the children. It was challenging to socialize with the disabled kids at first, particularly when trying to communicate. Throughout the week, it was amazing to see their enormous and beautiful personalities coming alive, as confidence and trust grew between the disabled children and volunteers. The older boys, many suffering from HIV/AIDS were so inspiring, attending school and aiming to achieve so much in their futures i.e. becoming teachers and engineers. After the first week

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of working at the placement, we took a two day trip to Siem Reap, to see the beautiful temples, in particular, Angkor Wat, one of the Seven Wonders of the World! It was absolutely stunning! It was also exciting as the film Tomb Raider was filmed at the temple of Ta Prohm, which we got a chance to visit! In the evening, we explored the night market and bartered for goods, which I became particularly successful at! It was lively and exhilarating at night time, with flashing signs and locals trying to usher you into their restaurants or persuade you to have a 1 dollar massage.

Back in Phnom Penh for the second week, we focused on teaching the community children English in the mornings, covering topics such as weather, numbers, animals and forming basic conversations. The children would come running up to us, leaping into our arms and were very interested and eager to learn and play. In the afternoons we played with the disabled children and socialised with the older boys, helping them with English, playing ball games and singing. On the last few days at the placement emotions were high amongst the volunteers as no one wanted to admit we only had a few days left, we all knew that we would miss Cambodia and 'Home of Hope' (the placement) as well as each other. On the last day, we had a party with the children. It was a very touching and emotional day. When we were leaving, the boys performed a lovely Cambodian Song and wrote a tear-jerking farewell message on a huge board...many tears were shed by the volunteers. It was so difficult leaving 'Home of Hope' after forming such strong bonds with amazing and inspirational people.

Despite being stricken with severe poverty, Cambodia is a wonderful country; the people have so much to offer and are very warming and welcoming. The local transport system of tuk tuks was brilliant! They were so efficient, trustworthy and convenient! On reflection, I wished I could have stayed another week or two! I made such good friends, have fantastic memories and will definitely return one day!

By: Ms. Eleanor Atkinson, 2WS-July Volunteer

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2 Week Special Programme had changed my Life

I have just returned from an incredible experience in the summer where I spent two weeks in Cambodia. During my time at the placement we visited an all boys orphanage in Phnom Penh. It was a pleasure to be accepted as part of the orphanage family for the time I was there. I had great fun playing with the handicapped and non-handicapped children, help feeding the children and joining in with the music and games. There was a separate building for the community children to whom we had the chance to teach English. All the children were immensely happy to see and spend time with us and we all thoroughly enjoyed getting to know each other and comparing cultures.

I came on my own to the Cambodian placement and from the moment I arrived everyone was so eager to get to know each other. There were people from a variety of countries all with different views and way of life – it was an amazing opportunity to see not only how diverse life is within Cambodia but also from other countries around the globe. It is very important to keep an open mind and be respectful to other people's cultures. For the weekend we headed up to Siem Reap to visit the temples, including Angkor Wat the 7th wonder of the world where we were lucky to witness the sunrise over the amazing temple.



From a personal point of view I was vegetarian for my time on the placement and some people who did eat meat were ill. You eat a lot of rice and local traditional foods which is great to experience although most restaurants do serve western foods. I highly advise future volunteers to bring clothes and toys for boys and girls for all ages for the orphanage and for the surrounding community you will have the chance to visit. Furthermore I wished I enquired what the orphan's interests and hobbies are. When I visited the orphans had the chance to play the guitar – I would have brought sheet music for the orphanage if I had known beforehand.

Overall I had one of the best two weeks of my life on this trip, everyone you meet is lovely, you will get a brilliant insight on different ways of life and you will have an incredible, all-rounded experience.

By: Jenny Bowman, 2WS-July Volunteer

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2 Week Special Programme-July in Siem Reap

It was not easy to reach Siem Reap, a city in North western Cambodia. After a six hours bumpy ride from Phnom Penh, the capital city. The first thing I felt after hopping off the coach was the fresh air and the cloudless blue sky which we rarely experience in Hong Kong. I was totally overwhelmed by Siem Reap was unique silence and tranquility. By Tuk tuk, I was then brought to the hostel to meet my new friends. Beyond my expectations, the volunteers who participated in the 2 Weeks Special Programme came from almost every corner of the world.



In addition to a few Asian volunteers, there were also some who travelled from the other side of the world such as United States and France to this little ancient city. With the welcoming dinner in an up stair restaurant in the Pub Street, the nine of us were soon acquainted and started to establish some degree of mutual understanding. Surprisingly, we became old friends in just a few hours. This friendship building was very important to prepare us to face the new challenges and to serve the kids in the orphanage. Interestingly, it was another forty minutes bumpy ride from our hostel to our placement, New Hope Orphanage. After breakfast, we hopped on one of the tuk tuks and the journey started. No doubt that this ride gave me a precious chance to look into Cambodia from another perspective. We passed through the prosperous tourist area, the barren lands, and the poor villages, drifting from concrete roads to bumpy and muddy roads. The children in the orphanage were rushing towards us, hugging us when we first stepped into the site. The friendly welcoming given by those orphans were so touching and heart-warming. At that instant, I was thinking about a question unanswered for a long time, "How come these kids were filled with joy and live a happy life even though they had lost their parents?" When I started my placement for the first day, I was curious to know their ways to pursue happiness. I kept on searching for the answer in these 9 days of volunteer work.

By: Mr.Chi Ho Austin Li, 2WS-July in Siem Reap



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Dirty Weekend at Siem Reap



NLCO is one of our partners in Siem Reap and it's a poor placement. Mr. Phan Rotha, the supervisor, requested to Projects Abroad to build a dining room for the children because the one which they had was too old to use, especially the roof as it was broken. After we got his request, we organized to have our Dirty Weekend at this placement.

We spent the whole day building and volunteers who joined this event were every active and also supported by local staff and the children.

During snack break, everyone enjoyed having snack and soft drink, especially volunteers and children had chance to play some games that were very fun. The kids and NLCO staffs are very happy and thankful to the volunteers and Projects Abroad that built a dining room which made them feel more comfortable while they're having meal.

By: Chou Sovannreangsey, General Assistant Siem Reap