



What's Inside...

CONTENTS

02	Director's Message	18	News and Update
02	Inside and Out		– Visiting in Cambodia <i>By Solfrid</i>
	– Meak Bochea Festival		– Wedding Director
	– Chinese New Year		– New Apartment
	– SFODA - <i>By Peggy</i>		– Extra Information
05	Feature	21	Social Events Review
	– Article by Sara Gingold		– Dirty Weekend and Dinner Party
07	Volunteers' Update		– Playing Soccer
	– Upcoming Volunteers		– The happiest time <i>By Joanna Pike</i>
13	Volunteers' Corner	25	Photos of the month
	– Mytrip... <i>By Clare Stone</i>	26	Miscellaneous
	– My Kids... <i>By Alex McGill</i>		– Char Kroeung and Grilled Corn
	– Work on the... <i>By Katie & Anna</i>	28	Volunteers' Contact List
17	Donation	30	Accommodation Details
	– From Projects Abroad and volunteers	30	Staff Contact Details
	– From Tine McKate and Sarah Wood		

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Welcome to Projects Abroad Cambodia

I am pleased to welcome you to this issue. Everything is well in Cambodia; our volunteers are increasing and keeping our staff happy and busy.

Certainly, not so far from January, in February we have 32 volunteers and most of them have selected Diving and Marine Conservation and Care projects. I hope that we will expose you to the new surrounding environment and you can gain new friends, knowledge and so on.

In February we have two festivals, one is official while the other one is unofficial festival for Chinese New Year. Please read the details of them below.

We have some news related to the apartment, donations and social events which are disseminated in this issue.. There are many articles from our volunteers which I hope you enjoy.

I would like to thank to you all for your hard work and support as always. I wish you all the best for your arrival in Cambodia and back home.

Ok, I will not talk much more.

If you want to express your viewpoint or you want to suggest something to be published in the next issue please kindly comment on our FACEBOOK group or contact our Social Manager: kimseang@projects-abroad.org.

Best regards

Mao Pises

Director of Projects Abroad in Cambodia

INSIDE AND OUT

Meak Bochea Festival

Meak Bochea Day is an important Buddhist celebration and marks an historical occurrence which was a spontaneous and unplanned gathering of monks to listen to sermons by Buddha. This year we celebrated it on 18-Feb-2010 - it is a public holiday in Cambodia.



Today Meak Bochea is a colourful festival with monks gathering at the temples and praying from Buddhist scriptures. The pagodas fill with Cambodians who come to pray and offer tributes of food to the monks. Same as last year, in Cambodia, we celebrated in the Oudong Mountain on 18-Feb-2010. There are a lot of monks collected in the area and a lot of Cambodian Buddhists attended offering food for monks. The reason we always celebrate Meak Bochea at Oudong Mountain is because we keep the bones of Buddha on the top of mountain in a temple.

Origin of Meak Bochea

Meak Bochea, otherwise known as “Fourfold Assembly” or Sangha Day”, marks four historic occasions which happened nine months after Buddha’s enlightenment. On that day in history 2500 years ago four events which are considered to be miracles in Buddhist doctrine took place. The first was the spontaneous meeting of 1,250 enlightened disciples or Arahats, of Buddha. They had heard through word of mouth that Buddha was going to be present at the Veluwan temple in what is now the state of Bihar in Northern India.

Secondly, Buddha had personally ordained each of these monks. Thirdly, each monk arrived without making a prior appointment. Lastly, all these events happened on the day of the full moon during the third lunar month.

Chinese New Year in Cambodia

From Year to Year the population in the world increases, especially in China, and in most parts of the world there are Chinese or half blood Chinese – which we call China town. Cambodia also has a Chinese community. This year the Chinese New year fell on 03 to 05 Feb 2011. In Cambodia, it is a kind of unofficial festival as most of us celebrate the Chinese New Year. Usually they offer food to their ancestors at home one day before Chinese New Year, which we call Offering Day of Chinese New Year . For example, this year Chinese New Year is from 03 to 05 Feb 2011, so Offering Day is on 02-Feb-2011. Significantly, on the first day of Chinese New Year it is believed that if we are happy for the whole day we will have a good time for the whole year. In contrast, if we feel sad and meet bad luck, we will be unlucky for the whole year. On this day parents always give red packets to their sons or daughters and in return the children give a cup of hot tea to thank their parents. The red packet represents good luck and prosperity to the one who receives it. Moreover, on this first day of Chinese New Year, some families will not clean their home at all as they believe that if they clean it is likely all their luck will be collected into the rubbish bin, but if they do not clean all luck will remain in their home for whole year. Chinese New year is not a national public holiday in Cambodia, but during this time sellers or business owners always close their shops and stay at home or go out with their families for pleasure and to relax. For example some families will stay home playing cards for enjoyment. During this festival, traditionally, rich families or businesses will rent the group of Dancing Lions to perform in their home or shop. It represents the bringing of luck and prosperity to their place. We hope that our current volunteers had a good time during Chinese New Year too.

SFODO - care project volunteer - Peggy Dutch Language

DO DARE DREAM, nog steeds het motto van mijn project bij SFODA in Cambodja. Dromen waarmaken, stappen durven zetten en inspireren tot mooie nieuwe dingen.

Er was eens een mooi meisje. Ze was niet alleen heel mooi, ze was ook heel bijzonder, anders. Zoals iedereen anders is, zo ook had zij haar eigen verhaal. Ze woonde sinds haar geboorte in een sloppenwijk. Ze kon niet naar school gaan omdat ze moest werken, vuilnis verzamelen om iets te verdienen om te eten. Haar ouders waren gescheiden en ze woonde samen met haar broertje en zusje bij haar moeder en stiefvader. De kinderen werden geslagen door hun stiefvader. Maar het meisje had een droom, ze wilde heel graag naar school, ontsnappen aan het geweld thuis en later een goede baan vinden. En dat kleine dappere meisje had het lef om een stap te zetten (wellicht niet zonder risico's) naar een betere toekomst door zelf naar een sociaal werker te stappen met haar verhaal en haar wens om opgenomen te worden in het opvang- en scholingscentrum. Do, Dare, Dream...



Dit is niet zomaar een verhaal, dit is realiteit. Wat een inspirerend voorbeeld van “zelf de stap zetten om een verandering teweeg te brengen”.



Naar mijn idee is een van de belangrijkste manieren om mensen in Cambodja te helpen het geven van goed onderwijs en het duidelijk maken van het belang van goed onderwijs. Een andere mooie ervaring was een gesprek met een aantal kinderen en hun (groot)ouders/verzorgers. Om diverse redenen zagen de ouders het belang van verdere scholing niet in. We hebben hen kunnen inspireren door te vertellen dat er voor iedereen kansen zijn, maar dat het aan jezelf is of je iets met die kansen doet. Hoe klein de kans ook lijkt, het

kan grote veranderingen teweeg brengen. We hebben voorbeelden genoemd en hen gemotiveerd door aan te geven dat als een ander het kan, zij het ook kunnen. De weg is misschien niet altijd even makkelijk, maar als je de stap naar je droom zet, kun je deze ook verwezenlijken. Hoe mooi is het om de verandering bij hen waar te nemen en hun dankbare woorden te horen.

Inspireren en geïnspireerd worden

DO, DARE, DREAM...drie voor mij zeer betekenisvolle woorden. In de voorbereiding naar Cambodja door zelf de stap te durven zetten om een langgekoesterde droom waar te maken. Tijdens mijn verblijf in Cambodja door alle verhalen van de kinderen en door het verloop van mijn eigen verhaal.

Inspiratie voor de kinderen, hun omgeving en wellicht ook voor medewerkers en vrijwilligers van Projects Abroad; ik hoop dat ik dat heb gegeven. Inspiratie door de kinderen; ik voel dat dat het grootste geschenk is dat ik mee naar huis neem.

Bedankt lieve kids en alle liefs, Peggy

UPCOMING HOLIDAY

It is International Woman's Day on 08th March 2011 in Cambodia.

We at Projects Abroad Cambodia would like to announce that on the above date our staff will be on holiday, but will still be contactable if you have any urgent problems.

FEATURE

To Me, Every Minute Is Unforgettable.

I honestly don't know where to start when talking about my time in Cambodia. Logically, it would be the beginning- arriving in Phnom Penh, my first time in an Asian country, travelling from order to chaos. If your reading this chances are you will shortly be arriving yourself, and that is what you want to hear about. I am, however, going to skip for a minute to the end, because by time you come to leave Cambodia, I guarantee, you'll be reaching for the tissues.

I was teaching at Riverkids, an organisation that helps children from the slums and their families. Throughout my time there I had the privilege of getting to know some amazing



children. They charm you with their intelligence, cheekiness and sense of humour. Yet one of the best things about the Cambodian experience is getting to know the children you work with individually. You learn which ones like to joke, which are cuddly, which will be naughty and, at the same time, they will learn about you. On the Saturday after our last day (the three of us working there finished at the same time) we had a goodbye party for the children. We hired a tent traditionally used for Khmer weddings, which was in itself pretty exciting, and had a lunch for all the children we taught as well as the Riverkids staff. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves amidst the party atmosphere. By the end of the party however, tears were flowing, as volunteers and children alike had to come to terms with the fact that we were, for now at least, saying goodbye.



Teaching is always meant to be a very rewarding experience, and in Cambodia it is even more so. The children we taught were born into unjust circumstances and despite their intelligence and strong will their situation has always been against them succeeding in life. At Riverkids, however, watching them slowly learn and knowing you have been apart of that process is incredibly heart-warming. The knowledge that you have helped them in a way that will benefit them for the rest of their lives is more valuable than any photo or souvenir from your stay in Cambodia ever will be. While I was there the three of us working there, with the help of very generous funding from the son of other volunteers, also ran a painting project for the kids. This allowed us to teach them in a different style and allowed kids who didn't excel in traditional English classes to shine in a different field. We had a great time with our kids, but one point I will stress is that it is important to leave notes and a detailed curriculum for the volunteers who come after you, in order to create more continuity for the children.

Whilst in Cambodia I also had a great social experience. I met people from all over the world who I would not otherwise have met (as well as many more Australians). I truly value many of these friendships and hope they will remain strong now that we have parted and gone our separate ways. It seemed as if we were always having some fun, always having adventures, and when you need it, there was always someone there. We had some great travel experiences- going up to Siem Riep, Sihanoukville, Kep and, probably the best by far, partying at Sophan's village on New Year's Day. Before leaving I also took the time to go with a couple of other volunteers to Ratanakiri, Kratie and Kampong Cham. I strongly recommend doing this trip if given the chance because, not only was it a lot of fun, but it also gives you the opportunity to see much of Cambodia that you would not see otherwise.

My time in Cambodia was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. I would be lucky to ever be part of anything like it again. Whilst there, treasure every minute, because every minute is unforgettable. **Sara Gingold**

UPCOMING VOLUNTEERS

Let's hear the messages from some of our prospective volunteers who will be coming in February 2011.

Théo Baland

Hi everyone!

I'm Théo, from France! I'm on a gap year before beginning a Psychology course and so I decided to use it to travel and be helpful, that's why I will be in Phnom Penh for the care project! I'm really looking forward to meeting all of you, and to begin my new life for three months!



I'm excited to meet you and all the staff of Projects Abroad!

See you soon!

Best regards,

Théo Baland

Patrick Horne

Hi, my name is Patrick Horne; I'm 18 years old and from Calgary, Alberta, Canada. I'm currently taking this year off from school and plan to start university in the fall to study political science. I'm looking forward to spending March in Cambodia with the diving group. Looking forward to meeting everyone! Thanks.



See you soon!

Patrick

Christina Søgren

Hi Seang

My name is Christina Sjøgren. I come from the capital of Denmark, Copenhagen, where I have lived all my life. At the moment I live in a dormitory and have a busy social life. I study Environmental biology and want to specialise in aquatic biology. In my spare time I see my boyfriend and friends. I'm also a sea scout and love the outdoor life. I'm looking forward to Cambodia and all the experiences. I also believe that my trip will help me in my further studies.



Looking forward to meeting you all.

Kind regards

Christina Sjøgren

Elena Pinakatt

Hi,

My name is Elena Pinakatt, I am 34 years old and German. My husband Prinz and I recently moved to Atlanta, USA because we both work for Coca-Cola who have their headquarters in Atlanta. I have been to Cambodia twice before and really fell in love with the country and the people so I wanted to come back. Now seems like a really good time to do it. I am very excited to meet all my fellow volunteers.



See you all soon.

Elena

Louise Jensen

Hi,

My name is Louise; I'm 19 years old and from Denmark. I graduated from high school last summer, and have been taking this year off.

In August I will be studying Basic Studies in Humanities at Roskilde University.

Before doing so I wanted to experience a different culture and decided that Cambodia would be the place to do so. I'm going to be attending the Diving and Marine Conservation programme, which I'm really looking forward to, since it's something completely different from what I'm going to be studying for the many years to come.



See you soon :)

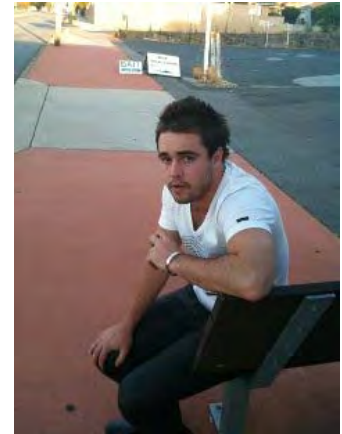
Kind regards

Louise

Joshua Stone

Hello Everyone

My name is Josh; I am 22 and have deferred University for a year to work and travel. I am trying to stay open-minded and have no expectations with regards to volunteering in Cambodia. It's just nice to give a little back and hopefully it will make a difference. I am travelling around South East Asia at the moment and will head on to Europe after Cambodia.



Thanks Seang,

Josh

Sarah Rosenbech Nielsen

Hello Everybody!

My name is Sarah and I am from Denmark. I am 19 years old and taking a year off from school before starting university. I am participating in the Khmer project for one month and then the Care project for one month. I can't wait to come to Cambodia and experience a different and exciting culture, since I have never been outside of Europe! I am very excited about meeting a lot of new people and also working with children, who are growing up under completely different circumstances than me.



See you in March!

Best wishes,

Sarah

Ariane Malo-Sauvé

Hi everyone!

My name is Ariane and I'm currently studying biology and ecology in Québec, Canada. English is my second language so I may make a few mistakes...sorry about that! I will come to Cambodia to do my professional training with Mikaël; he is a classmate of mine. Since I was a kid I've always wanted to dive in the ocean to sea coral reefs. I'm very curious about that ecosystem because we didn't get the chance to study it during my diploma. I just can't wait to dive and have the chance to study for two months incredible organisms such as tropical fishes, corals, anemones, squids and many invertebrates. Also, I would be very proud to learn about Khmers communities and to help them to understand the importance of conservation especially when they are living from fisheries and other natural resources.



See you in March!!

Kind regards

Ariane

Myriam Maraval

Hi

My name is Myriam, I'm 30 and I was born and raised in the south of France. I am just coming back from 6 years in Martinique (French West Indies), where I worked in social and urban development. I am supposed to continue doing that in Marseille, France, but before going back to the European way of life, I wanted to travel and to do something useful. I will be volunteering with the Cambodian Labour Confederation for 2 months. Before that I'll be in Java, Indonesia, and will visit a friend in Vietnam after my time with Projects Abroad.



Looking forward to meet you all!

Best regards

Myriam

Anna Zobel

Hello!

My name is Anna Zobel, I'm 18 years old, and I live in Melbourne, Australia. I'm taking a year off after finishing school to travel around for a while before I begin studying Media and Communications in 2012.



I decided that spending three months in Phnom Penh teaching English would be a great way to both indulge my wanderlust and do something useful. I anticipate that I'll have the opportunity to immerse myself in a completely different culture whilst also giving something back to the community. I've been to South-East Asia once before and I absolutely loved it. I can't wait to get there!

Anna

Jirina Olin Barfoed

Hello everyone!

My name is Jirina I'm 20 years old and live in Copenhagen, Denmark. I'm going on the Marine Conservation project on 1st March and I can hardly wait to go! I really need to get away from the gray, cold and wet Danish weather soon. My 2 month stay there will be the first stop on my trip and I'll be going to Mongolia for 2 months afterwards. I decided to go when I had a year off from school. It will be a great opportunity to see the world and perhaps help where I'm needed, so Projects Abroad was a great choice since I get to do both. I'm looking forward to learning how to dive and to see the jungle and the island-life. I love nature and I'm glad that I get to help maintaining it, just as it's suppose to be. I hope to get to know a lot of new people and learn from them. Perhaps my trip will show me a few new things about myself as well.



Also I'm looking forward to tasting the food in Cambodia since my favourite food is Asian food. I can't wait to taste it made in the traditional way.

Take care and I'll see you soon in Cambodia!

Jirina Olin Barfoed, Denmark

My Trip In Cambodia For Six Months



My time spent in Cambodia is something that was so eye opening, so breath taking, and amazing that I will never ever forget it. My original plan was to stay with Projects Abroad for a month and then travels with my family for another month then go home. Did that happen? No. I stayed for about 6 months in total in the end. I kept extending and staying longer - I did not want to leave and was hoping I would never have to go home. In the end, I needed to be home for the holidays and to apply for school. I will go back in a few months because it's so great.

While I was there, I did the Khmer project for a month. We did so many activities. I felt like a tourist sometimes but it was a good introduction to Cambodia. You get to learn about the art, culture and history of Cambodia and get to see the real beauty of the country. You travel inside and outside of the Phnom Penh and get a taste for different places. For the rest of my time, I did Care and Teaching projects with children. I really fell in love with every



single child. They are so sweet and each is unique. They really want to learn unlike most children back here at home. They all just need attention and love - to be hugged and played with. I signed up to be involved with "dirty weekend" activities at other schools and orphanages. This would involve going and cleaning or helping out at a placement in need of help. I would sometimes travel on the weekends to



places outside of the city like Siem Reap, but mostly I would go to Sihanoukville because I love the beaches. The sand is so soft, skies so blue and the air smells salty. Definitely take some time to travel to the islands because they are the most beautiful thing I've seen ever. People would probably pay thousands to go to some beach resort when you can go to these islands that are more private and wild at a much lower price. Cambodia is in need of volunteers and is an amazing country to be in - full of big smiles, big hearts and yummy food.

Clare Stone

My Kids, My Place, My Time in Cambodia

By Alex McGrill

My motivation for signing up with Projects Abroad was based on a keen desire to change my perspective on life. I had gotten myself into a comfortable routine with university and work, and I knew that I needed to escape it, even just for a little while. Looking back now, I realise that my reasons for going to Cambodia were all about me. I wanted the experience, and I wanted to be challenged, I wanted to give back and I wanted to break out of my routine: I craved something new.



While I'm thankful that these motivations spurred me on to choose Cambodia as my destination, I realise now that the experience, in fact, was not about me. It was about the friends I made and the locals I met. It was about Phnom Penh and the people who live there every day and face things I have no concept of in my own life. But most of all, it was about the kids that I taught every day.

Children are the same all around the world: cheeky, occasionally (or maybe more than occasionally) disobedient, spirited and beautiful. Although we didn't speak the same language, I felt so in tune with them by the end that it was like we had been communicating in the same language the entire time. I guess we were, just not with words. They made me laugh (they spent a lot of time laughing at me too) just by being themselves. Their impersonations of Justin Bieber, their dancing and the cute little things they used to say to me ("teacher Ally crazy") were just a few things that made me love them.

My placement was with the Vocational Development and Training Organisation (VDTO) at Bamboo Shoot School. The school itself is a basic brick building, but I know it's already come a long way from where it began. The atmosphere at the school was lovely; the teachers truly cared about the students and they seemed happy to be there. The director was very supportive and took a real interest in my home country of Australia.

Teaching itself was as challenging as everybody says it is. I almost felt like I had a full-time job; but I wouldn't have had it any other way. Every day I would go back to the apartment and make lesson plans, flash cards and work sheets. Some of the other volunteers and I would also make our daily trip to the International Book Centre to buy supplies or the local



photocopying centre to make copies of work for the kids. It was incredibly important to me that my students were never left without something to do in class. It was truly hard at times. The language barrier, differing learning levels and styles, lack of resources and lack of knowledge of my behalf were some obstacles. Despite this, I've come away from the experience knowing that teaching is exactly what I want to do for the rest of my life.

Volunteering is difficult, primarily because it's hard to understand poverty and tragedy when

you've never experienced it. There were many times when I just cried because I felt helpless and I desperately wanted to see results. I think that's the problem; the Western perception of charity. We give and we want to see visible improvement straight away. I wanted to see my students visibly improve their English. I wanted to know that they would be able to afford university and get jobs and support their families. I can't know this, and a lot of the time I felt like I wasn't able to teach them anything valuable. But the effects are not always visible; they were there in the little things, like being able to make a crying student smile despite not speaking their language.

I was also in Cambodia at the time of the Diamond Bridge stampede. A few of the Projects Abroad volunteers went to the hospital the day after to hand out fruit and water. There are no words to describe what we saw, and I find myself still coming to terms with it now. But again, it's not about me. The Cambodian people suffered so much, and yet they showed spirit and resilience. They grieved, and life went on.

Back in Sydney, I found it a struggle to settle back into my life. Now that I have, I still haven't forgotten what I owe Cambodia. Phnom Penh became my home, and I am so grateful to everybody who made it that way- from the staff members and volunteers, to our wonderful Cambodian cooks. Some of my best memories are sitting on the couch at night (totally and satisfyingly exhausted after a long day at school) and chatting with the wonderful friends I made at the apartment. Everybody was so different and it was such a joy to meet people I would have never met otherwise.



Work on the Island and some advice



Fourteen hours flying, five on a bus and 2 hours on a boat is how long it takes to find a home away from home. Blue seas, lush jungles and plenty of smiling faces is what greeted me as I stepped off the boat onto Koh Rong Samleom: A stark contrast to the snowy streets of Scotland that I had just left.

A typical day on the island starts with breakfast, usually rice or noodles but on occasion there are bread rolls and egg but then only if you get there fast as it's by far the most popular.. Then onto the all important business of my Diving and Conservation project!

The times to dive are 8:00, 10:00, 13:00 and 15:00. Or rather they are supposed to be though in reality “Island time” seems to differ from the usual. It’s always very relaxed!

The first few dives for the majority of volunteers, including me, are training dives but once you have your open water course you can participate in reef surveys, seahorse surveys and reef clean ups while viewing the amazing local wildlife, from parrot fish to blue spotted ribbon tailed sting rays and many more. If you decide to continue with your diving qualifications and do your advanced training there is a chance you might get to do a night dive so keep your fingers crossed!



It’s a definite bonus if you make a real effort to learn how to identify the different types of fish and substrates but the flash cards we learnt with didn’t make it an easy task. The best idea is to grab someone who knows what they are talking about and go snorkelling on House reef.

Learning the fish is hard enough but it’s nothing compared to learning the names of all the children attending the evening English class. If you want you can help out at these classes and it is very rewarding. I’d recommend it as, even though it can be hard work, it is well worth it when everywhere you go there are smiling children shouting “Hello teacher!” or, if you are really lucky, they might even remember your name!

In your free time you can take a wander up to the village and settle yourself at one of the local café/bars (basically a table outside someone’s house) and enjoy an ice coffee or – my favourite – tea grichman (lemon tea).

If some relaxing Island time doesn’t appeal to you, you can participate in some of the smaller projects that are run at the time or, if you are full of inspiration, you can start your own project. While I was on the island the projects included making a campsite, setting up a medical clinic and starting a compost pit. On weekends there is no diving but you can go for a jungle trek with a local guide and their dogs to scare



off the snakes but this is as far as your involvement with the jungle really goes. Otherwise you can jump on a boat and stock up on your western needs from internet to western food and proper showers. However soon you will be missing your bungalow with its friendly

geckos, despite its mosquito population.

Finally I'll leave you with what my friends and I agree are our 3 top tips!

1) Bring a snack supply!

While the food is good and healthy it does get a bit repetitive and snacks are a welcome treat. Also never underestimate the power of bribery!

2) Lots of mosquito repellent

It's a fact of life you will start each day with some new bites but if you are not prepared you will be eaten alive so stock up on some protection.

3) Bring entertainment

Whether its books, iPods, Frisbees or board games you'll be glad of all of them once you have settled in to island life. A deck of cards are always welcomed as well as plenty of new card games. When we were there someone had brought a slack line which gave us hours of fun.

I hope you have as good an experience as I did! Enjoy!

DONATION

Donation from Projects Abroad

Donated 50 note books, 50 blue pens and 1 water purifier to SCCDO as it was urgently needed for the kids.



Donation from Tine McKate

Donated machine Cut-Off to the SFODA placement as well as donating 500US dollars.

Pawel donate 100 bunches of bananas for the kids at VCAO.



Donation from Sarah Wood

Sarah Wood donated money to built rooms for the kids at CUCO which is the placement she has worked for.



Visiting in Cambodia by Solfrid Hanna - Our Colleagues

I did not want to leave Cambodia. There was so much that I still hadn't seen and done. Luckily I will be hearing from volunteers who have the time to experience the people, nature and the temples of Cambodia. Cambodia, I will be back!



In November I was fortunate enough to travel to Cambodia to meet my colleagues and the volunteers on our various projects in Cambodia. Ten days was not enough to see everything I would have liked to, but it was enough to have a little taste of what this country has to offer both volunteers and tourists. On my first day in Cambodia I was transported to some of the projects in

the same way as the volunteers are transported every day. I was told that the volunteers have a choice between going by moto (small motorbike or moped) or by tuk-tuk, and that it is mostly the middle aged volunteers that chose tuk-tuks. Still in my thirties, it had to be by moto for me!

Oh the traffic! Total chaos at first, but after a few minutes on the back of my colleague Sophans moto it became clear that even if there are no rules to be followed, there are some unwritten traffic rules. Rule number one: Lexus SUV's always have the right of way. There are quite a few of those big monsters, in such a contrast to the tiny moto's with complete families sitting tightly together. But the big cars are excellent for using as shelter when crossing a busy junction.

The first orphanage I visited was a huge state run orphanage with 118 mostly disabled children and children with hiv/aids. It was clean, tidy, the children had beds, and both children and staff looked happy. The director told us that the reason they ended up with so many disabled children was that the privately owned orphanages and Non-Governmental Organisation's (NGO's) did not have the resources or funding to take care of children with special needs. The orphanage had just received two more children after social services had called nine other homes to ask them to take in two small children who were found walking the streets on their own, but none of the other homes would take in more children at that time.

This home had a physiotherapy department where the disabled children receive regular treatment and training. A lot of the children have Cerebral Palsy and need training every day. I met some excellent physio-volunteers doing a great job, and exchanging their skills with the only two physiotherapists employed by the home. Some long term volunteers have even set up a sensory room for the children to enjoy! Most of these children are not orphans, they are abandoned. Parents choose to give up their children out of lack of



resources, whether their child is disabled or not.

At the next orphanage I went to I met a four month old baby who was abandoned by his mother only two hours after he was born. She left him at the maternity clinic. It is assumed that she could not pay her hospital bill, and walked out leaving her baby behind. This orphanage was much smaller. 44 children live there and in addition the NGO, which has some funding from the Netherlands, it also does social work among prostitutes and young people with hiv/aids.

The last orphanage I visited looked like the poorest orphanage out of the three. They have no permanent funding, so there is a constant struggle to provide for the children. The home was run by one man and his wife, a few staff, and with the help of a couple of volunteers. I asked the director who owns the orphanage, and he told me it was his own NGO. He grew up in an orphanage himself, and he was allowed to go to school. He felt he had a good life, , he felt so fortunate that he wanted to help children himself. Now he lives and works day and night at his own creation. He has little money, but there was a sparkle in his eyes when he was talking about how he managed to send all of his 77 children to school.

Two Dutch girls were volunteering at this orphanage. They had done some fundraising at home and collected money for a water filter system. Now it was hanging on the wall, bright and new, and the hope is that now fewer of the children will become ill. The volunteers and the director had gone to buy the filter system together, and with some negotiation they managed to get two for the price of one. There was lots of happy children drinking water from the new system on the day we visited!

For lunch all volunteers head back to the volunteer houses for a lovely meal prepared by their very own cook. After lunch there is some time for a nap or a chat before your driver picks you up to go back to work a few more hours on your project. In the evening it is very easy for the volunteers to socialize as all the volunteer houses are situated next to each

other; they can head out for a night out or chill under the stars on their private roof top terraces.



After a few days of orphanage visits it was time for me to visit Project Abroad's Marine Conservation project in Cambodia. At the island Koh Rong Samleom, the volunteers take a diving certificate within their first week, and then they are ready to take part in the marine

research project. The project focuses on documenting reef-bleaching, population counts of sea horses and identifying fish and other sea creatures. Since the start of the project three years ago, the volunteers and project staff have identified 94 new fish species and added them to the official Cambodian register of sea species. The project has also successfully pushed the government and local authorities to protect the reef from fishing with nets and other harmful fishing methods. Hardly any of the volunteers have a science background, but they are still able to contribute amazingly on the project, with a little bit of training along the way. I am very impressed!

Only staying for a couple of days, I did not have a chance to learn to dive or to do any research myself, but I put a snorkel and mask on and swam out to the reef. No wetsuit needed as the water held 29 degrees Celsius. I had been warned of the scary sea urchins, and of course the first thing I encountered was a huge spiky sea urchin. Getting over the initial scare, I enjoyed the tropical fish and a beautiful blue clam embedded in the coral, and I was slightly envious of the volunteers who get to do this for work every day.

On land I hung out with the volunteers, had a cold drink in the small village (population of 200), kept huge geckos for pets in my bungalow, had bucket showers, slept under a mosquito net and absolutely did not want to leave this paradise island.

Luckily I had two days off for sightseeing in Cambodia, and did what all volunteers do. I travelled to Siem Reap to see the wonderful temples of Angkor. Since I am not a writer, I can only say that I have no words to describe Angkor Wat and the surrounding temples. I was only there for a short time, but I think the experience and the beauty of the area will be overwhelming whether you have a day or a week to take in the different temples. No journey to Cambodia is complete without a visit to Angkor Wat.

All my travelling and work in Cambodia was only made possible by the very good help of my colleagues at Projects Abroad Cambodia. Thank you very much for providing a wonderful stay, and I hope to see you again soon!

Solfrid Hanna, Projects Abroad Norway.

Director of Meak Chheu

Congratulation to Mr Bun Toksela, director of Meak Chheu orphanage who got married to Miss Pao Chantha on 22-Jan-2011.

We would like to wish him happiness and prosperity for the rest of their lives together.

New Apartment

From January 2011, the number of volunteers will increase which has encouraged us to manage other apartments for our volunteers to stay in.

The address of the new apartment is quite far from the old one. Why? Because some of the placements and orphanages are quite far from the old apartment so we decide to rent one which not as far from the placement. So now some volunteers who are allocated to work in the area of the new apartment will find it much easier to go to and come back from their placements.

Extra Information

Recently we have created these links, just click on them to see our Facebook group, monthly newsletter, and blog posts.

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=29195831915>

<http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk/volunteer-destinations/cambodia/newsletters-from-cambodia/>

http://www.mytripblog.org/mod/blog/group_blogs.php?gl=true&group_guid=2845

SOCIAL EVENTS

Dirty Weekend

It was such a big day on 26th Jan as about 30 volunteers participated in our Dirty Weekend. First, we had planned to help build some part of the placement but as Sarah Wood had fundraised from home, she decided to donate the money to build three



rooms for orphaned kids to live and study in. With Projects Abroad volunteers we achieved a lot even though it is quite far from the apartment.



Soccer playing in group of Volunteer



Everybody likes sport as it is good for health and it is an activity which strengthens



ns friendship. Last week Projects Abroad Cambodia's volunteers had been invited to join in playing soccer with a group of Cambodian students.

Immediately after coming back from work our volunteers gathered in Apartment 1 then left to the soccer play court which is located close to the apartment. In total, we had about 20 volunteers; only 8 of them played and the rest of volunteers decided to sit and watch. The volunteers group get a goal, we all shout out Wow :-)) and cheer them on.

We played for about 1 hour, and the winner was the volunteers group 8 versus 3.

Monthly Dinner Party

The monthly dinner party is what we are always waiting for. On 28th Jan we celebrated it at Boeng Meas restaurant. There were around 50 participants in total.



The pictures are available in the Official Projects Abroad Cambodia facebook.

The happiest time with the kids at the pool

On Saturday the 16th January, Lucile, Jim, Jo and other volunteers from the Cambodian Hope Association (CHA) took the 70 children from CHA to the Peace Swimming Pool.... though it wasn't actually called that when we were there!

When we arrived at the orphanage the kids were already packed into 10 tuk tuks, with music playing, smiles galore and bouncing bodies raring to go! (Sorry 9 tuk tuks, the 10th was packed with 80 sandwiches and an abundance of fruit, lollies, juice and water!)

Half an hour later, we arrived at the pool, split into groups, but then realised that was unnecessary, as the two main areas were easy to cover with so many volunteers. The kids immediately got changed into their other clothes, very similar to their first set, and then jumped in the pool, squealed down the slides and got pulled about by the flying fox.

About half way through the day the little ones had a nap on the benches! Although many played right through, with no break apart from scoffing down a sandwich, along with the rest of the food carried by that one tuk tuk.

The slides seemed a little rickety and rusty, but I think the volunteers enjoyed it just as much as the kids as they splashed down, landing sideways into the water after the scarily fast ride.

At about 4 o'clock we took a group photo and the kids' weary faces told me it was finally time to go home after a 7 hour day! We packed up again, and left hoping we hadn't missed anyone in the toilets!



All the kids were so grateful, and I wouldn't be surprised if they were all dreaming about it as they slept soundly on the tuk tuk ride home.

A very successful day, sure to be remembered by the kids and the volunteers for many years to come!



PHOTOS OF THE MONTH



CHA KROEUNG

Ingredients:

For the kroeung paste

- 2 stalks lemongrass, thinly sliced
- 5 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- 1 large shallot, coarsely chopped
- 1 1/2 teaspoons galangal, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 6 kaffir lime leaves,
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric
- 2 chillies, chopped and seeded
- 1/2 cup water



For the stir-fry

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 600 g beef or 600 g chicken
- 3 tablespoons fish sauce
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 large onion, peeled and sliced into wedges
- 1 red pepper, sliced (bell pepper) and other vegetable as your favourite
- 1/2 cup roasted peanuts, ground
- rice , for serving

How to Cook:

1. Blend all the paste ingredients in a blender until smooth.
2. Transfer the paste to a bowl, add the meat and mix well.
3. Heat the oil in large wok over medium



heat. Add meat, stirring well until browned.

4. Add fish sauce, sugar and salt and stir until the sauce is bubbling.
5. Add the onion wedges, some vegetable and cook, stirring, until soft and translucent.
6. Add the red capsicum and 6 tablespoons of roasted peanuts. Stir for another minute, then remove from heat.
7. Sprinkle with remaining peanuts and serve with rice vermicelli noodles, lettuce, fresh mint and bean shoots.

Khmer Snack: Grilled Corn

Ingredients:

- 6 ears corn, husks and silk removed
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 1/2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 green onions, white parts only, thinly sliced
- vegetable oil, for brushing



How to make:

1. Prepare charcoal grill or preheat an ungreased cast-iron skillet over medium heat.
2. Very lightly brush the corn with oil and set on the grill rack or in the skillet.
3. Cook, turning every 2-3 minutes, until the kernels are tender and nicely charred, 12-15 minutes total; keep warm.
4. Meanwhile, in a bowl stir together the fish sauce, water, sugar and salt until it is dissolved.
5. Heat the 2 tbsp oil in a saucepan over medium heat until very hot but not smoking.
6. Carefully pour liquid mixture in (it may sputter a bit so watch out); add the green onions and simmer until the sauce begins to thicken, about 30 seconds; remove from heat and cool.
7. Brush cooked corn with the sauce and serve.