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Welcome to Projects Abroad



To begin the first page of March's newsletter 2010, allow me to take this great time to wish all women readers a happy, healthy and prosperous International Women's Day.

This month on 8th March 2010, thousands of events are held throughout the world to inspire women and celebrate achievements.

Cambodia's government and other NGO also celebrated events of Women's Day. The day is representing women's rights in society. Women definitely have the right to study, work, and participate in society. The local activity connects women from all around the world ranging from political rallies, business conferences, and government activities and networking events, through to local women's craft markets, theatrical performances, fashion parades and more. Furthermore, they can share their ideas and experiences for developing in society. In addition, I would like to wish Mok Sopheak Vattey, our accountant staff, and Mr. Chem Rithy, director of CHA (which is one of our partners), to have a happy couple life forever after getting married.

Well, as you may know, Projects Abroad Cambodia has been smoothly running for over four years. Last month is the time that Suzi Lamb, International Development Manager from the UK's Head Office, has visited us again and helped to update the Diving and Marine Conservation project. So I would like to send a thank you message to her and hope that she will deliberately visit us again in the future. What's more, I would like to express my gratitude for all volunteers who have spent their priceless time to volunteering in Projects Abroad Cambodia. I believe that you have gained a great experience, true cultural knowledge and a good time in here. For the next volunteers who are coming soon, we are waiting to welcome and help you in Cambodia.

What you properly expect - is what we are trying to fulfill for you.

Hope you enjoy reading in this newsletter.

Best regard

Mao Pises

Director of Projects Abroad in Cambodia

CAMBODIAN WEDDING CEREMONY

In Cambodian society, a wedding is the main obligation for men and women before they want to start their life together. Those who dare to have sexual relations outside marriage are considered as unacceptable and destroy their own reputation in society.

In previous eras, normally, Cambodians always celebrate a traditional wedding ceremony for three days. The first day is called "Thngia Chol Rung", the second day is "Thngia C Kom Not" and the last day is "Thngia Som Pes". However, in this era, a traditional wedding ceremony is shorter than traditional weddings in the past. To be exact, it only takes one day to complete. And they celebrate Pithi Soat Mun one day before the wedding day; it is done in the evening. Many working Cambodians do not have the time to set up a very long wedding ceremony. Below are the aspects of a Cambodian Wedding ceremony.

Pithi Soat Mun - Blessings from the Monks

Traditionally, three to five monks or as many as seven will invoke blessings which have been specifically chosen for the couple by the monks. Out of respect and reverence for the monks, all people are asked to remain silent while the bride and groom receive their blessings during this ceremony. We do it in the evening of the day before the wedding day.



Pithi Hae Chhumnun (Presentation Dowry)

In the morning, around 7:00pm of the wedding day, a Cambodian wedding begins with the groom and his family travelling to the bride's home bearing gifts to the bride's family as dowry. The groom, escorted by his best man, parents, and relatives and guests arrive at the bride's house. The groom and all the people wait outside the bride's house until she comes out. Then, the groom offers flowers to the bride and takes photos. After that they enter the house all together. Family members and friends are introduced.



Three traditional songs accompany the presentation of dowry:

Neay Pream He Kaun Kamlas (Arrival of the Groom): A song telling the story of the groom and his family's journey to the bride's house bearing meats, fruits, pastries, drinks and desserts of every variety to be presented on the wedding day.

Chambak Rouy (Presenting the Dowry): A dialogue between the matchmakers, parents, relatives, and friends of the bride and groom in which the groom's family and friends officially present the dowry gifts to the bride's family.



Pak Paeuk Pisa Sla (Inviting the Elders to Chew Betel Nut): Presentation of the betel nut to the bride and groom's elders. In turn, parents of both the bride and groom ask for blessings and well-wishes for their children.

Some guest will have breakfast which is prepared for them then go home. Some guest will wait until the ceremony done in the morning.

Pithi Exchange Ring

The bride and the groom exchange rings and they wear each other's. First, the groom wears the ring for bride and then the bride does the same for the groom.



Kat Sak (Hair Cutting Ceremony)

To prepare the bride and groom for their life as a married couple, their hair is symbolically cut, representing a fresh start to their new relationship together as husband and wife. The master of ceremony performs the first symbolic hair cut and wishes the couple happiness, prosperity, and longevity. The bride and groom's parents, relatives, and friends then take turns to symbolically cut the bride and groom's hair and give them blessings and well-wishes. (In the old days, the bride and groom's hair were really cut during this ceremony, but in modern times it is only done symbolically.) Two songs accompany this ceremony:



Sarika Keiv Vong (The Beautiful Cardinal Bird): The bride's beauty is extolled and compared to that of the beautiful cardinal bird.



Trapeang Peiy (The Village Pond): This song describes a pond with clear water where the bride was brought to take her bath. It also symbolizes the bride and groom working together in beginning their new life as wife and husband.

Pithi Leang Chhoung (Foot Cleaning Ceremony)



The bride cleans the groom's feet. This means that the groom has to adapt to married life and not acting as though he is living the single life. Then, the groom gives an envelope of money to the bride. Then, they enter the room.



Sompeas Ptem (Paring Ceremony)

In this final and most memorable stage of the wedding, family members and friends tie the bride and groom's left and right wrists with blessing strings. The praises and well-wishes of happiness, good health, success, prosperity, and long-lasting love are acknowledged and witnessed by the loud sound of the gong and joyful cheer. The ceremony concludes with a shower of palm flowers thrown over the new couple. And



close family and friends are invited to come forward to bring their best wishes and blessings to the new couple by individually tying ribbons around each of their wrists. These knots are tied on both the bride and groom, who were traditionally required to wear them for three days afterwards to preserve the good luck. This



ceremony has customarily been considered an ideal opportunity to take a picture of each guest in attendance with the new couple. Four songs accompany this ceremony:

Phat Cheay: A melody inviting the bride, accompanied by her bridesmaids, to the

pairing ceremony. A distinguished female relative leads the bride into the room.

Kang Saeuy: A melody accompanying the offering of gifts to the ancestor spirits and asking for their blessings.



Bangvel Po Pil (Seven rotations passing of blessings): Only married couples are permitted to sit around the bride and groom as the sacred flame is rotated seven times around the new couple. The flame of the pure bee-wax candle represents anger, which the couple should avoid as it can disrupt the marriage relationship. The smoke of the flame, however, is sacred enough to protect them from all evils if they are sincerely committed to each other. Family members who receive the candle motion their hands over the flame to guide the smoke of the sacred flame over the bride and groom.

Bay Khon Chang Dai (Tying the Wrists): While the bride and groom's wrists are tied with the blessing strings, the following song is sung: "We tie, we tie three strings to each wrist of our children. We wish for true happiness and success to this couple, who will always be together like wet grass seeds. We tie your left wrist to make you remember your parents. We tie your right wrist to make you carry on the family lineage and traditions."

After completion of all the ceremony, the official ceremony is done in the morning. And they wait to have a wedding party in the evening.

FEATURE

DIRECTOR OF CHA WEDDING PARTY



On 03th March 2010 it is Mr. Chem Rithy's, director of Cambodian Hope Association (CHA), wedding day. All the Projects Abroad Cambodia team were invited to join his wedding. This is the good news for our former volunteers who used to work at CHA. For the next volunteers who will work with CHA would recognize his and his wife's face easily. He briefly told us that his wife is his ex-colleague who worked with him at an orphanage for the last four years and he started to fall in love with his wife since that time. Then, after he created his own orphanage, which is

running smoothly by the oversee donor, he decide to marry her. On that day, director of Projects Abroad Cambodia, Mr. Mao Pises, and some staff, had joined the wedding party in the evening.

I hope this couple have a brilliant future and keep their love forever lasting. And hope that they will have a baby soon!



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day has been observed since in the early 1900's, a time of great expansion and turbulence in the industrialized world that saw booming population growth and the rise of radical ideologies.

The first Cambodian celebration of International Women's Day kicked off on March 8th 1994 with a three day long festival. Pink and green banners proclaiming "End Violence against Women" and "Women Build Peace" were strung up in Phnom Penh's streets. A peace walk by Buddhist monks and nuns meandered through Phnom Penh's prostitution district. As many as 1,000 marchers, with flowers, incense sticks and candles showed up, with the day ending in a candlelight ceremony at the Independence Monument.

On International Women's Day which falls on March 8, parades with floats are held in many towns around the country, speeches are made and exhibitions of varying sizes are held across the country.

In Phnom Penh, an exhibition sponsored by the Women's Ministry would display more than 100 types of goods produced by Cambodian women, including silk handbags and scarves. Women farmers show off fruits and vegetables grown free of pesticides and chemicals.

NGO sponsored women's organizations would march with banners and high spirits in a parade to Angkor Wat. And in Takeo Province, women garment workers sing while campaigning for the rights to food for HIV/AIDS patients, especially women and children. Elsewhere, a photography exhibition to showcase the contributions of Cambodian women towards rebuilding the country is open to the public.

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

A special holiday in Cambodia is Khmer New Year holiday; it falls on 14th 15th and 16th April 2010. During this festival, all workers will have a holiday and enjoy to visiting their hometown or some resort as they prefer. However, the first day, they have to stay home to offer a fruit and pray to Tevada (Angle) for good luck and prosperity.

Second holiday time of April is on 28th April 2010, It is Visak Bochea day. Mostly, Cambodians will go to pagoda.

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

UPCOMING VOLUNTEERS

Phill Sargeant (Diving and Marine Conversation Projects)



I am Phill Sargeant from the UK; I am- 24 years old. I will do Diving and Marine Conservation project for two months in Cambodia. I am really looking forward to coming to Cambodia and working as a volunteer in Cambodia until June. I am hoping, with my arrival date, that I will get to share in some of the Cambodian New Year festivities. But we will have to wait and see how things work out. I hope everything is going well for all of you at the moment in Diving and Conservation in Cambodia. What an amazing opportunity, I really cannot wait to get over to you all and get stuck into island life, that's for sure. I have not done very much diving before, only when being wiped off my surfboard, but I am certainly looking forward to dedicating time down under the sea and on those reefs, awesome...A big hello to everybody already out on the island, and indeed all of my fellow volunteers for April

through to June; I'm looking forward to meeting and hanging out with all you guys; looks like we will be having the time of our lives out there, and I am stoked. It's going to be amazing, I can feel it."

Christianne Chevre (Care Project)

My name is Christianne, I will arrive in Cambodia on 5 April 2010. I'm very excited to come; I already now have trouble sleeping because I think a lot of this trip :) I think it's a very big chance for me to come to your Country, to discover a new culture, new people, and another☺. It's the first time for me, so an experience. I was in India, South America and many other countries, but I never had the chance to work in those countries. Travelling for me mean meeting people; it's for me not very important to see famous places, or famous edifices, I can see that on the internet ;). So I think this opportunity is the best for what I want, simultaneously to help and discover, perfect :)!

I have a little bit of anxiety too because it's new and unknown, I think it's normal! Anxiety to breathe at the beginning, like India, the weather is very different, I need a little moment to adapt; it's not a big problem. I have anxiety too, to love too much, the children and other people too.

Emily Wood (Care Project)



My name is Emily and I am 19 years old. After being a member of the Charity Committee at my school, I really wanted to take a gap year to volunteer and help others in another country. I am really looking forward to experiencing a new culture, people and way of life. My sister has travelled to Cambodia and has told me great things about the country, which has made me very excited! I love socialising and meeting new people as well as reading and going to clubs and concerts. I babysit frequently and love children so can't wait to meet the Cambodian children I will be working with. I'm also excited to try new food and ride on a tuk-tuk.

FORMER-VOLUNTEERS

Article from Helen Bohm Andersen - Volunteer of Diving & Marine Conservation Projects



No place is like the island of Koh Rong Samloem. You may love the island, which has a small village with nice and wonderful people. The island has no cars and motorcycles.

The view is just something special. When you wake up in the morning and look out from the bungalow five meters from the sea, the smile is hard to hide.

Even if you have mosquito's bites and sand in your bed the feeling is freedom and it's there always.

And when you discover that you just can take on your dive equipment in 4 minutes and go diving, it's even more satisfaction. Isn't life beautiful!

I left Sweden on 4 of January 2010 and didn't know what adventure I had in front of me.

In the end of my journey to Cambodia I had a boat trip for two hours before I could take my first step on the island. When I arrived, a lot of people met me with a smile and were excited to show and tell me about the islands treasure.

The life and living on the island is simple and easy if you make it that way, everything is up to you. If you have to have a mobile phone that is working every second, internet, hairdryer, candy' or nice painted toe nails I would choose another place. I will also be sorry for you, that you will miss the best opportunity to explore yourself and the underwater environment Cambodia can offer.

The island has more to offer like seahorse surveys, reef surveys, reef clean-ups, beach clean-ups, culture, and jungle treks with special orchids, children's kindness and their interest of learning English.

And when you have worked with this for some months you can tell that you have helped and actually done something for the environment and you can feel happiness and go back home but not without tears.

When you have thoughts during your stay that you would like to have a pizza instead of rice, hot shower, yoghurt and meet other people and use internet you can take the boat to the mainland Sihanouk Ville.

But when you arrive the mainland and smell the exhaust gas, see all the traffic, tourists, feeling the heat even more between the buildings, you will grab your western food, buy things that you like and send some emails to your friends and then hit the boat back next day to the island you just love!

The feeling you have every time you come back and view the harbour – home sweet home!

Let's go diving! YES!

The best relax meditation you can have and after the dive you feel like a new human being except if you do the rescue diver, then you feel totally worn out but with a huge smile and a satisfaction that you did it. Best course so far.

If you never dived before and are going to start on the island, I just say lucky you, can't find a better place to train to be a diver, good instructors and you can do it as fast or slow you want to. Make you a better diver and more confident.

Good luck and enjoy life on the island!!

Helen Bohm Andersen, Sweden

Article from Andrea Lowing - First Volunteer at Meak Cheeu of Care Projects

I arrived in Phnom Penh in January at midnight to embark on a two month care placement. Driving from the airport to the apartment late of night, I did not immediately get much sense of what Phnom Penh was like - that all changed the next morning. My first trip around the city in a tuk-tuk was a sensory experience. The city's colours, noises and street food aromas just hit me and riding in a tuk-tuk or on a motor I really felt 'part' of the traffic. My experience of Phnom Penh is that it is a city of contrasts, it is in part beautiful, it is in part tough for the many people who live in poverty in the slums for example.



I have just finished a two month placement at UNACAS (Unaccompanied Association) - an orphanage in the village of Bek Chan about an hour's ride by tuk-tuk from the volunteer apartment. The orphanage is home to 90 children aged from 6 to 20, who live in two separate buildings (boys and girls) in grounds which includes a small farm area. The orphanage sustains itself in part in terms of food as they grow vegetables, breed chickens, pigs and have a pond for fish, and they supplement this with food bought in the village. I enjoyed my time at UNACAS immensely. My days were filled with playing and providing care for the younger children - they particularly enjoyed being read to, colouring in pictures, drawing, and playing with bouncy balls, skipping, jigsaws and various arts and crafts activities. They are very inventive and have a number of games involving sticks, stones and shapes drawn on the floor in chalk, which I was often invited to join in. The older boys play a lot of football, basket ball and volleyball and memory games like 'pairs' and simple card games such as 'uno' are popular with all ages.

I spent an hour a day teaching English to the staff (the 'mothers', the cooks and the security guard). My tuk-tuk driver also joined in, and was an amazing help with writing the Khmer translations on the board. What struck me was that even though they could not speak any English and were so keen to learn. We started off simple with ABC etc and progressed quickly to fruits, vegetables, clothes, cooking methods - the kind of words and phrases they wanted to learn to try to communicate with English speaking visitors.

This was a totally unexpected, but very rewarding aspect of the placement.

One Sunday I went with another volunteer to meet the staff and children at a water park just outside Phnom Penh - this was great much fun and wonderful to see the children, so excited in a different environment doing back flips into the water and using the various slides. I would recommend going along if you are invited to any days out with your placement - or some volunteers I know have organised their own e.g. a trip to the park.

My advice to future volunteers would be to come with an open mind, my experience is one of many. Speaking to the other volunteers - our experiences varied widely. Some volunteers work in schools, some in orphanages; a couple accompany Cambodian social workers into the slum areas. Some orphanages are better equipped than others and tasks can vary a lot. I enjoyed my placement, because although I did not have any intense care activities (as the children were older and there were no babies to care for) I felt by getting involved with the children's games (which the staff do not have time to do) as well as incorporating a little English we all benefitted - and had fun. I did experience a different placement when I took part in the 'dirty weekend', which involved a cleanup at a school for children who work in and around one of the city's dumps - it was very different to my orphanage, good to help and beneficial to me to see a different placement to my own.

Outside Phnom Penh, there are plenty of opportunities for travel - I have visited Siem Reap to see the temples of Angkor (a must), to Rabbit island, a small island off the town of Kep to sleep in the beach bungalows and to Sihanoukville, the beach and party town. Cambodians are very helpful, friendly and smiling people - this is a great part of the culture. I would recommend reading something about the history of Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge, it really puts things into perspective. Overall I have loved my experience here, I'm glad I volunteered for two months, one would not have been enough. I plan on returning, perhaps in a few years - I really want to visit the orphanage and see the children and staff once again.

PROJECT UPDATE

Cambodia Conservation Project Update by Suzi Lamb, International Development Manager

In February 2010, almost one year on from my first visit to Koh Rong Samleom, I returned to the island. Last year I visited to make final checks before our first volunteer arrived in March, this year I was greeted by 16 volunteers and I was arriving with three more!

The change and development made on the Conservation Project in less than a year is staggering. We have had over 50 volunteers join the project in the last 12 months, and

Projects Abroad now employ three full time staff who work alongside the Marine Conservation Cambodia team.

The conservation base has changed with 5 more volunteer bungalows springing up and extra wings added to the communal area. Just down the beach from the volunteer area there is now a restaurant and extra bungalows for tourists; income from this also goes to support the project.

The village has changed a bit too, there are three small bars, and the shops have started selling snacks like Pringles to the volunteers.

The volunteers are working hard on a wide variety of projects including seahorse and reef surveys, beach clean-ups, reef salvage dives, orchid surveys in the jungle interior of the island, making anti-trawling devices and a wide variety of community projects with the local village, from building an incinerator to landscaping the area around the village school.

There is now the opportunity for volunteers to get involved in the village school by combining a teaching and conservation project, or even just helping out with a few extra evening lessons. In the evenings you can relax in a hammock, have a beer in one of the village bars, watch a DVD in the communal area, or play games and cards. One night we had a bonfire on the beach to say goodbye to a volunteer leaving the next day. The night sky is incredibly clear, as there is no light pollution, so simply star gazing is another popular pastime!

Island life perhaps isn't for everyone, the accommodation is basic, cold water bucket showers and the generator runs for just a few hours in the evening, so there are no fans. However, most of the volunteers have adapted quickly and I slept much better on the island than in a hotel room with air-con in Phnom Penh!

I'd like to say a big thank you to all the hard working Conservation staff, dive staff, cooks, cleaners, builders, the chain saw man, the Projects Abroad staff in Phnom Penh, the welcoming villagers of Koh Rong Samleom and to Paul Ferber, Director of Marine Conservation Cambodia, without whom none of this would have been possible.



I hope I get the chance to write an update similar to this about our five year anniversary! Though I very much hope I get to visit again before then.

CLEAN UP DAY AT VCAO



The desire to explore something is one of volunteers' expectations. The Cleanup Day organised on 18th Feb-2010 at Vulnerable Children Assistance Organization is the day that some of our volunteers sharply felt excited and a bit tired since we had a lot of things to be cleaned.

We started from 9:00am to 3:00pm, by sharing work responsibility we had cleaned the placement surrounding environment. Some volunteers collected rubbish, cleaned the classroom, cutting grass at the backyard of the placement and so on. Materials had been



provided before starting to clean.

Then, we relaxed for around one hour to have lunch all together. While eating fried noodles almost all volunteers find it hard to use chopsticks because they never used them before. Anyway, we could eat it slowly. Again, I am so sorry about that and I wish cook made fried rice instead. Really Sorry!



Next, we started again in the afternoon,

Of course, everybody felt absolutely tired; even so we still kept smiling to each other and completed almost all activities.

Hey everybody, I would like to

thank you so much from the bottom of my heart for your hard work on that day and sorry for any inconvenience which happened unintentionally.



WEDDING PARTY

After an invitation wedding letter was sent to all volunteers, they are eagerly waiting to join Vattey's wedding on 26-Feb-2010. When the day came, all volunteers joined the wedding party in the evening and half of them joined the official ceremony in the morning. They felt astonished by the wedding celebration; all enjoyed the taste of the food, were happy with the dancing time, and understood about some aspects of the traditional Khmer wedding ceremony.



Now let's hear the thank message from Mok Sopheakvattey who was the bride on that day.

Hello everyone!



I am Vattey, the accountant of Projects Abroad in Cambodia. It was my pleasure to let you know about my feelings on my wedding day. It was a wonderful day for me in my life that I could have the opportunity to invite all my colleagues, close friends and all my relatives to join my party, especially it was really a good opportunity for me to invite Projects Abroad volunteers to join. I am so glad to see all of them at my day. Moreover, I can see all of them were so happy to say congratulations to me; everyone had fun together, enjoyed the food, drink and dance and especially, for all volunteers to have a chance to see our traditional wedding party from the morning until the party finished.

Last but not least, I would like to say thanks you to all my colleagues and Projects Abroad volunteers that spent their valuable time to join my wedding party and also make the party more fun and pleasure.

At last I wish all of you good luck, prosperity and full of joy in your life.

DINNER PARTY



On 5th Feb 2010, we had a dinner with a few new volunteers. They talked about their feelings in Cambodia for the first time. For example, Jannifer, our Teaching volunteer, said this is the first time for her to be away from home so she misses her family, especially her mom. However, she hopes that she will have a good time in Cambodia. . . Then, we went to night market to walk around and bought bag. Then we went back to the apartment.

Again, on 18th Feb 2010, some volunteers accompanied by Jean Pierre, our Care Projects volunteer, had dinner at Mexican restaurant in order to celebrate his birthday. He is very kind, friendly and gentle so all volunteers like him and consider him as their Father. Special thanks to Sara Jo-Whiteman that she facilitated this party, and all the volunteers who contributed for Jean Pierre's food bill.



PHOTO IN MONTH



MISCELLANEOUS

LAB SACH KOR (Beef Salad)



❖ *How to cook*

- 1- Heat up a small saucepan in medium high temperature. When the saucepan is hot, pour cooking oil and immediately add garlic and lemon grass.
- 2- Stir Pour water into the saucepan, when the water boiled, stir prohok in. Stir well.
- 3- Remove from the stove before add sugar, lemon juice and chilli paste. Taste the sauce, and increase or decrease prohok, or sugar to your liking.
- 4- Mix the meat with sauce thoroughly then add shredded veggies.
- 5- Top with chopped chilli, crushed peanuts, mints or basils before serving.

❖ *Ingredients*

- 1 lb of lean beef, slice thin
- 3 tablespoons fish paste "prohok" or anchovy
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh lemon grass.
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil
- 1 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 chopped fresh chilli, bell pepper, ¼ shredded cabbage, 2 shredded carrots
- ¼ cup crushed, roasted, unsalted peanuts, and a handful of basils and mints.