

Cambodia

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

Community Health Education



Since 1961.

Program: Community Health Education

Job Title: Health Education Extension Agent

Dates of Service: September 23, 2016 to September 23, 2018 *

Staging Dates: July 22, 2016 *
(in the USA)

Pre-Service Training

(in Cambodia): July 25 – September 23, 2016

*dates subject to change

AA154 = 3760BR

AA155 = 3761BR



This document is intended to give an overview of the project you are invited to work on in the Peace Corps. For more detailed information about Cambodia and living there, please read the Welcome Book via the link included with your invitation and check out the related Web sites referenced in the welcome book.

For further information about serving as a Health Education Extension Agent in Cambodia, call the Country Desk Officer for Cambodia at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., (9AM to 5PM, EST):

Toll-free: 1-855-855-1961, press 1, then extension 1184;
or directly at (202) 692-1184
or via email at cambodia@peacecorps.gov

A NOTE FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGER

The introductory information included here will provide you with a basic explanation of Peace Corps Cambodia's Community Health Education (CHE) Program and the work that we expect Volunteers to accomplish in the coming years. As Health Education Volunteers in Cambodia, you will face a wide array of challenges and opportunities that are impossible to fully conceptualize until you have first hand experience. This reality requires you to demonstrate the strong commitment, dedication, patience, flexibility, openness, and determination that will result in a deeply rewarding experience.

Cambodia has a long, rich and complicated history. Cambodians are proud of their ancient history and are still recovering from the tragedies of more recent history. The near-total destruction of its infrastructure and educated workforce has left Cambodia with a lack of trained and educated people to further its development. There is a significant gap between critical staffing needs and the availability of skilled personnel who are willing to live in rural communities to meet those needs.

The CHE project is geared towards health education at the community level. Volunteers are assigned to community health centers, however, the scope of the Volunteers' work is not limited to these health centers. Working with local schools and with Village Health Volunteers will be an important part of your service. Your work will enhance the quality of life for people in your area through the development of community-initiated projects, the promotion of life skills and the achievement of sustainable community health activities.

Living and working in Cambodia will require significant behavioral adaptation on your part in order to effectively communicate and gain the trust of the members of your community. **You will be living and eating with host families both throughout training and your entire Peace Corps service.** You will have to learn to live with significantly less privacy than you are used to at home and adapt to a cuisine that may be foreign and monotonous. By living, eating and interacting with a host family and thus integrating into the local community, your ability to be an effective development agent will increase dramatically. You will learn the language better, understand conservative Cambodian culture more thoroughly, and will be safer knowing that your new "family" will be looking after you as you move through your daily routine.

The special challenges you will face as Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) will be many. Volunteerism and civic responsibility are not well-developed concepts in a country where families and communities were torn apart by war and civil strife. Most of the adults in your communities were alive to experience the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge, which can make trust and collaboration difficult.

Cambodia is on the road to recovery. Infrastructure is being built, educational levels are improving, and interest in health education has never been higher. Our early experience indicates that you will be welcomed warmly in your communities as a health educator, as an English-speaker, as a development agent, and as an American.

Every Volunteer experience is different; this document will give you the general background information about what your service may hold but we encourage you to keep in mind that your service will be what you make of it.

Yours sincerely,

Community Health Education Program Staff

PEACE CORPS CAMBODIA HISTORY

The Royal Government of Cambodia requested several times that Peace Corps open a program in this country. Though an original Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 1994, assessment teams in the 1990s, found that the political situation was too unstable for Volunteers to be safe and to serve effectively here.

In 2005, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports initiated a new country assessment -- this time with very different results. The Peace Corps assessment team found that administrative and security infrastructure was sound and that the opportunities for PCVs to work safely and effectively had developed significantly. The first Peace Corps Trainees arrived in Cambodia in February 2007.

As you arrive in Cambodia, you will enter a peaceful country with an economy that is growing quickly. While the developmental needs are great, and much of the infrastructure is still lacking, there are enough supports in place to ensure your safe and productive service.

The entire health care system was essentially dismantled by the Khmer Rouge, who targeted anyone with an education for elimination in the period of 1975-79. Although significant donor investment in the health sector continues, outcomes in Cambodia are among the poorest in the region. Cambodia has alarmingly high rates of maternal and infant mortality, as well as the highest prevalence of tuberculosis in Asia.

According to the most recent health statistics available, childhood mortality rates are decreasing. The Cambodia Demographic Health Survey (CDHS) conducted in 2010 reported 45 deaths per 1,000 live births while 66 deaths per 1,000 births were reported in the 2005 CDHS. The maternal mortality ratio for Cambodia according to the 2010 CDHS is 206 per 100,000 live births while 472 deaths were reported in the 2005 CDHS. This decline due is a result of effect interventions by donors and the Ministry of Health.

The 2010 CDHS showed a 3% decline in Children's stunting with 40% of children being affected. Children who are underweight remained stable at 28% despite extensive donor support of the health sector.

Recent programs have led to an increase in women giving birth at health centers where they can receive care in case of complications. Unfortunately, health centers do not have the capacity - either the staff or



the beds - to accommodate the increased need. There remains a lot of work to be done in increasing capacity and health education to prevent negative outcomes in these areas.

As a Volunteer in the CHE program, your job will be to improve the capacity of communities to identify and address their health needs. As a health education Volunteer, you will split your time between supporting the local health center, local school and conducting community outreach with village health volunteers. Your goal is to affect positive change, be a positive and professional role model, as well as being a catalyst for important community development initiatives.

We are certain that you will develop meaningful relationships within your community and will contribute greatly to Peace Corps' reputation for bringing peace and collaboration across the world. You will be pioneers, both in your role as a health educator and as a change agent.

YOUR PRIMARY DUTIES

After successful completion of Pre-Service Training (PST), you will be assigned to work at a health center at the District or Commune level. Cambodia is divided into 24 Provinces with about 6 to 10 Districts per Province. Peace Corps is currently operating in 15 provinces.

Health centers generally serve a population of about 10,000 people, which could include between 5 and 30 villages. Services focus on maternal and child health activities, as well as infectious disease prevention and treatment. There is usually a doctor or nurse, at least one midwife, a pharmacist, a vaccinator and a cashier/administrative person, in addition to the health center director.

Health education activities are intended to be conducted through a system of village health volunteers (VHV); designated individuals from each village trained to do education and outreach. These volunteers (by design but not necessary in practice) hold regular meetings at the health center to learn about new initiatives and report information in regard to the health situation from their communities. This group of community members will be essential partners in any community outreach work that you do as a health education agent. **Nutrition, Ante-Natal Care (ANC) Checkup and Delivery, Water and Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)** education are the most commonly requested topics at the health center and in communities and are emphasized by the Royal Government of Cambodia.

In addition to the village health volunteers, you might find staff at the local primary and high schools to be good collaborators. Especially early in your service, you may find that by bartering help with English classes for permission to conduct health education classes, you can find a way to work with students in English while your Khmer language skills are still building. **Water and Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health** education and promotion are all themes that are useful to emphasize with students, who can share information with their families at home. These areas are the high priority of the Royal Government of Cambodia, especially the Ministry of Health. You will be required to assist in promoting health education on these areas in the community where you will be working with your local counterparts.

The health care system itself is fraught with challenges and while it is formally written in many documents, the reality is that the structure is not always implemented at the community level. This is where your work in capacity development is very important. Many health center staff received little training in their jobs; pay is low and often late, so morale and motivation are also low. In rural areas, the distances that must be traveled to access care are extreme, so patients often seek care when it is too late to be effective. Additionally, health centers are usually poorly equipped to treat emergencies.

Working with a Cambodian counterpart is rewarding, frustrating, and challenging. It will take some time for you and your counterpart to determine the best ways to work together as a team. You may work with one or several health center staff members depending on how your health center is set up and you will be considered as one of the staff yourself. Most or all of the staff you work with will think that you are a doctor and may have high expectations of what you can do. Prevention education is a relatively new idea and staff may think that it requires more work without any additional pay. Or they may simply not understand appropriate ways to use your skills other than for English teaching. You will be required to have real patience, flexibility, and openness to be able to build and maintain a mutually beneficial partnership with your co-workers.

One of the exciting parts of your professional work is to participate in the Peace Corps monitoring, reporting, and evaluation (MRE) process. All Volunteers receive training on the Peace Corps MRE tracking and reporting system. Each Volunteer regularly reports MRE information, and this information is summarized to describe overall progress of the project. This important MRE system helps Peace Corps improve its programming and report its accomplishments. The opportunity to learn and practice professional monitoring and evaluation skills are some of the many valued benefits of Peace Corps service.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SECONDARY/ COMMUNITY PROJECTS

In addition to your primary work as a health education extension agent, there are an enormous number of other community development needs in your host communities that will quickly become apparent. During your first 3 to 6 months at site, you will spend time exploring your community, improving your Cambodian language skills, getting to know your colleagues and community members, learning about your health center and its activities, and participating in some community activities. You are not expected to pursue community development activities until you have comfortably integrated into your community and settled into your primary work assignment.

One aspect of health education, physical fitness, is largely ignored in Cambodia, especially outside of schools and big cities. Even within the schools, organized sports activities are largely non-existent. Sports clubs and teams are a positive way to build leadership skills among unemployed youth. Girls clubs and other mentoring groups for kids, both in-school and out-of-school, are also ways to learn about the health issues in your community.

All Cambodia PCVs are expected to work on community projects throughout their service. These activities are not secondary in importance; rather they are considered an integral part of your duties as a Volunteer. We expect you to work with members of your community and other development partners to help design, plan and implement small-scale, sustainable projects that address community-identified priorities. You will work closely with community partners in all phases of project implementation to ensure skills transfer, cross-cultural exchange and project sustainability.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Available Resources:

Volunteers are placed in health centers. In addition to working at the health centers, PCVs are expected to work with the village health volunteers in the communities served by the health center. PCVs are also expected to engage in primary and secondary schools to deliver health messages to students.

Every health center works closely with a referral hospital at the Operational District level. These hospitals can offer a variety of services not available at the health center. Some health centers are located in the same compound with the referral hospital. Staff at the referral hospitals might be interested in working with the health education Volunteer to improve their English skills. Some health centers may request help learning how to use computers as well since they have only recently started using them.

Schools are an excellent venue for health education activities, as students are a great way to disseminate information to their families. Also, high school students are an ideal target for prevention education themselves, especially for life skills and reproductive health information.

In Cambodia, there is a wealth of health education visual aids and supplemental reading material in both English and Khmer, produced by the many donor-funded NGOs. These materials can be useful to you as you develop health education training programs in your community.

Although there is normally electricity at the provincial level, and for at least several hours a day at the District level, electricity may or may not be available at health centers or schools. Computer/internet access is usually available at the Provincial level. It is important to keep these limitations in mind as you think about the kinds of activities you can implement at your site. Often Volunteers invest in mobile internet sticks to use with their personal computers at site. You will be expected to access internet at least once a week to keep in touch with Peace Corps Cambodia updates.

Location of Job:

Placements are at health centers located at the community level. Your community and health center counterparts, in collaboration with Peace Corps staff, will identify appropriate housing in reasonable proximity to your work, up to 3-4 km. You will be living with a host family with whom you will share daily meals, attend social gatherings and spend holidays. Health centers are usually centrally located near the market and other community services. You will be traveling between your home and regular workplace

by bicycle and/or public transportation. Although motorbikes are the most common form of transportation in rural Cambodia, motorbike accidents are too common for them to be considered safe for Volunteers. You will be strictly forbidden to operate motor vehicles, but will be allowed to ride on the back of motorbikes for work related purposes. This is a special permission given only to CHE Volunteers in Cambodia for work related purposes (far villages), so we will be providing you training and a safety helmet for your protection

We strive to place Volunteers in those communities where assistance is most needed and where there is the greatest interest in and support for the Volunteer's work. You will be placed only in those areas of the country that we consider to be safe. No Volunteers will be placed in areas where land mines are deemed to be a potential danger to PCVs.

Working Hours:

Given the lack of medical staff and low pay, most health centers are open only in the morning, and only Monday thru Friday. Health centers also close for Cambodian holidays (of which there are many). During other times of the day, your schedule will be very flexible, allowing you time to work with schools and conducting outreach.

When you first arrive at site, you may find that offering English lessons to health center staff in the afternoons or early evening might be a good way to get to know the staff better when they are not so busy. Many professional Cambodians are very interested in learning English to improve their professional skills. Such activities might help to establish yourself as a valuable resource while you are working on improving your Khmer language skills.

Cultural Attitudes and Customs in the Workplace:

Cambodians are generally patient, tolerant, warm and friendly. Hierarchy, status, position and respect are aspects of Khmer society that you will need to understand in order to work effectively at site.

During the first months at site you will focus on practicing positive community-entry skills and building relationships with your co-workers, host family, neighbors and community leaders. Peace Corps is still new to Cambodia, especially in the health sector, and you will find that your Cambodian partners may not fully understand the purpose and goals of Peace Corps. Many colleagues will see you as an "English teacher" and may not fully understand your role in the community.

Furthermore, Cambodia's recent history, with multiple changes in political control and severe reprisals for mistakes, make Cambodians resistant to change. You may find that not all of your co-workers are enthusiastic about promoting preventive health education at the community level. Some may identify needs and can be overly directive in getting you involved, while others may not seem to give the support and direction that you require, especially in the early months at site. In addition, it will take flexibility and persistence for you to make your partnership with Cambodian colleagues and community members work.

Medical professionals are respected in Cambodia, but are shockingly underpaid (about \$30-\$40 per month). In many health centers, patients are expected to come to the center for free treatment in the morning, but only get sound medical advice if they also go to the practitioner's private clinic in the afternoon. These private clinics are essential for the health center staff to be able to make a living. In scheduling times to work with your colleagues, you will have to work around this reality of the health care system and respect your colleague's need to earn a living.

The concept of time is different in Cambodian culture, so you will need to be patient and flexible with your co-workers, colleagues, and community members. Compared to the fast-paced life of the U.S., things may seem to be moving very slowly in Cambodia. Additionally, plans and schedules can be changed at the last minute, frequently without notice. People are not direct in their interactions, so do not mistake their indirectness for evasions or lies. As time goes by, you will learn whether people actually mean 'yes' or 'no' despite what they say. The more you get to know them, the better you will be able to interpret "hidden" meanings.

Interaction between men and women is a sensitive area that can easily be misinterpreted because of cultural differences. Casual relationships and dating are not common for Cambodian people, so you will have to keep a certain distance and learn how to cultivate culturally-appropriate professional relationships. In general, you should observe your host family members and work counterparts as models for your own behavior.

Being an ethnic minority has its challenges in the United States, but being a minority in Cambodia poses challenges that may be more intricate and unique. Cambodians are known for being friendly people, but as in any society there are people who are intolerant of differences. This is due in part to the homogeneous nature of Khmer society where racial and ethnic diversity is typically not understood. This lack of exposure to ethnic diversity may cause you to be subject to uncomfortable situations with your host family, community members and total strangers.

Cambodians have a pre-conceived stereotypical image of Americans. They think that all Americans are light-skinned Caucasians. Therefore, African-American Volunteers may be offered skin whitening creams. Asian-American Volunteers will frequently be questioned about their "home land," and face disbelief that they are American. And white-skinned Volunteers will have their arm hair stroked by children in the market as well as by family members and students. They may be told how beautiful white skin is and that dark Khmer skin is ugly. These are just a few examples of scenarios that challenge PCVs daily and require a special sensitivity and utilization of cross-cultural coping skills. It is important that the PCV manages his/her own feelings and responses to these issues. Your attitude and reactions can be powerful tools for teaching tolerance and understanding.

Despite the adversity faced by minority Volunteers, most will tell you that they have had an overall prosperous service that included fruitful relationships with Khmer nationals. Their Peace Corps experience has been an asset and an integral part in positively growing and shaping their lives for years to come. PC Cambodia makes it a priority to help you become fully prepared, mentally and emotionally, for your service and is dedicated to supporting you throughout your journey in Cambodia. We hope that

by telling you this information that you come with a plethora of patience, an open mind, and ready for the toughest job you will ever love.

Dress Code:

Cambodians dress neatly and take great personal pride in appearances, and doing so as a Volunteer will increase your effectiveness and credibility. First impressions in Cambodia are extremely important. Throughout your service in Cambodia, from the moment you step off the plane at the start of training to working at site, to the day you depart, you will be expected to dress professionally. Host families, colleagues, community members and local officials will pay close attention to how you present yourself.

Appropriate professional dress for men includes slacks and collared shirts and neat shoes. For women, collared shirts and long skirts with sandals that have a back strap are appropriate for work. You will find that colleagues may wear more open sandals as well, but Volunteers should bring both and take time to observe what is most appropriate. Sleeveless, transparent, tight and/or low-cut tops, as well as going bra-less, is considered inappropriate. Shorts are not worn by either professional men or women except to play sports or at home.

Male Volunteers should also know that long hair, beards, moustaches, and earrings are generally not worn by Cambodian men and are not appropriate for professionals, particularly in rural areas. Multiple-pierced ears and visible body piercings or tattoos are also not appropriate for either gender. If you have large tattoos, be prepared to wear clothing that will cover them. Additionally, shaved heads may cause unwanted attention; in Cambodia a shaved head has very clear and usually serious implications (entering the monkhood, observing mourning for a close family member or a rite of passage for gang membership).

During Pre-Service Training, there may be occasions when you will greet high ranking officials of the Cambodian Government. You will also have official ID photos taken on arrival. Therefore, all Trainees are expected to be well-dressed. If you are a male with long hair or a beard or moustache, you should cut it off before leaving for Staging.

You will learn that Cambodians in Phnom Penh dress more casually and may not follow all of the above rules, but we expect that you dress as appropriately and be conservative, especially during training and during your first four months at site, until you better understand the culture and customs of your community. In general, Volunteers should be observant about the manner of dress that your colleagues use and seek to dress in the same way. Volunteers are also expected to always dress appropriately at the Peace Corps Office or at any training event. Your cooperation is important and much appreciated, as it will make a difference in how successful you are in integrating into your community. If you are hesitant to make these adjustments to your personal appearance, you may want to consider declining this invitation.

TRAINING FOR YOUR JOB

When you arrive in country, you will begin an eight-week integrated Pre-Service Training (PST) program that provides you with the skills to be an effective and self-sufficient Volunteer. You will live with a Cambodian host family, which is often the most valuable and rewarding aspect of the training program. The home stay will offer you an opportunity to practice language skills and explore cultural understanding, including perception of gender roles and responsibilities, education, environment and health.

PST consists of instruction in several main components: 1) technical skills; 2) cross-cultural skills; 3) Khmer language; 4) personal health care; and 5) safety & security. In addition, we will explore your role in development and discuss successful approaches to working with community partners on secondary projects.

The technical component of PST includes formal sessions, sometimes to be held at a central hub site and designed to provide you with technical information on Cambodia-specific health issues, as well as hands-on experience with basic health education techniques. A field practicum working in a Cambodian rural community health center will provide you with a perspective on the health issues in the community and your role as an educator in that setting. You will also have the opportunity to develop, practice and refine your presentation skills in the local language.

Technical training also incorporates sessions on participatory needs assessment, gender, community and youth development and project design and management. These components help prepare PCVs to identify and respond to the various needs that they see at their sites.

Through cross-cultural training, you will compare American and Cambodian values, beliefs and traditions. You will develop skills that will help you successfully adapt to Khmer culture and begin to experience the beauty and charm of Cambodian traditions.

Through intensive, community-based language study, you will acquire basic survival, social and health technical Khmer language skills that will inform and enrich your understanding of Khmer culture. Being able to communicate in Khmer is essential for your success within your primary assignment (as few health center staff or village health volunteers speak any English at all) and for cultural integration into your community. Be prepared to work diligently to acquire this important skill. You will be assigned to language groups and will learn from a Language and Cultural Facilitator over the course of training.

Peace Corps Cambodia encourages Trainees to achieve a Novice-High level of language proficiency by the end of PST. This level means that you are able to speak and understand the Khmer language at a very basic level, and have the foundation for further language acquisition once at site.

Any Trainee who does not demonstrate motivation and progress in Khmer language and other components may not qualify for service. The Country Director will determine if a Trainee at a lower language proficiency level may swear-in and receive extra language training, based on demonstrated motivation and ability to integrate and the potential to be effective in his or her work and community.

You will receive comprehensive health training from the Peace Corps Cambodia medical unit. The medical staff will provide you with necessary immunizations and prepare you to maintain your health throughout your service. In addition, Peace Corps staff will provide you with information on the current political and security situation in the country, assist you in identifying sound safety practices at site, and instruct you on the post's Emergency Action Plan. The Peace Corps places the safety and security of all Trainees and Volunteers above all else. We expect you to be prepared to abide by all safety and security policies in-country. We will help you learn how to develop and put into practice a personal safety strategy in your community.

Upon successful achievement of competencies in the above components and upon the recommendation of training staff, you will be sworn-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Training is a crucial time for Peace Corps to evaluate your qualifications for Volunteer service, as well as for you to evaluate your commitment to Peace Corps and to serving in your assignment for the two-year period. After this initial training, you will go to your placement site and begin your service.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Peace Corps has specific selection criteria for your site assignment that includes: a viable work assignment, reliable communication and transportation, safe and adequate housing, opportunity for secondary projects outside of the your primary assignment at a health care facility and above all, standards of safety and security. Your housing conditions will vary, depending on the site and on the housing that has been identified for you. You will have a chance to purchase settling-in items when you are at your permanent site after Swearing-In. Very strict vegetarians may find it difficult to maintain rigid diets, especially within some social contexts. Be aware that some individuals will find the heat and humidity very taxing, especially during the first few months in Cambodia. Please be sure that you can handle such conditions before accepting this assignment.

CHE Volunteers will live in small towns where sanitation facilities (bucket showers and squat toilets at a minimum) are available. Access to 24-hour electricity is much less common, although it is possible to charge a cellphone and other small electronics from electricity available for a few hours a day or from a car battery purchased with your Settling-In allowance. Drinking water must either be filtered, boiled or purchased. Soap, shampoo, sanitary napkins, film, stamps, stationary, etc. are generally available in rural towns. Most Provincial towns have internet access and convenient transportation facilities. Public transportation can be inconsistent, so you will need to be patient and flexible and plan ahead of time for trips. Most sites will have local van drivers that travel to a provincial town or Phnom Penh on a daily basis.

Peace Corps prohibits you from riding on motorcycles while not on duty and driving vehicles, so your primary mode of transport will be a Peace Corps-provided bicycle. Volunteers must be comfortable riding a bicycle for short to moderate distances (1-3 miles per day).

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES & REWARDS

Please reference the [Welcome Book](#) for more detailed information regarding diversity and cross-cultural issues, and safety and security in the Peace Corps.

Most Volunteers find that the main challenges are not physical hardships or safety and security issues, but emotional stress caused by lack of structure, limited language, cross-cultural misunderstandings and differences in values and expectations. While frustrating, these challenges are opportunities for tremendous learning and personal growth.

A large portion of your social life will be spent with your Cambodian host family, colleagues and neighbors, with whom you will play sports, eat your meals, attend Khmer festivals and cultural events, and just hang out. Your ability to adjust and to enjoy life on this level will be an important aspect of your success as a Volunteer. If you can be flexible and learn to adjust, your experience will be highly rewarding.

Cambodians are very friendly and open to foreigners. People are eager to learn and take advantage of any opportunity that comes their way. As a result, you will find it relatively easy to form rewarding friendships with local people and to have an impact in your community.

Another challenge for many Volunteers is the bureaucracy of Peace Corps. With the safety and security of Volunteers and Trainees being our post's priority, there are a variety of rules and regulations you will be expected to understand and to follow. Some Volunteers find these to be restrictive. Nonetheless, it will be incumbent upon you to adapt and work within the existing Peace Corps structure. These policies are created solely with your safety in mind, but their effectiveness is dependent on your compliance as well.

Peace Corps Cambodia has a Professional Code of Conduct that you will be asked to abide by in PST and throughout your service:

1. Show respect for the people and culture of Cambodia at all times.
2. Observe local standards of behavior, dress and protocol.
3. Comply with policies that help ensure your safety and security.
4. Strive to integrate into your community and Khmer society, spending more time with Cambodian colleagues and counterparts than with other Americans and expatriates.
5. Learning the local language is an on-going responsibility during your entire service.
6. If you choose to drink alcohol, drink only in a socially and culturally appropriate and safe manner, respecting yourself, your country, Peace Corps and the people of Cambodia.
7. Behave as a professional colleague of your Cambodian co-workers, other Volunteers, and of Peace Corps staff, resolving any differences through openness and respectful dialogue, avoiding gossip, rumor or personalization of any conflicts.
8. Be completely open and honest with Peace Corps staff about difficulties you face as a Volunteer or Trainee, enabling a collaborative approach towards resolution of any problems.
9. Recognize that you are a co-owner of the Peace Corps Cambodia public image, along with staff, local colleagues and the other Volunteers who serve with you.

10. Embrace a grass-roots and community-based approach to development, working to meet the needs and wishes of as many host community members as possible.

If you follow this code of conduct and approach your service with the three goals of Peace Corps in mind, you will find that Cambodia offers a setting for you to see visible change as a result of your Service. The need for assistance is apparent in a variety of development areas. While poverty and corruption are widespread, the possibility of changing the lives of the individuals, families and co-workers that you get to know are very real. We hope that you are prepared to accept the challenges that await you, and we believe that the rewards you receive in return will be exceptional.

COMMENTS FROM VOLUNTEERS

Hello, from the Cambodia!

I'm sure you have many questions and maybe even some expectations for what things will be like as you embark on this amazing journey. I remember stepping off the plane and taking in my first deep breath of the humid Cambodian air and feeling excited, but anxious about how much I had to learn and not knowing what to expect. This experience is challenging, but with an open mind and a good attitude, I think you will find your work here in Cambodia rewarding.

Figuring out a new language and trying to understand unfamiliar cultural norms was often frustrating, yet humbling. Committing frequent cultural faux pas has sometimes reduced me to feeling like a child, but was essential in navigating life in this foreign land. Rest assured, you will come to learn about Cambodia on many levels and experience things that not many people ever get to experience in their lifetime. Be comforted by the fact that you have been invited to work in a unique part of the world where you will be frequently reminded why Cambodia is appropriately called the Kingdom of Wonder!

After almost two years into my service, I enjoy riding my bike throughout my village passing some of the friendliest and most curious people who I now call my friends and family. I knew that coming into the Peace Corps I would be learning about the people of Cambodia and working alongside them, but I never knew just how connected I would become to the community members and small rural village, surrounded by lush rice fields and unique cultural intricacies.

Although there have been many ups and downs, the positive experiences have heavily outweighed all of the challenges. Speaking Khmer every day and learning the language has opened up a world of information that once felt beyond my reach to understand, but has now offered me with more than just a glimpse of how life works in this part of the world, it's now my life too. Of course there are things that we will never understand, but that's exactly what has continued to intrigue and fascinate me about this beautiful and unique country.

Every Peace Corps Volunteer will undoubtedly have their own unique individual experience, but I'd like to share just a few of the things that I'm involved with as a Volunteer. As a community health education extension agent, I realized that my work would be rather unstructured. I spent time observing staff at



my health center and finding opportunities where I could jump in and help. After a while, I began weighing young children at the health center as they came in for vaccinations. It's through this role that I discovered many underweight children in and around my village, which provides me with an opportunity to educate families about nutrition and ways they can combat malnutrition. If I'm not meeting with families and doing various types of health education in or around my community, I help one of my counterparts with a community garden project, I enjoy meeting with my art club that I established at the local high school, and I spend time with my host siblings and chatting with local villagers.

This experience has provided me with cultural revelations, deeply rewarding interactions, and enumerable amazing moments. Although there will be challenges, you will find solace in Peace Corps staff and other Volunteers who are here to support you on this journey. You have been invited to a very exciting country where you will be warmly welcomed and charmed by the local people and culture.

Welcome to the Kingdom of Wonder!

—*Westen Thomas*

K7 Community Health Education Volunteer