



# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2023

World Peace and Friendship

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Peace Corps is a non-political and non-religious organization of the United States Government that seeks to promote peace and friendship among peoples of different nationalities and cultures. For more than six decades, Peace Corps has provided technical assistance in 141 countries through the implementation of projects in agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health and youth in development.

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## Message from the Country Director



The mission of the Peace Corps is ***“World Peace and Friendship.”*** We meet our mission through service. Our Volunteers live and work for two years in communities with host families in order to be immersed in and adapt to local culture. This helps them to create meaningful relationships, see from a new perspective, contribute to Cambodia’s development and apply their technical skills appropriately in a new environment and culture.

The Volunteers returned to Cambodia last year when the program resumed after a more than two-year suspension due to the COVID pandemic. They have been working with teachers throughout the country in order to contribute to the development of English Education in Cambodia. Additionally, they have worked with local colleagues and friends on a wide range of community development projects such as the development of school gardens that help improve the nutrition of children and families, or the establishment of a library as a resource for a school and community.

Whether working in their primary assignment or with the community on a development project, the goal is local capacity building. By working with the Volunteers, community members can learn to identify their own leadership abilities, to access resources, and to practice working together toward community development goals that meet the needs and opportunities prioritized by the community. The role of the Volunteer is to participate as a new member of the community and help to facilitate this process.

While working and living in the community, our Volunteers also share the diverse cultures and customs of the United States so that Cambodian people can better learn and know about the United States by building relationships. Volunteers are able to share what they have learned about the rich cultures and customs of Cambodia with family and friends in the U.S. The friendships built during two years of living and working in a community in Cambodia through mutual sharing can last a lifetime and are the driving force behind our mission to build world peace and friendship.

We continue to be grateful to our host, the Royal Government of Cambodia, who makes this collaboration possible by inviting the Peace Corps to work in partnership to meet their development priorities at the national, provincial, district, and commune levels. This annual report celebrates 15 years working with Cambodian officials, counterparts, education institutions, and building relationships with families, communities and with individuals.

The data and stories shared here represent the spirit of the Peace Corps’ people to people development strategy that can only happen when we learn and grow together. We are proud to share the collaborative achievements of our Volunteers and their Cambodian counterparts in 2023 through this annual report.




## Peace Corps Global Overview

Peace Corps sends industrious and diverse Americans abroad on behalf of the United States to partner with communities in addressing the most pressing needs of people around the world. Volunteers work at the grassroots level to develop sustainable solutions that address challenges in agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, and youth development. Through their service, Volunteers gain a unique cultural understanding and a life-long commitment to service that positions them to succeed in today’s global economy.

The agency traces its roots to 1960, when then Senator John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country by living and working in some of the most remote corners of the world. He ignited a movement among young Americans that inspired the nation and led to the founding of the Peace Corps. In an ever- changing world, the agency has become a dynamic, forward-leaning champion for international service defined by its innovation and compassion—yet, its original mission remains the same.

Today, six decades after its founding by President John F. Kennedy, the Peace Corps remains committed to promoting world peace and friendship by pursuing three goals.

-  1  
To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
-  2  
To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
-  3  
To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans





# Cambodian Government Support

The partnership with the Royal Government of Cambodia is the fabric for much of Peace Corps Cambodia's work. Our partnership began with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) under a 2007 Memorandum of Understanding to send Peace Corps Volunteers to high schools to provide support in English teaching.

MoEYS guides Peace Corps Cambodia's strategic direction and geographic reach. Provincial and district level officials assist with identifying Volunteer placement sites. School directors supervise the Peace Corps Volunteers. In 2019 following the vision of MoEYS, Peace Corps Cambodia expanded its English education support by placing Volunteers in primary schools to work with teachers and students in 4th, 5th and 6th grade classes. With the ministry's support and continued guidance, we hope to increase the number of Volunteers placed in primary schools for years to come.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation provides permission for Peace Corps to work in Cambodia and visas for the Volunteers. The Ministry of Interior at the national, provincial, district, and commune levels assist us in keeping the Volunteers safe and offer emergency support.

Peace Corps Cambodia is grateful for the Royal Government of Cambodia's guidance, collegiality, and encouragement.



K15 Swearing-In Ceremony



K14 Swearing-In Ceremony



Meeting with MoEYS



K14 Swearing-In Ceremony

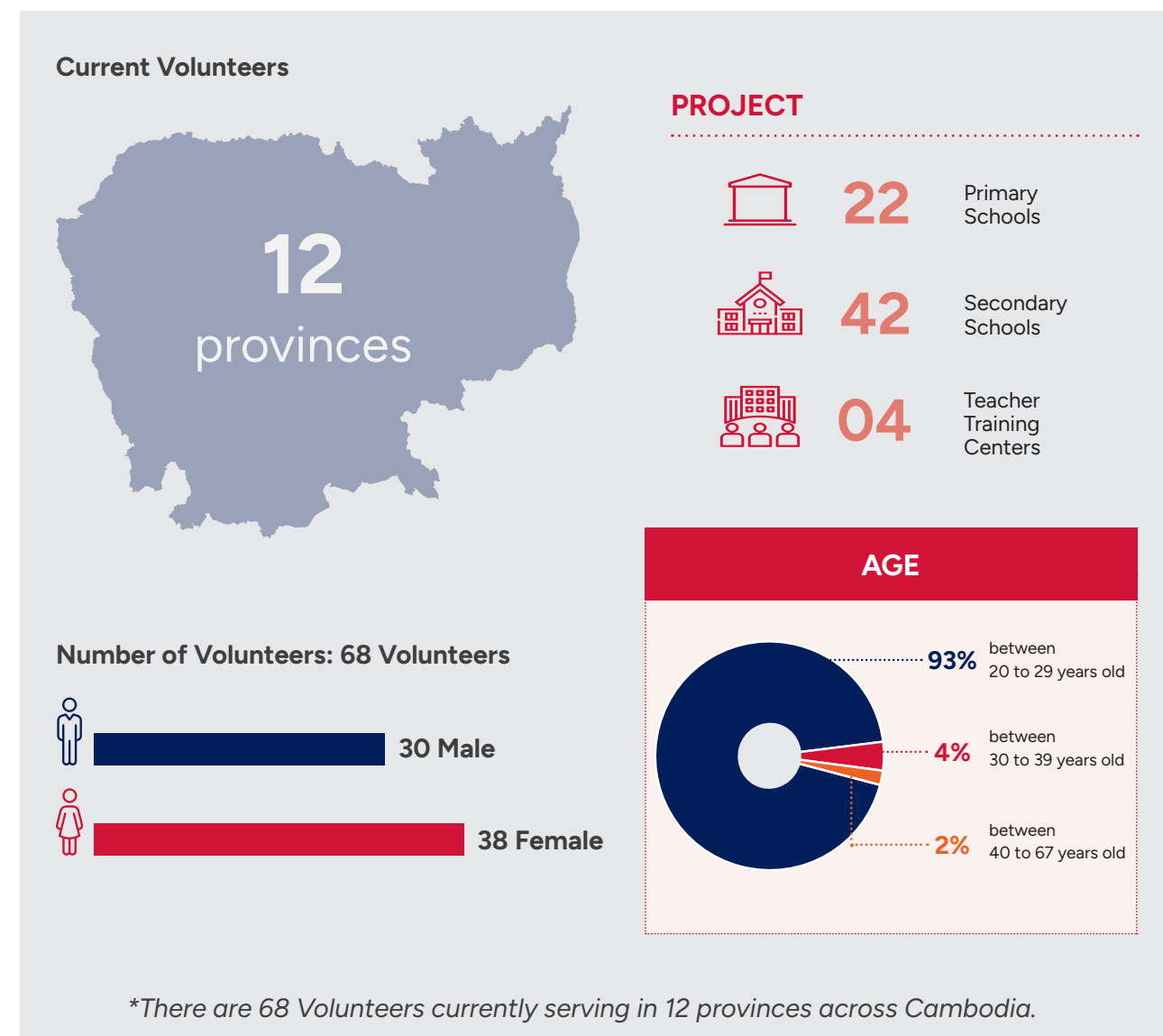




## Peace Corps in Cambodia

Individuals who serve as Peace Corps Volunteers are carefully selected through a competitive application process. Peace Corps Volunteers have ranged in ages from 20 to 75 and represent diverse ethnic and minority groups. All current Peace Corps Volunteers in Cambodia hold university and/or advanced degrees. Volunteers come to Cambodia to contribute their skills and knowledge to the development of the country through direct action at the local level. Upon arrival in Cambodia, Peace Corps Volunteers receive extensive language, cultural, health, safety, and technical training. Peace Corps provides training opportunities to Volunteers to improve their language and technical skills throughout their service. Peace Corps also trains community members and school teachers on topics such as project management, food security, teaching methodology, and digital literacy.

Volunteers live with Cambodian host families for two years at a standard of living comparable to Cambodian citizens in their communities. They work side-by-side with Cambodian people to assist them in carrying out meaningful work towards a better future for their community and for Cambodia.

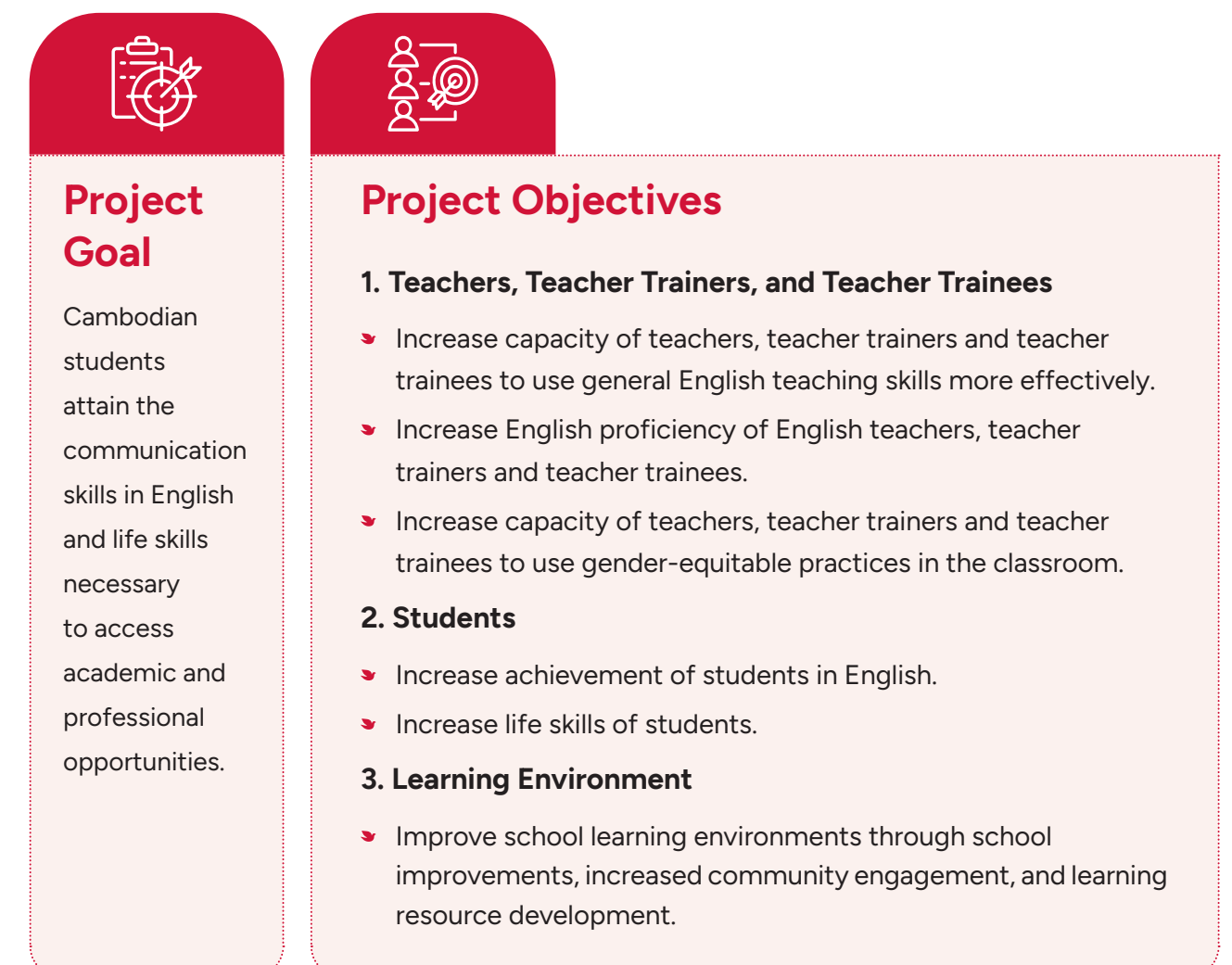


## English Teaching and Teacher Training

The English Teaching and Teacher Training (ETTT) project has been cooperating with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport in Cambodia since 2007. The project has worked to develop the English language of Cambodian students, teachers, and community members to help them gain access to personal, professional, and academic opportunities.

Volunteers teach at high schools, primary schools, and teacher training centers. Volunteers co-teach with a Cambodian teacher as requested by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport. This practice benefits not only the students but also enhances the Cambodian teachers' language capacity and builds their technical classroom skills. By teaching alongside a Cambodian teacher, Volunteers share innovative teaching practices, help design and deliver lessons, build communicative English language skills, and introduce effective classroom management techniques. Volunteers also develop and enhance teaching and learning resources for the classroom, including the introduction of new technologies.

Since the project opened in 2007, more than 785 volunteers have served and 547 were English Teaching and Teacher Training Volunteers.





# Education Project Accomplishments in 2023



Number of Volunteers currently  
serve at post

Number of provinces  
Volunteers serve in

**Cambodia**



**Increase** capacity  
of teachers to use English,  
general teaching skills  
and English proficiency of  
English teachers



**99**

Number of teachers  
engaging in co-planning  
and co-teaching



**60%**

Percentage of teachers who  
demonstrated a minimum  
number of recognized teaching  
practices in general teaching  
skills and teaching English skills.



**57%**

Percentage of teachers  
who increase their use  
of English procedural  
language



**Increase**  
achievement of students  
in English and life skills of  
students



**259**

Number of classes  
that Volunteers teach  
students in



**10,331**

(F: 5,634)

Number of students  
taught English lessons  
by Volunteers



**443**

Number of students  
attending extracurricular  
English clubs



**53%**

Percentage of students who  
demonstrated achievement in  
an English course



**Increase** the  
ability of community  
members to support  
students' access to  
learning by improving  
the school learning  
environment.



**608**

Number of community  
members involved  
in school facility  
improvement projects



**68%**

Percentage of community  
members who report volunteer  
organized school involvement  
activities increase their ability  
to support students' access to  
learning



**Peace  
Corps**  
CAMBODIA





## Training for Counterparts and Host Families

### Counterpart Conferences

Peace Corps Cambodia provided 2-day training workshops for 72 counterparts of Volunteers teaching at primary schools from Battambang, Siem Reap, Pursat, Kampong Chhnang, Takeo, Kampot, Kampong Thom, Tboung Khmum, Kampong Cham and Svay Rieng. Participants received technical training on primary school English teaching pedagogy including classroom management, the four skills, co-teaching and co-planning approaches, and integrating instructional games and activities in lesson plans. Participants had the opportunity to co-teach with their Peace Corps Volunteers in small class demonstration lessons.

In 2023, Dr. Kann Puthy, deputy director of the Primary Education Department, joined us to speak about the national English curriculum for primary education, its challenges, and potential solutions.



Building Technical English teaching Skills for K14 counterparts

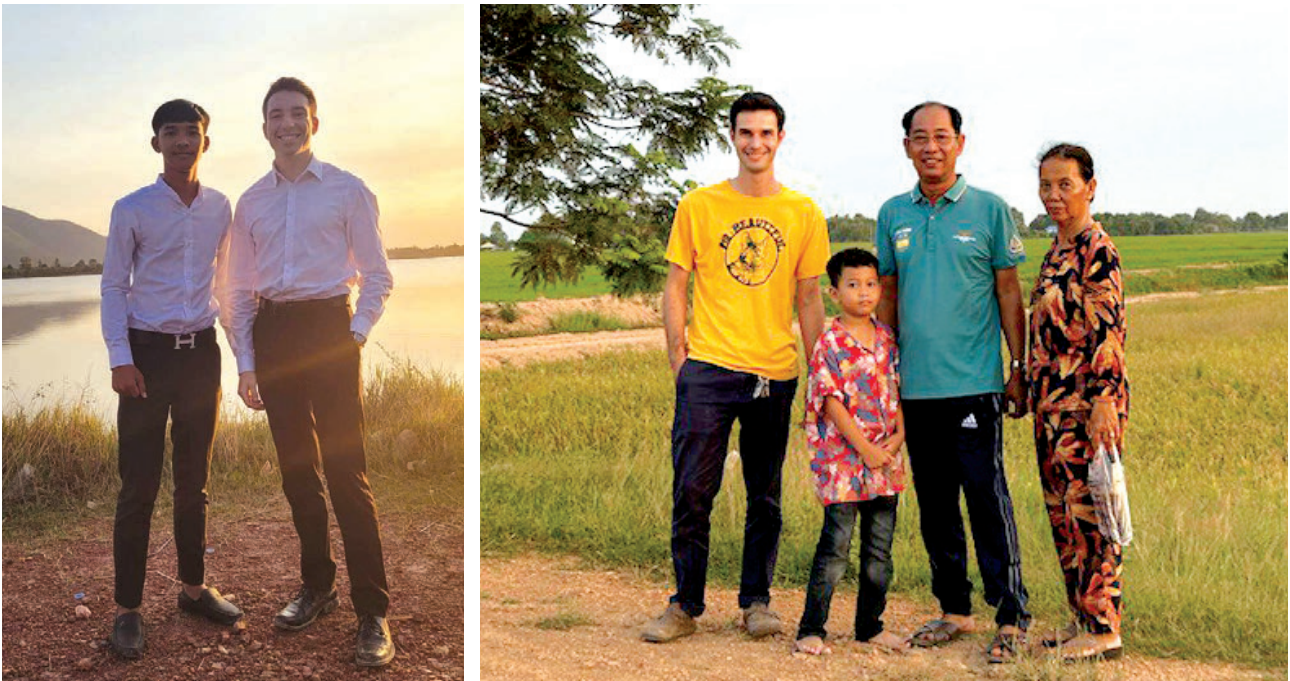


Building Technical English teaching Skills for K14 counterparts



Host Family Orientations

Our host families play an important role in the service of Volunteers in Cambodia. They are essential to Volunteers’ cultural integration and language learning at site and help keep our Volunteers safe and healthy while connecting them to important people are resources in their communities. Prior to the arrival of Volunteers at their permanent sites, Peace Corps conducted full-day orientations for 72 host families from Battambang, Siem Reap, Pursat, Kampong Chnang, Takeo, Kampot, Kampong Thom, Tboung Khmum, Kampong Cham and Svay Rieng. In attendance were 150 participants who would be host family members for our Volunteers. The workshop covered topics such as intercultural communication skills, cross-cultural norms, American diversity, Peace Corps policies, and ensuring the health and safety of Volunteers. Currently serving Volunteers and experienced host families shared stories, lessons learned, best practices. The orientation created a community of practice among our host family members across the country.



K15 Host Family Orientation at Sunway Hotel





New Initiatives

Support for the Volunteer for My Community (VMC) Program

In 2021, Peace Corps Cambodia began a collaboration with MoEYS' General Department of Youth to support the Cambodian youth volunteer program called Volunteer for My Community (VMC). To support the Youth Center Department in implementing VMC during the COVID-19 pandemic, our staff observed community service projects in Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham, Takeo, and Kampot provinces. Staff contributed to the evaluation and selection of 6 provincial project teams out of 25 as finalists in a national competition and attended the awards ceremonies during International Volunteering Day events from 2021 to 2023. Staff also conducted trainings for VMC volunteers on Project Design and Management (PDM) and developing community gardens to address food security in Siem Reap, Kamong Thom, and Battambang in 2022.



Achievements

2022

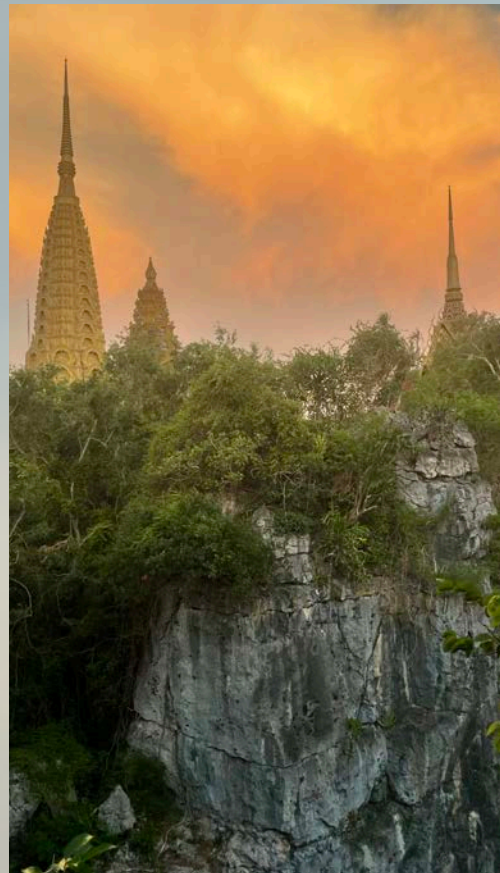
- Peace Corps conducted three regional PDM and food security trainings for 81 VMC volunteers from 9 provinces. Participants included 12 ministry level VMC staff and 12 provincial VMC chaperones from Takeo, Kampot, Kampong Chhnai, Battambang, Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham, Tbong Khmum, and Prey Veng.

2023

- Peace Corps conducted PDM training for 66 VMC volunteers from 11 provinces alongside 30 currently serving Peace Corps Volunteers. Participants included 6 ministry staff and 11 provincial chaperones from Kampong Chhnai, Pursat, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham, Tbong Khmum, Prey Veng, Takeo, and Kampot.
- As a result of the PDM training, several Peace Corps Volunteers began partnering with VMC volunteers to conduct community projects and activities together. We hope to see more collaborations between our volunteers soon!











## Volunteer Stories

### Megan Horner and Her Counterpart Nita in Kampong Thom

My first introduction to my Counterpart, Nita, was during the Primary Counterpart Conference at the end of Pre-Service Training. I barely knew her for 4 hours, yet she was already buying me bubble tea during our lunch break. Then, when I arrived at my site, I was very overwhelmed by all the new faces, but felt a sigh of relief when I saw Nita standing in front of her classroom, greeting me with a bright smile. She helped me make my teaching schedule, made a routine of going on long walks with me, and also introduced me to many Khmer snacks.

Teaching with Nita is always so enjoyable. Not only is she a wonderful and enthusiastic teacher but she is also so creative. If needed, she can come up with games in an instant, or make up quick activities for our students to pass the time. Even when we are not teaching, we always find ourselves talking about the good memories we have teaching together.

It was about a month after first meeting Nita when she asked me to be a part of her wedding. She told me the position is usually for someone very close to the bride, and she told me that even though we only recently met, she considered me one of her best friends. Since I also considered Nita to be one of my best friends, I immediately agreed. Other than being part of her wedding, Nita has let



me join in on plenty of other activities with her family. From visiting Phnom Penh to Kampong Thom Provincial Town, and even Prasat Sambor Prei Kuk, Nita never hesitated to invite me along for her journeys.

There were plenty of times when I was feeling down at my site, and the first thing everyone would ask me is "Does Nita know? Should we tell Nita you are not well?" and "Let's take you to Nita," which illustrates how deep my friendship with Nita is. Not only are the students aware, but even the community members took notice of our close friendship.

Nita and I often show our appreciation for one another through coffee. Sometimes during our school breaks, Nita will go and buy us some coffee from a shop in our District Town. And

then on my off days, I will bike to the same coffee shop, buy coffee for the both of us, and then bike back to the school to enjoy them together. Even when we travel out of site, one of us is always trying to buy coffee for the other. Now, every time I drink a coffee, I find myself thinking of Nita. And I drink a lot of coffee!





Ethan Smith and His Students in Kampong Cham



In Cambodia I live in a large provincial town, which has different challenges compared to more rural sites when it comes to creating connections with the community. In the first few weeks at my site, I didn't know too many people beyond my host family and co-teachers at the Provincial Teacher Training College (PTTC). As with most new situations in my life I was shy and not very sociable with the people

around me. While teaching I was outgoing and friendly, but not so much outside of the classroom. However, there was a handful of students who approached me about starting an English Language Club at the PTTC. I immediately agreed to start the club with the students, who are all around the same age as me with most being a few years younger. As I ran the club and continued to teach, the students got to know me better and I felt comfortable and slowly but surely began to become my true self. A core group of five students emerged as the ones who shaped my school into my true community. They helped me connect more with an ever-increasing number of students, who did not possess the English skills necessary to communicate with me. This not only led to better relationships with my students but also to me increasing my use of the Khmer language at school.



As the school year went on the students would invite me to school events, trips, and to just go enjoy a dinner with them. The most memorable was the three-day trip to Siem Reap and Angkor Wat with the majority of students and some fellow teachers. Throughout the school year they assisted me in finding the best places to eat, hangout, get clothes tailored, and much more. At the same time my conversations with students continued to evolve and through them I learned so much about Cambodia; from small tidbits on how the Ministry of Education works to everyday and personal matters. I got to know many of the students more than other Peace Corps Volunteers and my host family. I even went to the funeral of the mother of one of my students, which was a very emotional and hard experience. Nevertheless, I am glad I was there to show and express my support for this student.

When I started teaching at the PTTC it was the final academic year for this generation of students. They have all graduated and are now teaching at primary schools across the provinces of Kampong Cham and Tboung Khmum. It was both a sad and happy time when the students left to start their teaching careers. I was happy that they all were able to finish and become teachers but sad that they were no longer my amazing students. With some of the students I still message with them or if I see them in the provincial town, we have a quick chat. Also, one of my former students is now my best friend and someone who has made my Peace Corps experience so wonderful and memorable. I believe in the deepest part of my heart that if I hadn't met all these terrific people my Peace Corps story would be completely different and possibly less impactful both for myself and those around me. I now eagerly await the arrival of the new generation of students to start at the PTTC. I look forward to making even more memories and connections here in Cambodia.





## Katie O’Sullivan and Her After-School English Club in Banteay Mean Chey

The after school English club the students in my community started is my joy and passion here in Cambodia. Organic, student-driven, and interdisciplinary - the club has become so much more than just students studying English. It is a space where students gather to learn from each other, work together, and find excitement and motivation in using and improving their English skills. We practice English through games and activities rather than textbooks and tests; and we use music, art, and excursions to apply the language to real-life scenarios.

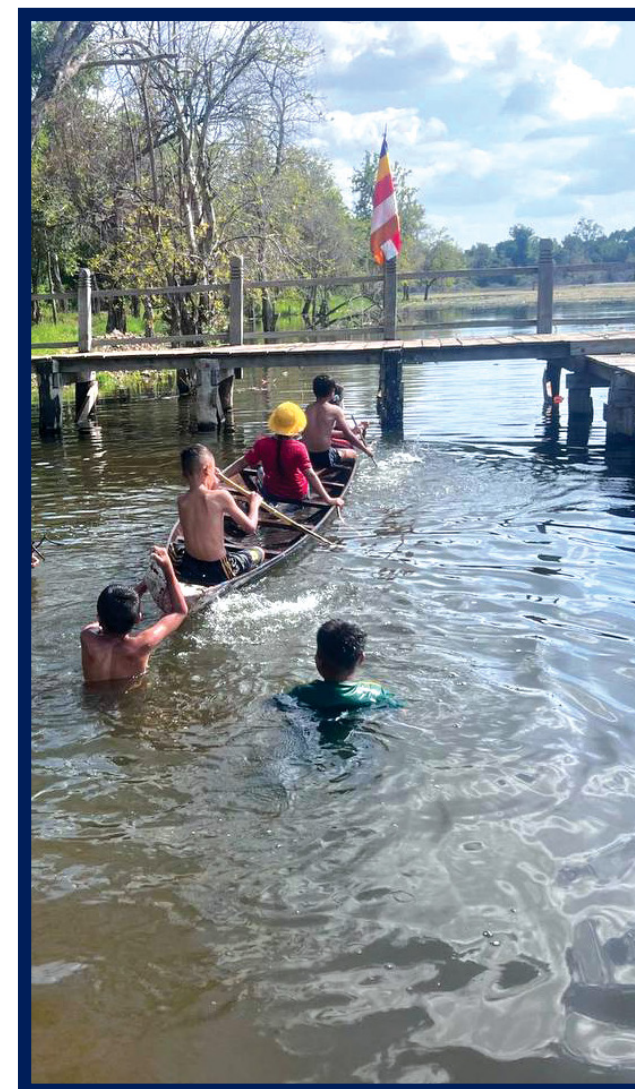
Something that started out with me tutoring my two host siblings before dinner has grown into a club averaging 50 students and lessons that range from Halloween celebrations and holiday card making to exploring nearby temples and discussing local customs and traditions.

Together, we have created an environment where everyone feels comfortable, celebrated, and supported, unafraid to try new things and encouraged to leave their comfort zone. This includes me, the “teacher.” The club has enabled me to find my place within the community and connect with students beyond the classroom. Consequently, I have formed deep bonds with these students and

see them as family. The joy I feel when the students arrive after school, so full of energy and ready to learn, is unparalleled. Witnessing their English improve with every class is special but seeing them come out of their shells and find their voices has been the best part of my service.

My host family has been integral to the success of our club. When my host family saw how large the club was getting, they generously gave us a space to meet and make our own. Together with the students, we have decorated it and have plans to paint a mural in the future. My host family is deeply invested in our local community and their love for the kids is evident in how they have helped form and sustain this club. It would never have been possible without their love and support. My host-sister, Savy, is the backbone of the whole endeavor. She not only works with me to teach the students English but helps to fill the cultural and language gap between the students and me.

Reflecting on what we have created, I am in awe. The students deserve full credit for this project. They came on their own volition, determined what type of format the club would take, and helped plan the lesson topics each week. They are smart, courageous, and kind. They inspire me to be the best teacher I can be every day, for them. I have taught them English, but the lessons they have taught me and the love they have given me is threefold.





## Jake Upton and His Host Family and Community in Kampong Chhnang

My first meeting with my host family was a confusing whirlwind of excitement and worry. I only had the vague biographical details from the site information packet and a few grainy photos of the house to guess how the next two years of my life would go.

Then, suddenly, I was there, sitting at the dinner table with my new family. Before I knew it, we were laughing and joking with each other, sharing food and conversation as a family. My host grandmother insisted I call her mother, and my host mom and father that I call them big brother and big sister. Their warmth and friendliness swept away my worries, and I knew, without a doubt, that I would treasure the next two years with them.

Nearly one year has passed since that day and I could not have predicted just how right I was. My host family has been with me every step of the way, helping me with my integration into the community, taking me to festivals, parties, and events.

My host father is a primary school teacher just like me, and we often talk about teaching and relax after a long day at work. He loves to bike, and we will often bike in the evenings together. Throughout my stay he has also helped me out with countless bike problems, and I try to help him out with his English and with IT problems with his computer or his printer. He enjoys inviting me to parties with his friends and has tried, with varying success, to help me get better at playing boules. I'm still a liability as a boule partner, but he still enjoys playing with me, nonetheless.

My host mother works for the Ministry of Culture, although she worked with the Ministry of Public Works when I first arrived. She has introduced me to so many ministry workers and civil servants that I'm convinced I've met half the bureaucracy of Kampong Chhnang by now.



My host brother likewise works at the Kampong Chhnang Provincial Hall. He is the busiest member of my host family, often coming home late at night after a long day of writing documents. I usually see him after I have had a particularly long day of work teaching at a nearby Wat when we both sit down to eat dinner late in the evening. Together we commiserate over a long day of work and practice English and Khmer while eating bowls of cold rice. Like his mom, he has also introduced me to countless bureaucrats.



When I first arrived, I did not even know that I had a host sister, as her name was not in the site information packet. She has been in Phnom Penh for most of my service either studying, or more recently, working at her new job. While I don't see her much, she always comes back for the holidays, so whenever she comes back, I know that my family will be celebrating something, even if I don't quite know what yet. Her English is quite good, and she often helps me explain difficult to get across conversations.



Pagoda time with Host family

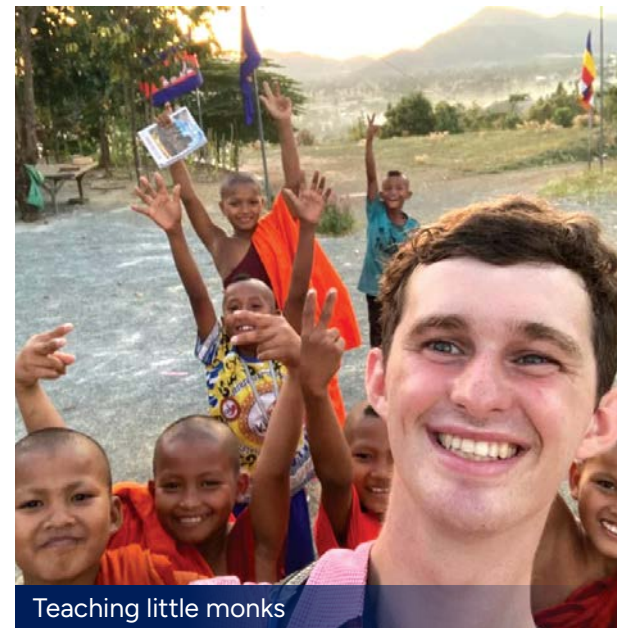


Last but certainly not least: my host grandmother. Before she retired, she used to be the director of the school where I teach. She knows all the teachers and school staff well and loves to hear from me what is going on at the school. She is always determined to make sure I am eating as much food as is humanly possible, and watches with an eagle eye for the slightest sign of ill health. She loves taking me to festivals at the different Wats and to all sorts of parties and events. Whenever I do laundry, iron clothes, wash dishes, or any other task around the house she always makes sure to check in to help and give advice.





The help and support of my host family have given me the time and energy to deeply engage with the community and Khmer culture. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I ride my bike to teach English to the young monks that live on a nearby mountaintop. After that I then go to my counterpart's house for Khmer tutoring. Even though I come back late my family always makes sure there is a warm meal waiting for me. Teaching the monks has allowed me to build valuable community connections from talking with many of the community members who come to the temple, and has increased my visibility in the surrounding communities, to the point where other wats have requested me to come and teach.



Teaching little monks



In my free time I study the Khmer martial art of Bokator. I practice every weekend and perform demonstrations with the other Bokator students. I have learned a great deal about Khmer history and culture studying with them and have shared with them my own martial arts knowledge of Taekwondo and western wrestling. My "Lok Kru" (literally translated as teacher but in this context probably translates best as sensei) is also an avid wrestler. From time to time, he will have me lead some of the newer students through their Bokator exercises, or even has me teach them whatever

I want. My host family has been very supportive of my Bokator training, with my host mom even taking the time to sew me handwraps to use after my knuckles were a bit scraped up during training.



While I was in Phnom Penh for a committee meeting, I received the terrible news that my host grandmother had fallen ill and had been sent to the hospital. Fortunately, she was in stable condition, and after wandering through the hospital I was eventually able to find her. I asked her repeatedly if there was anything I could do, any way I could help, but her only concern was that her illness had weakened her arm, and she didn't know if she would be able to cook for me. Tearfully, she told me that if I had to switch to another host family, she would understand. I told her I did not want to go anywhere, even if I had to cook every meal myself.

Thankfully, things were not as dire as we all worried. She made a great recovery, and a next-door aunt volunteered to help with the cooking. I was so touched by her concern for me, even under the most trying of circumstances. I will be forever grateful for my host family's love and support, and I owe so much of my success as a volunteer to them.







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