

OCIP Cambodia Reflections

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I have done several community services in Singapore and I find that community service is all just about serving initially. There was no second thought to it. However, I am glad to have an opportunity to participate in overseas community service at Cambodia. Through this trip, it changes my perspective towards community service and makes me realized solely serving is not enough. Other than that, it also helped me to strengthen my personal development through multiple involvements and experiences.

It is hard to sum up a trip that has been such an amazing experience. Words to describe the past two weeks include – eye-opening, awesome, broadening, challenging, engaging, developing, fun, rewarding, educational, team building, revitalizing, encouraging and of course hot! These 14 days in Cambodia with such welcoming people was the best impression I had. Despite all the hardships they face, there are still some of the most welcoming and selfless people I have met. Smiles meet you as you walk along the street. The somewhat rule-less roads are hectic, filled with cars, motorbikes and bicycles and yet I witnessed very few crashes. Everyone looks out for one another. Such scenes are hard to be seen in Singapore whereby majority of the people are leading fast-pace lifestyle as well as the given traffic conditions.

During this trip, it was great to work as a team and particularly great how well we all got along together. In a team full of leaders, I felt I was able to develop some leadership skills in a different environment and was able to communicate clearly. Leading a team was not as easy as I thought it would be. Being a leader for the team, I faced problem such as miscommunication, poor controlling of the behavior of certain members and disagreements. However, along the way I began to learn other styles of leading and learn to manage impulsivity which I felt it was one of the utmost important elements of being a leader. Such experience would allow me to self-reflect and improve myself to be a better leader. No one is born to be a natural leader; it's all the hardships, trainings and experiences that make a leader born.

During my stay in BBLC, we engaged in activities such as teaching the kids how to speak and write proper English and doing of infrastructure. Teaching English was a stretch for me. As I could not speak or understand Khmer, I needed to be enduring and rely on the Basic English they understood to explain harder words and concepts. Often, I need to rely on the teacher to translate certain facts to allow the kids to understand better. My life has been impacted greatly by teachers who made the extra effort with me, and I appreciate that more and more when I teach. Both the children's class and young adult class were polite, enthusiastic and eager to learn. This made me so happy and proud to be a part of. I found myself thinking about my school years and how much I value the great educators I have been blessed with. Doing of infrastructure was not as easy as I thought. All the perspiration and having to work under the hot sun makes me felt more

appreciated to the efforts and hard work contributed by the foreigners to build a stable building for the people in Singapore. Although we may not be able to witness the results of our hard work in Cambodia, but at least, from the bottom our hearts we know that we have somehow played our parts to help the community. Also, it's all the little effort accumulated to build a better place for the community over there.

Since returning home I have changed my views on a lot of things. It is hard to look at simple things like catching the public transports, teenagers with their electronic gadgets on the street, or even the tall buildings of our city in the same light. I keep thinking that we in Singapore take so much for granted and often have life so easy that we simply don't make the most of it. In Cambodia, it's intriguing to see people live in lesser conditions and still be so happy. It makes me realized that happiness is not the product of material possessions, wealth or fame. It lies elsewhere; in the content soul, in the quiet smile.