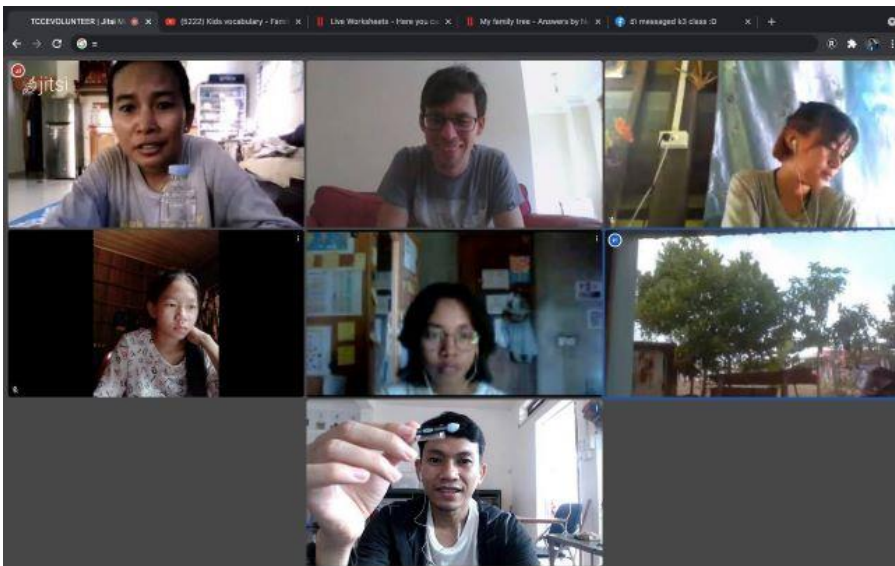


Note from *people and places*: this volunteer's placement was designed specifically for them – they went through our full matching process, as we've been doing with you. The placement report indicates their particular skills and experience – yours may be similar or completely different – your own placement will make best use of **your** experience and skills. Every volunteer is different – in what they give and what they gain. Reports from previous volunteers serve to give you as good a picture as possible about the project. If you have any questions about any of the detail in this report please do not hesitate to contact me at [dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

## E-volunteer placement report Treak Cambodia

Andy Davis

May – July 2021



### What was your motivation for e-volunteering?

I was supposed to go to Cambodia to volunteer this year but was prevented from doing so by COVID. I wanted to connect with the project that I am still hoping to volunteer with when it is safe to travel again, so I could be more effective when I do (eventually) go in person. I also wanted to use my increased amount of free time doing something useful and this was something I could easily do with access to a laptop and internet connection.

### Was e-volunteering as you imagined it would be – if not how did it differ?

It was well planned out with the project in Cambodia what we would be doing, which made it easier to plan lessons and activities that they would be interested in and find useful. There were some limitations with using video conferencing tools but not as much as I would have thought. It is difficult to work with more than 2 people at a time,

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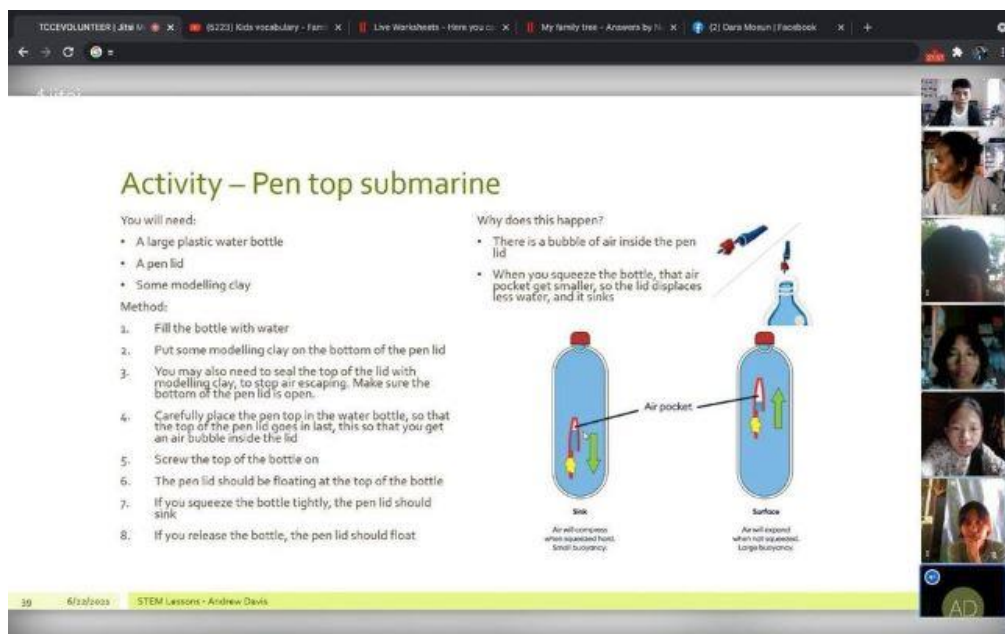
especially if the internet connection is variable. It would have been very difficult if one of the parties had a poor internet connection.

**Pre-placement preparation - were you happy with the information we shared with you during your preparation for this placement? what information did you consider most useful?**

People and places are very good at staying in touch, in fact it was a group video meeting with old and new volunteers, that I was attending as a future in-person volunteer, that gave me the impetus to enquire about e-volunteering. There was plenty of information given to me at the start of the e-volunteering placement, and we had several email and video conversations to properly plan the placement. Talking to other volunteers who have already done a placement was also useful in figuring out what resources were available.

**Your experience and work – including what resources you may have sent to the project and to whom – please attach copies of any written resources you may have given to them, and let us know of any others**

The placement mostly consisted of creating lessons using PowerPoint and giving lessons to the teachers in Treak CC, for them to use with the students. As an Engineer who has some experience doing educational activities, my lessons were focussed on STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). The teachers chose the subjects they were interested in learning about, these subjects were: Volcanos, The Water Cycle, Transportation, Recycling, Astronauts and Buoyancy.



I would plan out a lesson according to what they wanted to know and what their current knowledge was. This often required some research, as there were some things I didn't know (what causes the monsoon seasons in Cambodia, for instance). I found websites like BBC bitesize very useful for finding information that was well explained and clear. On average I would say that each lesson would take me 4-5 hours to prepare.

During the lessons I would continuously check in to make sure everyone was understanding. Dara and the other teachers would often ask questions that would require me to add information during the lesson or, if I didn't know the answer, I would do some research and send a follow up email with the answer (a typical lesson would include at least one question that I didn't know the answer to, which kept me on my toes).

**What advice would you give to future e-volunteers, including any technical difficulties you encountered?**

It's important to make sure you have a good internet connection, I often found that I would have to move my laptop closer to my Wi-Fi router for video calls. As far as I could tell, the internet connection at Treak CC is good. If you are

instructing people in doing activities, ensure you are using materials that are easily available in their location.



Make the contents of any lessons relevant to the people receiving it. For instance when doing a lesson on the water cycle, I included a section about the water cycle in Cambodia and how it creates the Monsoons.

Try and establish what the people receiving the lesson already know about the subject. Keep in mind that education systems are different in every country, so what subjects are taught in one country are not necessarily taught in another. If you give a lesson to anyone based on them already having information they do not have, they will find it a challenge.

When doing lessons to 1 or 2 people, try to make the lessons more interactive (this is something I would improve on if I were to do it again). This is more challenging over video call and, in lessons with more people, can be impractical.

### **Successes, disappointments and challenges of your placement**

From my point of view the placement was a success, I believe it was a success for Dara and the other teachers; the proof will come when they try teaching the information to their students when they re-open the school. It was also great to meet and work with the teachers Dara, Viphou, Chheur, Monyroth, Sreyrath and Vathana as well as Michael and Dianne; this will mean I can “hit the ground running” when I start a placement in-person.

Beyond the disappointment of not being able to go to Cambodia to volunteer in person, the only disappointment was how quickly the 12 weeks seemed to go.

A major challenge for me was trying to explain complex subjects in a weekly 1-hour lesson to people on the other side of the world. It is difficult to gauge whether people have understood everything, and in some cases, 1 hour was not enough to cover a subject and we would have to go into “extra time”.

### **What was the highlight of your volunteer experience?**

The highlight for me was the enthusiasm of the teachers in Treak CC and the interest they had in the information I was giving. I also learned a lot myself from doing the lessons, both about my teaching skills and my knowledge of the subjects.

I spent most of my time teaching the teachers, which was an excellent idea as they could absorb more information and pass it on to more students. I enjoyed doing video calls with some of the students, even though these were more challenging and probably had less of an impact than teaching the teachers.

**Would you recommend e-volunteering to other people or not? please tell us why** Yes. People and places are good at matching you up with projects that require knowledge that you have, so you can be confident that the time will be well spent. We were able to find a day and time that fit in well with everyone's commitments, I did lessons at the start of my working day, which fitted in well with my work.

**Do you have any concerns about the support you received from people and places and/or our local partner during your placement?**

No

**Did you experience any significant technical difficulties? Were they overcome, and if not what could we have done better to help you?**

No

**Your recommendations for the input of future e-volunteers – a particular area of your work which could be continued by others and how would you suggest this could be done?**

Personally, I hope to continue my work on an in-person placement in a year or so. If someone is able to continue with this work in the meantime I think it would be very beneficial.

If I were to do another placement, I would probably go back to basic principles, for instance: The 3 states of matter (solid, liquid, gas); convection; gravity and forces; basic chemical reactions (like combustion); mass, volume and density; electricity; etc. I covered these subjects a little in my lessons, but I would have preferred to spend more time on them, as they are important base knowledge for understanding how volcanoes or the water cycle works, for example. It was sometimes necessary for me to over-simplify something (or even use the phrase "because it does") for me to cover everything in a lesson in the time available.

**Overall, what did we do well?**

Good communication and I feel I was well matched to my placement, I felt like my time and knowledge was being well-used.

**What could we do better? – and please don't hold back: surely there's something we can improve on ...**

It's difficult to think of anything. If I had to say something, I would probably have preferred the lessons to be longer, in fact in some cases they were, but if they were longer it may have also been more difficult to fit it into everyone's schedules (including mine).

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