

Award winning ethical, responsible, sustainable volunteer travel



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## Autumn newsletter 2017

### Editorial



Welcome to our Autumn newsletter, as I write this the date for the *people and places* social at our HQ (Kate's Home) in Faversham is rapidly approaching, the details are as follows . . .

**DATE: Saturday 4th November**

**RSVP Wednesday 1st November please**

**TIME: 12 - 5 pm**

An opportunity to meet the people and places team - previous volunteers and co volunteers

**PROGRAMME:**

This is a fairly informal occasion

There will be a short introduction from us and an update about the latest projects we have visited this year, -the remainder of the afternoon is free to mingle, socialise, chat ...and eat !

**REFRESHMENTS:**

We'll be providing drinks and light snacks, as usual. If you have any allergies or particular dietary requirements, please let us know.

**DIRECTIONS:**

Address - 1 Naboth's Nursery, Canterbury Road, Faversham ME13 8AX

The 'office' is about 5-10 minute walk from the train station, or there are generally taxis at the front of the station - Reeves is an excellent local company, and you could book a taxi beforehand if you like - 01795 536 666

If the weather's good and you choose to walk – [here's a link to a map](#) – and if all else fails, you can give us a call 01795 535 718

**Nigel Pegler**

Any comments and volunteer experiences welcome at [newsletter@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

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## **we need your teaching skills - and not only in schools**

**Definition of teach: "cause (someone) to learn or understand something by example or experience."**



**Definition of skill: "The ability to do something well; expertise."**



## **That's what we are all about in all our volunteer projects**

{As an aside we are proud that our programme is a skills-share programme. However, we need to use the term "volunteer" because in this Google search age the vast majority of people use the word "volunteer" when they do their searches – not "skills-share".}

Many of our "education" volunteer programmes are **not** based in schools – many are.

[All of our programmes need volunteers to share their skills](#) - e.g. teach.

Here are some examples of where we need teaching skills - not only in schools but in community, health and vocational programmes too.

Please read on to learn more about the projects we work with that need and would warmly welcome your teaching skills .

***If you are a qualified teacher or teaching assistant we need your skills in all the schools – and in many of the community programmes we work with.***

**Here are just a few examples of where we need you to share your skills and experience in schools:**

### [Schools Support South Africa](#)



### [Education Support in Rural Nepal](#)



## [Early Childhood Development in The Gambia](#)



*If you have business skills such as accountancy or marketing –*

Here are just a few examples of where we need you to share skills and experience

## [Business Development Support Siem Reap Cambodia](#)



## [Business Development for youth in Kruger South Africa](#)



## [Business Support for Women in Kathmandu](#)



*If you have practical such as gardening and building*

Here are just a couple of examples of where we need you to share skills and experience

## [Community support Cambodia](#)



## **Practical support for young people in Saint Lucia**



*If you have health and social care skills*

Here are just a couple examples of where we need you to share skills and experience

## **Health and social care projects in Cambodia**



## HIV community care in South Africa



We **tailor make** every volunteer placement – **matching** your skills to project need –

Go on, take a look – [register with us](#) for free with **absolutely no commitment**. Kate our placement director and Dianne our volunteer programme advisor will help you identify where you could best share your skills – where you could **“teach”** and where you could find a unique and fulfilling experience.

**And don’t forget – our local partners and the people they work with will “teach” you at least as much as you “teach” them**

**Thankyou**



## **caring for vulnerable children - Dianne & local partner Sarah share inspiring developments**

*This article is written jointly by Dianne Ashman, voluntary programme advisor for people and places and Sarah Corley, director of volunteer and student travel at AOA. AOA is people and places' local partner in Swaziland.*

This is the story of [six Neighbourhood Care Points \(NCPs\) in the Ezulwini Valley in Swaziland](#). NCPs were first started by UNICEF to provide support and care for children whose families were struggling with poverty and the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Their over-riding aim is to provide vulnerable children and orphans with the care and support they and their families need to enable them to continue to live within their community rather than being placed in an orphanage.

In 2012, when our story starts, these six NCPs, supported by AOA, were providing two meals a day for the children and very basic childcare. They were staffed by women from the local community who tried to give the children some basic education but struggled because they had no resources and lacked any form of teacher training – some of them had not completed their own schooling. AOA maintained the NCP buildings and volunteer groups painted the walls with educational materials such as the alphabet and numbers, but any teaching that did happen simply involved rote learning, with few opportunities for children to learn through play. Although free primary education for all had recently been introduced in Swaziland the country lacked teachers and schools, so children were (and still are) interviewed at the age of 6 before being given a school place. Many children from the NCPs were failing to pass this interview, so were being excluded from the education system from the very start . . . and so the cycle of poverty continued.

Now, in 2017, all children who are about to graduate from these six NCPs (102 children) have been awarded school places. The schools report that they can no longer distinguish between children from the NCPs and those from more advantaged backgrounds. What is more, the NCP teachers have received training so that they understand various teaching strategies they can employ to help their children learn, and have the confidence to try out various teaching methods through a structured programme of activities which covers the key learning areas of language, maths, art, science and discovery, and physical development. The focus on holistic child development means feeding and health programmes now form a structured part of the development of these children, and parents are becoming engaged in their children's learning.



*2011 - no structured activities*



*2016 - how many children ? active maths*

What has brought about this transformation, and what has our role been in this?

Dianne first came to Swaziland in 2012 to meet our local partners and to ask what their needs were for volunteer support. She learned about the children's poor chances of passing their interview for school, and that although AOA wanted to introduce a more formalised learning programme they did not have the time or expertise to do this, either within their own staff or from the generally young and inexperienced volunteer groups they took. She visited the NCPs and saw their basic buildings and lack of resources – until very recently one of them had had no building at all and was referred to as 'the school under the tree'. She met one of the teachers who had found out on a half day training course (the only training she had ever received) that a pre-school classroom should have separate areas for writing, reading, dressing-up etc, and the image of this teacher standing by the sign she had stuck up saying 'Book Area' in an empty room with no books was one that remained in her mind long afterwards.

Sarah joined AOA in March 2014. She quickly identified that even those children from the NCPs who got a school place struggled to achieve well and lacked understanding of many of the basic concepts of education. She admired the local women running the NCPs but soon realised they lacked the skills-set to do anything much more than child minding. At the same time, she realised that the volunteer groups who spent some time at the NCPs were having inconsistent and not always satisfactory experiences, and as she became more knowledgeable about the ethics of volunteering she realised the volunteer experience they were offering did not meet the criteria of having a clear purpose and a clear role. She looked for a way to address all these issues and realised an organised curriculum for the NCPs, involving the teaching of relevant skills by teachers who had received appropriate training, alongside a clearly directed programme for the volunteers as classroom assistants, would go a long way towards meeting these needs.

Dianne contacted Sarah during 2015 to find out if there was still a need for someone to help write a curriculum for the NCPs. She had had some experience of curriculum design, albeit for older children, during her teaching career and felt motivated to help local staff put something together if the need was still there. This coincided so closely with Sarah's ideas that we decided to go ahead. Dianne returned to Swaziland as a volunteer in September 2015, Sarah cleared some space in her diary and we approached the task with enthusiasm.



The teachers did not have the expertise to write the curriculum but were consulted from the very beginning. We held teachers' workshops to get their ideas on topics to include, and got their buy-in to what we were proposing. Our idea was to produce a curriculum which covered a different topic every week, with suggested activities for language, maths, discovery, art and drama/physical development. Dianne and Sarah consulted

pre-school teachers in the UK and Swaziland, had some local help in finding pictures and activities, and put some trial weeks together, which the teachers tried out for us. It quickly became apparent that although they loved the worksheets they could not do the teacher-directed activities without further direction. So, rather reluctantly, we became more prescriptive and put a lot more detail into what we produced. By the time Dianne's placement was over, the first term was written, including teaching materials and resources for the children. A training session for volunteers had also been put together, showing them how they could provide useful in-class support for the teachers, and trialled with a group of Australian teenage volunteers.

On her return to the UK Dianne continued to work on the curriculum, getting help and advice from a pre-school teacher in the UK who checked the content and made sure tasks were set at an appropriate level for this age group. Dianne then checked the entire curriculum against the Swaziland Early Learning Development Standards (a somewhat intimidating document) to make sure it covered all the skills, knowledge and abilities we need to teach our children to prepare them for primary school. She sent a draft for a year's curriculum to Sarah by the end of 2015.

It quickly became apparent that this curriculum was still too ambitious. The teachers provided invaluable feedback on what worked and what was too difficult, and Sarah worked hard to make changes, working on this every Sunday in her own time. She included more local/cultural issues, such as respect for elders, safety, and a topic on jobs to create ambition for a child's future. She also recruited their unskilled volunteers to make resources such as laminated cards which could have multiple uses to help teach recognition of colours, letters and numbers. As she was doing this alongside her other work this was a massive undertaking. She also realised that we had tried to push things on too fast, and that although the teachers were willing to try out the curriculum they were still very nervous of it and lacked confidence in their own abilities.



It was therefore decided that volunteer donations paid as part of clients' joining fees should be used to fund the appointment of a local, trained primary school teacher who could drive the curriculum forward and train the teachers in their own language – and so Eunice joined the team.

During 2016 Eunice worked hard to engage the teachers, build their confidence and give them teaching skills, and also to trial various topics from the curriculum to gauge what worked and what didn't. She consulted local primary schools about what skills the children needed to settle well into school and wrote these into the curriculum. Already by the end of 2016 primary school teachers were talking very positively about the improvement in the skills of children coming from the NCPs.

### *Eunice*

In November 2016 a *people and places* volunteer, Cecilia, came to Swaziland. She was invaluable in helping Eunice insert all she had learned into the curriculum, and by the time her placement had finished a full curriculum for term one was ready for printing.

Teaching started in earnest with the start of the school year in January 2017, and Cecilia returned for a second placement and worked on the second term, as well as continuing to help with teacher training sessions. A second *people and places* volunteer, Yvonne, also came with the specific aim of working with two of the teachers to build their skills and confidence in the classroom, especially as one of them had been very nervous as to whether she would have the ability to deliver the curriculum having dropped out of school so early herself.



*volunteer Cecilia with NCP teachers*

As we write this, the teachers are just starting to teach the third term of the full curriculum. Parents are taking their children for their primary school interviews, and so far all have been given places. One parent even reported that the school had said 'if he comes from an (AOA) NCP, we'll definitely give him a place, they're always really good'. Interviews with the teachers who have been part of the whole process have all been really positive – they are so much more confident than they were two years ago and couldn't wait to show us their children's work - one teacher said 'I am so excited to tell you how well my children are doing'.

As Sarah is about to leave AOA and handing over to Michelle, we thought this was a good time to assess the outcomes of what has been achieved so far. We know there is a long way to go – the curriculum is by no means perfect and there is a lot more that can be done to build the teachers' skills. However we are delighted that after only two years we can say the following things have been achieved:

#### **For the NCP teachers:**

- Vastly increased confidence and passion
- No longer fearful that they don't have the ability to teach
- Improved spoken English
- Understanding of the role of the volunteer groups and how they can use them in their classrooms to enhance learning, whether that is through splitting large classes into groups to enable small group learning, or through asking the volunteers to teach new songs and games, or through asking them to find and prepare resources, or through broadening the children's cultural experience.

#### **For the children:**

- Primary school places for all of them (to date) and therefore a chance to benefit from all that education offers them
- The chance to start primary school on an equal basis with those from more advantaged family backgrounds
- A more varied curriculum with a lot more activities, games and songs as well as a good grounding in writing, counting etc.

#### **For the community:**

- For the first time, parental engagement in their children's education with parents coming into the NCPs to see what the children have been doing
- Better health because of the feeding programme, introduced as part of the holistic approach to child development
- Better school buildings with better resources, because this clear and sustainable programme for the NCPs has attracted more donors.

#### **For volunteers:**

- The opportunity for skilled *people and places* volunteers to participate in a really meaningful programme which is showing real results, and which one volunteer described as the best organised placement she has been on.
- For groups of young or unskilled volunteers, the chance to participate in a meaningful programme which involves a clear definition of their role explained as part of their orientation programme, at least one training session in how they can best help, support of a qualified teacher at All Out Africa (Eunice) as well as working with an NCP teacher on a daily basis, and participation in a programme of planned activities designed to build children's skills in a progressive way.
- It is notable that volunteer ratings of their experience have gone up in the last two years and that there is greater consistency in their experiences at their NCPs.

We are both immensely proud of these outcomes and grateful to the NCP teachers for being brave enough to participate so willingly in what must have seemed a frightening new venture. We feel more privileged than we can say to have had the opportunity to get this project under way.

Dianne and Sarah

[read about the project here - volunteers can add support to this ongoing programme](#)

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## meet three teachers from Swaziland-could you share your skills with them?

*this from Dianne, just back from working with the NCPs in Swaziland:*

I would like to introduce you to three teachers from the [Neighbourhood Care Points we support in Swaziland](#), working hard to give pre-school children the knowledge and skills they need to give them a good start at school. These teachers receive a small allowance but not a full salary – they work more or less as volunteers because they genuinely care about the children in their care.

Teacher **Mgazi** has been working at Mlindazwe NCP since 2009.

She has had no formal training as a teacher other than a few workshops, but she has always tried to put into practice any ideas given to her about how to teach young children. When she was first taught something about phonics and shown how to sound out the letters in a word this was a revelation to her, and she still teaches her children to sound out the letters of the alphabet even though this is not a teaching method in common use in Swaziland. Over the last two years she has learned various techniques for teaching children through play, and she now has the confidence to include topics of her own into the curriculum rather than simply relying on the materials given to her.



This is Teacher **Zodwa** from Ekuzukekeni NCP. She lives in the village very near to the NCP and has worked there for more than five years. At first she was one of the cooking ladies, but when the previous teacher sadly died Zodwa stepped in to become the new teacher. She loves the children and is an enthusiastic teacher, although like the others she has had no formal training. Zodwa loves to sing and dance – she has recently been on a music and movement course and now her children know so many songs and actions!

Teacher **Gugu** has been the teacher at Ezulwini NCP since 2010.

She has always cared greatly about her pupils and wanted to do her best for them but did not have a lot of confidence and preferred not to have other people in her classroom. Now her attitude could not be more different. In a recent interview she told me (in her own words):

*"When I started I was going away from the white people, but practice makes perfect because now the volunteers come and now I learn more English so I help my children more. So now my children are very good, they are speaking English, they are very good at writing, I am excited about my students."*



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## **Kenya - a return to familiar territory - this time, as volunteers !**

The following extracts are from volunteer Kathy's report following her 2 month placement at [Gede House - a school for children with special needs.](#)

My son, Joe, and I decided to volunteer for different projects in Kenya this year and we were lucky enough to come across People and Places through our search for potential placements. Joe worked at Sita Community Snake Farm on a conservation placement and I volunteered at Gede Special School. The whole process and experience was very well supported and organised with friendly, professional and personal one to one guidance. For me, as a teacher, it was important to know that we were being 'screened' appropriately and that we were expected to go through a proper application procedure, complete with references and disclosure checks. Not only did this reassure me of the organisation's ethics but also gave me a genuine sense of trust and confidence that the projects would match up to expectations and would suit our individual skills and vocational interests.



*Precious, Pauline (me) and Peris*

Having been to Kenya many times, we were just excited to be back and to get 'stuck in' to the work.

When Joe and I signed up to volunteer in Kenya, neither of us dreamed that Turtle Bay Beach Club would be hosting us during our stay. It is a place we know very well, having been there on holiday many times! Joe went first when he was only a year old; he learnt to swim there and we have, over the years, made friends with many people at, or through, this beautiful hotel.



*Watamu beach*



*TBBC at night*

It was absolutely serendipitous that we discovered the Gede Small Home project through People and Places and then, ended up returning to a place we love so dearly. The incredible team of staff made our time in Watamu even better as volunteers, not just as holiday makers. We could not have asked for a better person to support us with our community work than Ken, Turtle Bay's conservation and community officer.



He was absolutely brilliant in terms of looking after us and ensuring that every aspect of the placement worked smoothly, from checking our packed lunches were on time, to sorting out our daily 'tuk-tuk' journeys.

We had a day to relax and get over the journey and then Ken organised an orientation tour of the area and of the places where Joe and I would be working which was really helpful, especially for me to meet the Headteacher, Madame Karo, prior to starting at the school.

The school is situated right next to the Primary School but has its own area, buildings and staff team. There are classrooms for the Hearing Impaired children and separate classes for those children who suffer from cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities. I spent the first few days observing different groups and working in both areas with the aim, and advice from Mme Karo, to 'find where my heart settled'.



It settled on Class 2, working alongside Madame Peris, and during the next two months I worked closely with Adam, Asma, Sylvia and Furaha ... lessons including English, Maths, RS, Social Studies, Science and, at times, tried to deliver some Kiswahili despite the fact I speak very little!



It didn't take long to feel infected by the incredible joie de vivre and resilience of all the children I came into contact with. It is easy to write words such as 'humbling', 'inspiring', 'life changing' but harder to convey their true weight and meaning.

My experience with the children and staff at Gede was all these.

"see my good work"



Pipe-cleaner glasses



"I see you"

One of the things I was most proud of achieving whilst out there, and one which I contributed my project money to (as well as the money from a flood of donations from friends and family) was getting a uniform made for every child at the school who needed one. These uniforms were made to measure for each child by the wonderful Mama Willy and her team.



The uniforms were designed particularly with no zips, buttons or hooks, for ease of use by the children who cannot use such things. The girls had dresses and the boys had elasticated shorts and football style shirts so they could manage basic functions (like going to the toilet) either independently or with much less help.





The staff at the school all made me incredibly welcome and accepted me fully into their routines, their classrooms and their lives. I am proud to call many of them my friends now and have pledged to go back as soon as I can afford to. I know I am just one of those who want to try and make a small difference to these children's lives. I feel absolutely privileged to have worked there. My letter of appreciation from Madame Karo is very special and one in which she says: "I hope you will find the time to come back and see the seeds of creativity and innovation which you have sown in the minds of the learners, which will have grown to maturity".

I aim to do just that.

Kathy

*Precious, Pauline (me) and Peris*

[Read more about the Gede volunteer programme here](#)

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## **Dianne reports on her recent visit to our education and community volunteer programme near Kruger, South Africa**

I have recently returned from a visit to [the project we support at Hazyview](#), run by our local partners Good Work Foundation. They have been developing a revolutionary model of learning for rural Africa - Digital Learning Campuses, designed to bring children and young adults from rural areas into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by showing them how to access to the world's body of knowledge and opportunities available through digital technology.

I was last at the Hazyview Digital Learning Centre in 2015 . . . and what massive strides forward have been made since then! I was impressed with what I saw then – about 1500 grade 4 children from eight rural schools in the province of Mpumalanga coming to the Centre once a week to learn how to use computers and to work on apps designed to support their English and Maths in HDLC's Open Learning Academy, and up to 300 young adults a year graduating from the Careers, Skills and Training Academies designed to give young people skills in the 'languages of access', ICT and English, and the opportunity to take this further with career-based courses geared towards employment prospects in the local area.

Now, only two years later, Hazyview Digital Learning Centre is the hub at the centre of further 'satellite' centres – the first two, in the rural villages of Justicia and Huntingdon, are open and fully functioning, and the remaining two, at Dumphries and Lillydale will open in 2018.



Huntingdon DLC

Like Hazyview, each centre supports local schools through Open Learning programmes, and these are now available not only to grade 4 children at the centres but also to learners in grades 5, 6 and 7 in their schools. There is now also an Open Learning Plus programme for learners showing aptitude, which is an after school course covering such things as robotics, coding and drones. Each new centre supports 60 young people taking 'Bridging Year' courses in ICT, English, Media and 'Ready to Work', all digitally based courses geared towards improving students' employment opportunities, in addition to the 120 already undergoing training at Hazyview. The Career Academies have been rationalised to give students three clear routes of progression, in the fields of ICT, Media and Travel and Tourism. Each route includes higher level courses and leads on to direct opportunities for employment, offered through internships or further training offered locally.



A key aim is to make the centres self-sustainable – one room on the Hazyview site is currently rented out as an IT support call centre which has enabled this company to bring their call centre back into the country from overseas, and offers direct training and potential permanent employment for those following up their IT training into a career. Currently this centre employs 10 local people but expansion plans are imminent and shortly 150 people will be able to get jobs and training here.

*call centre at Hazyview*

Future plans include similar ventures for the Media and Travel and Tourism sectors, with plans to build a Media and Photoshop centre offering services to local businesses, and a 'smart' training hotel on site which will provide on-the-job training for people seeking employment in new tourist developments, including hotels, around the nearby Kruger Gate (soon to be renamed Mandela Gate) into Kruger National Park.

*Maria, Head of Operations and Programmes,  
and Jane, Head of Huntingdon DLC*



So, organisational and structural changes have been huge in the last two years. But even more impressive has been the development of many of the staff. GWF has always prided itself on 'growing its own staff', so many people who do the Bridging Year then become facilitators for the Open Learning programme, and those showing appropriate promise are promoted into managerial positions, always with guidance through individual mentoring and support programmes to help them succeed. One young lady who was an Open Learning facilitator and thinking she would need to move away from her family to get employment in Johannesburg when I first met her in 2015 is now Head of the satellite Digital Learning Centre at Huntingdon – she is enjoying her job and the responsibilities it brings, and has grown immensely in confidence and self-belief.

Another, who two years ago was rather nervously about to start managing the centre at Justicia, is now Head of the Hazyview Centre, a job which includes managing a whole team of staff and students, which she does with great confidence and a sense of humour. Others who were managing small subject areas or teams in the past now have roles of responsibility across all the centres, and these job opportunities will grow as the centres continue to expand and eventually as the Hazyview model of learning is replicated in other parts of rural Africa. As a previous people and places volunteer at GWF said to me recently, "to watch staff develop into managers has been incredible and humbling".

But for me one of the most satisfying things was the fantastic welcome back they gave me, and to hear the tremendous appreciation from everyone at GWF for the work of volunteers we at *people and places* have sent there in the last two years. Two people in particular, Catriona and Ray, have been back three times and have become real members of the GWF team. Although they had some concerns about whether South Africa was a safe destination before they left for their first placement, they soon felt at home there, hiring their own car, socialising with friends they made at GWF and becoming 'locals'.

They have also hosted several people from GWF in their own home when they have come to the UK. One member of GWF staff, Accolade, came last year on her first visit to the UK to represent GWF at a fund-raising event and auction in London. She told me how excited and nervous she was, and how fantastic it was that these volunteers met her at Heathrow, showed her the sites of London, and then had her as their guest in their home – she says they are now her friends for life. Some of the other staff also told me how they had been exchanging emails with these volunteers only recently, and one of them continues to mentor key staff members of GWF via Skype.



Ray, Accolade, Catriona - together again, in London

Catriona and Ray are not IT specialists, so don't feel you need to be skilled IT practitioners to volunteer here – there are areas of ICT where they could use support, but in general they're pretty good at this themselves. Volunteers so far have contributed in the areas of human resource management, organisational design, mentoring and team building, curriculum planning and design, business planning, finance, graphic design, and working on the conservation programme. . . . and that's not an exclusive list, that's just what people have done so far! So I hope you can see there is scope for individualised volunteer placements here which make use of a very wide range of skills.

[Check this project out on our website](#) – volunteer here and you too could become part of the *people and places*/GWF 'family'.

Dianne

## Cambodia - a volunteer stresses the importance of flexibility

*people and places' volunteers have so many skills and experiences to share with local communities - the following from Stephanie, an American social worker with a particular interest in nutrition.*

I had an incredibly wonderful experience with Treak Community Centre . I enjoyed my time immensely and was able to quickly integrate into their work in the community! The staff members at [Treak Community Centre](#) were very supportive, kind and welcoming.

During my time there, I assisted the head teacher with English classes, completed interviews regarding housing and education in the local community, and developed the framework for a nutrition program. I felt I could openly express my thoughts to local project staff members.

I believe the nutrition education program could continue to be developed and implemented within the school. The work I completed merely provided a beginning framework.



*Stephanie with local staff, Dara & Pechey*

On my last day, I completed a workshop with all of the staff members to teach about adequate nutrition. I provided classroom ideas and the teachers at the school were interested in the subject. Future volunteers could expand by developing lessons for each level of class (nursery through advanced) that the teachers could use to teach the subject.

*and our next people and places' volunteer will build on Stephanie's work - they're in touch with each other and exchanging information and ideas - continuity !*

There are many successes I feel occurred during my placement. I quickly learned that being a native English speaker was extremely useful for the students' pronunciation of words in the classroom. Developing relationships with local staff and community members is also a wonderful success— I enjoyed participating in a variety of activities at the community centre with them.

Although the time I was in Siem Reap was limited, I was able to provide a basic framework for the research areas I came to work on. Occasionally communication between staff members seemed to be lacking, but these instances were resolved quickly - a practice in flexibility! I practiced flexibility daily and cannot stress that enough when volunteering. I believe international volunteering expands your understanding of different cultures in ways that simply reading or discussing alone cannot do. It also allows for personal growth in many different ways. Most importantly, sharing skills to improve a community program can benefit many for years to come.

The absolute best moments of my volunteer experience took place when I went into the local community with the head teacher to complete interviews regarding adequate housing and education. It was through those interviews that communication between Treak Community Centre and the students' parents improved and we were able to learn more about the needs of the students in their homes and community. The parents were very welcoming and eager to discuss their desires for their children—and provide insight into why education is important in their families. I believe this experience provided a strong cultural context for the students I was working with in the classroom and enhanced my overall experience greatly.

[Read more about this project here](#)

If you haven't already spotted our YouTube channel it's worth a look. There are video interviews from volunteers and if you have videos of your time volunteering or one of the talks you have done – we know many of you talk to groups on your return from volunteering – please send them to us so we can share them.

**click the logo**



**meet the *people and places* team [here](#)**



[Take a look here at slideshare for slide shows from volunteers](#) – if you have a slide show to share please do send it to us, thanks so much to all the volunteers who have contributed to date.

Remember we are on facebook too - [follow us here](#) – in the blog and on facebook are where we tend to post our latest news.

If you like beautiful pictures and funny visuals we are also on [pinterest – follow us here](#)

and finally we are tweeting too – [follow us here](#)