

My Unforgettable Experience in Cambodia

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Cambodia is known for its beautiful temples, delicious food and marvelous culture. However, Cambodia has its share of problems such as poverty, education, and healthcare. Did you know that over 20,000 children live and work in poverty on the streets of the capital of Cambodia, Phnom Penh? When I was 12 years old, I went to Cambodia and saw with my own eyes, the effect it had and still has on the people. At that time, I was living in Singapore, and wasn't aware of the problems arising in countries nearby, such as Cambodia.

My trip to Cambodia was unforgettable as I was able to learn. I was 12 years old when I went to Cambodia; I had volunteered to play with some of the local children who live in Siem Reap. My first impression of the local children was that they looked young, around 6 years old at most. However, after talking to them, I learnt that most of them were the same age as me. It was clear and evident that they weren't getting enough nutrition. It was then that I had completely understood and learnt that the place you were born or the family you were born into can determine your life.

They also told me that they did not go to school, and instead, worked to sustain their families. I knew instantly that an unsustainable cycle had been created. A cycle of where children are not able to go to school to further their education and instead are having to work from a young age, and then their children would also have to start working from a young age.

I was shocked, I was surprised and I was devastated to learn this fact. I instantly felt ashamed that I had been able to live such a blessed life compared to these children. At that time, I was so ashamed, that when they asked me how old I was, I lied and said I was 15. I was confused to how these children that are around my age, were not and still not, getting the same luxuries that I have gotten my whole life. My whole life, I never had to worry about not having enough to eat, never had to worry about money, never

had to worry about anything. After this trip, I learned to not take things such as food, water and education for granted, but to be more grateful as they are a privilege. I have come to believe that things such as food or education shouldn't be privilege, but a right.

My unforgettable experience in Cambodia made me determined to make the world a better place. I realized that the poor children of Cambodia might not have the power to live a better life. They might also not have knowledge about civil rights and freedom. But I do. I am able to make a positive change; I can help children in Cambodia! I have the power to make their lives better and I am planning to do so. I plan to return to Cambodia and work with nonprofit organizations. I believe that we have to work together. Few problems, can be solved by just one person. We are more powerful, smarter, and more hopeful when we work together. Action can be taken in many ways, action can be big or small, and action can create change. In the future, I plan on taking action by volunteering to help build schools for nonprofit organizations and work with people to ensure that more students are able to get an education.

The 20,000 children who live and work on the streets of the capital of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, deserve better. I want to be able to give them the childhood they deserve. A good education, food, clean water, and most importantly, love. It is our job, as humans, to spread and give love.