

Grade 8 History and Global Concerns Trip

Cambodia

29th March - 3rd April 2012



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70 UWCSEA (Dover) Grade 8 students participated in the History and Global Concerns Trip to Cambodia.

In Cambodia the students learnt about the country's recent brutal history, visiting the important historical sites of the Tuol Sleng (S21) Prison and Genocide Museum and the Choeung Ek Killing Fields, built 25 houses with the Tabitha Global Concern, painted the Prey Sara Pech school and taught the children at one of the 6 projects they visited: Aziza, Indochina Starfish Foundation School, Lakeside School, Rudi Boa, Tiny Toones. All in the space of 5 very busy days!

The trip embodies all that is good about UWCSEA and gives the students an insight into the hardships faced by others and the difference they can make.

In addition to the 70 Grade 8 students, 6 UWCSEA Cambodian scholars accompanied the trip taking a full part in all of the activities whilst performing the invaluable role of interpreters. They are:

Kimheang Chham	(Grade 8 - East)
Puthyda Keath	(Grade 9 - Dover)
Sinh Chhinh Lor	(Grade 10 - Dover)
Sun Hay Try	(Grade 8 - East)
Vireak They	(Grade 10 - Dover)
Vuth Chea	(Grade 9 - Dover)

The students were accompanied by 14 UWCSEA staff and community members:

Andy Fielding
Chris Davies
Dylan Carter
Geraldine McGrath
Glen Upton
Jennifer Kightley
John Waters
Kate Lewis
Michelle Fisher
Pam Males
Sanchia Hunt-Towle
Susan Edwards
Tom Soper
Tony Deeley,

The Grade 8 students who participated in the trip were:

Abigail Stearns	Adam Bocker
Aditi Iyer	Akanksha Saha
Alex Choi	Alison Wanger
Aman Deol	Ananya Avanthsa
Anshuman Nemali	Arhaan Berry
Barnaby Birkbeck	Cai Devine
Chris Kiong	Chris Lund
Claudia Lee	Dario Merlino
Divya Ramesh	Dounia Crivelli
Elinor Walker	Ella Theisinger
Elsemieke Marren	Emily Haeger
Felicity Lane	Fidelia Franto Fong
Georgia Moody	Gloria Yoon
Hana Douglas	Harry Scott
Isabel Hope	Isabel Capodanno
Isabelle de Bruin	James Harayda
Jasmine Cave Jones	Jayna Viswalingam
John Tolton	Jostijn Dessing
Julian Williams	Kartikye Mittal
Katya Ghirardello	Kira Khoroshilova
Kritika Suresh	Leila Fuerst
Matthew Ames	Matthew Grundlingh
Nami Ibaraki	Naomi Wang
Nicola Wong	Nicole Mueller
Noyonika Ghatak	Oscar Settle
Phoebe Hutchinson	Ramona Kuijntjes
Rene Lichtenecker	Richard Choi
Rohan Iyer	Ryan Ng
Ryan Yuen	Saanjh Gupta
Sabine Loth	Sharon Teja
Shayna Sarin	Smilla Huzell
Suk Joon Hwang	Sunehra Malhotra
Tara Chandrasekharan	Tarini Sipahimalani
Tiger Hills	Vincent Harrold
Vitika Agarwal	Wendy Van Horen Carneiro

This booklet is a collection of the reflections written by the students after the trip.

Abigail Stearns

One aspect of the trip that particularly stood out for me was as we were leaving the school that we painted. It was such an emotionally fulfilling time, and it made all of the hard work I did more than worthwhile. It was an experience that I would repeat multiple times if I had the opportunity, and it provided time to just reflect on what I am provided; a good school, trips, and vacations. I used to just take every luxury for granted, but in that moment leaving the school, I realized that this is something I worked hard at for other people, instead of myself. I had never given much thought to the effort put into painting UWC that people go to, but they do deserve just as much praise as we got. They did the same job as us, but somehow we ended up with the gratifying finished job, which is something everyone deserves. This is not just connected to painting, as any little aspect of my life that makes me happy, or helps me, deserves a large group of waving school kids saying thank you, which is something I will now aim to do. That day of painting, along with house building and seeing the families that I helped, really effectively taught me to not take for granted the life that I am privileged enough to lead, and I have learnt the lesson more strongly than could be read in any book.

Adam Bocker

I believe that the trip is the main reason for people to join Tabitha. It was for me. I wanted to be a part of a GC that not only donated money, but actually got in touch with the families we are helping. That was my favorite part of the trip, interacting with the families while building the houses. There is really no memory from the trip greater than one I have from the first day of house building.

To start off, lets just say that I do not have the most experience with building houses. IKEA furniture used to be the most I had done in terms of building things. On the first day I was hammering the best I could on one of the walls but as I expected it did not go very well. I was sweating, hammering maybe 30 times on each nail only to pull it out again because it was bent. Then a boy, no older than 10 came up to me. He reached out with his right hand towards me with his fingers slightly bent and he also reached out with his left hand, open and his palm was facing up. I understood that he wanted the hammer and some nails, so I gave it to him. He took the hammer in his hand as if it was a pencil, and with 5 easy taps the nail was all the way in.

I was amazed. I just looked at him like he was Superman. He proceeded to hammer two more nails in, just as easily, and now I looked at how he did it. He returned the hammer to me and I had a go. I didn't take large swings before hitting the nails this time and it went better. He was still watching me, and as the nail almost was in, it got bent. The boy went up to me again, pulled out the nail like it was nothing and he got a new nail. He then did it slowly to demonstrate the right technique.

After that moment I got nail after nail in like never before and I helped that boy build his house. It is one of those memories I think I will never forget, and memories like these are what make the Cambodia trip an amazing experience.

Aditi Iyer

These empty grey paths,
Once filled with screams,
Sorrows, sadness

As the Pol Pot armies
Shackled, killed and beat
Their traitors
By the hundreds

The cells filled with haunting memories
The small, enclosed spaces
Where they would live half dead
and half hoping
to be freed

Only 7 lived to share
Their stories
Of the inhumane cruelties
Behind the walls
of Tuol Sleng

I am very thankful, that I was able to go on the eye opening Tabitha trip this year. As much as I enjoyed the trip, I have found myself more dedicated to the cause after visiting Tuol Sleng.

Tuol Sleng, the prison and interrogation centre, most known for its cruel deeds, was once a peaceful school. After Pol Pot came to power, the innocence of the school was drained, and classrooms became cells, and monkey bars became a form of torture. As we walked down the corridors and rooms, we saw the shackles, skulls, and photographs. Although it was sad to think of all the pain and sorrow, which had once filled the empty barbed wired prison; it was what motivated me to build for the people, who had been through so much.

At the house-building site, whenever I managed to hit my thumb or miss the nail by miles, my visit to Tuol Sleng, was a constant reminder, of why I was in Cambodia, and what I had to do, to make a change.

Akanksha Saha

I thought that out of the entire trip I would probably enjoy the house building the most. And what I found is that house building is a lot harder than you think, the first house you build will take ages and you put in all your heart to building the first house while you lose your thumbs at the same time because you can't hit the nail properly. I got a lot of blisters on my fingers because I didn't wear any tape on my fingers, and trust me I regretted it later. But on the second house I felt like I did a much better job because I could get more work done. I didn't really mind the full sleeve shirts and long pants because the weather was really nice, a lot cooler than I expected it to be. Nailing in the walls was really tough. I tried it for about five minutes and then gave up, realizing that I'm much better at nailing in the

floor planks. That, and if I had continued, then I would have probably done a bad job of it. And I would much prefer I do a good job than a bad one.

The other thing I really liked about the trip, is visiting the Indochina Starfish Foundation. All of the kids there are amazingly bright, they are awesome at sports and they look like they just love to learn. I know that some of us here in Singapore don't like going to school and at times we can see it as a hassle but these guys just love it, and I think it's something we can learn from them. Because not everybody has the privilege to go to school we should be happy that we are fortunate to have an education. And just in general they are genuinely the most stunning kids I've met. I'm really glad I went on the trip because it taught me a lot.

Alex Choi

The Tabitha house building trip was a life-changing experience for me. And now I am going to tell you why it was. We have been fundraising for months and months, and ended up raising more than \$40000. Before signing up for the trip, I already had basic information, as I was a boarder and I was friends with the Cambodian scholars in the boarding house. When I was on the bus to the airport, and on the way to Cambodia, I kept thinking that I shouldn't just think about me and having fun with friends, but mostly to think that I am here to help them as much as I can.

Fried spider is the only thing I can remember about the first night. Honestly, I can't stand that stuff. I tasted the leg though, it was okay. I didn't even try to eat the body.

It's hard for me to describe the second day. In one day, I went to two of the most depressing places on earth: Tuol Sleng prison and the Choeung Ek Killing Fields. I think that day was one of the only days I was silent. From that day, I thought that it was important for us to do our job with our best effort. Of course I already had that in my mind, but this time it was different. It felt like if I didn't do this properly, I would regret it for rest of my life.

Third to fifth day was "The Day". House building. At first, I thought that the place we were going was just bit of countryside really, not the middle of nowhere. As I looked out of the window of the mini bus, I started to feel how lucky and thankful we should be to be born with this privilege. I also felt terrible how we were complaining about how hot it was in the mini bus. As soon as we got off the bus, we started building. Honestly, I was having such a hard time even nailing the floor. We had to dunk our heads about every 10 or 20 minutes and Mr. Davies was right. I wanted more.

The house building was already so much fun, and an honor to do it, but the handover ceremony was my favorite part of the trip. Why? Because I could meet the families we built the houses for. I felt so thankful and happy when the families thanked us so much for the houses, when we knew they could have done it so much better.

The last day seemed it like it went so fast. Actually, the whole trip went so fast. It was already the last day but it felt like it was only the third day. If they asked me if I would like to stay here for another week for more house building, I would have said yes. My group went to the Rudi Boa centre and had some art lessons with the children. I was surprised. They were so talented. I know this makes me look like a terrible person, but I thought they

wouldn't be able to do so much. I was wrong, and I felt ashamed of myself.

After the trip, I asked myself, "Why did I participate in this trip?" I answered, "Why? To help them, to know how lucky we are, and to be reborn as a new person."

Alison Wanger

I have finally achieved a mission that I have been preparing for, for months. Going to Cambodia was one of the most amazing things I have ever done. I have learnt so many new things; building houses, painting schools, interacting with children and especially to respect and be thankful for what I have. I realized that the way I live is a privilege. We managed to put a smile on people's faces that never knew a change like this was possible. Just by putting in some of my time and money and especially thought, I managed to save two families. I loved the way we learnt about their culture and lived with it. And learning about their history has changed my thinking. I now am grateful for everything I get, respect what I have and learnt that I am lucky. I am so proud of myself for being able to help these families who did not deserve any of the suffering they have been through. It is not their fault that they live in an undeveloped country. And the kids did not choose where they were born. But they are all allowed to be happy, to have a roof over their heads and daily food for them to survive. We all managed to give them two of those things: happiness and a safe home to live in. Somewhere where they can be safe from rain, from wind and other things that they are still scared of.

We also managed to re-paint a school. Not only did we make the studying for the children more enjoyable but we all had fun doing some artwork. There were some kids around there, trying to help us out and watching us do them a favor. When you looked at them, you could just see happiness in their eyes and a smile showed us that they were thankful towards us.

I mostly enjoyed the last day. Going to Tiny Toones was an amazing experience that I will never forget. The little children were so adorable and sweet. They tried so hard interacting and giving an effort into the drawings that we later hung up on the wall. But there was this one little kid that always stayed around me. He was so amazed at the camera I had brought in. He was astonished that this object could capture a small moment of happiness. He could not stop playing around with it. For all of us a camera might just be a normal thing to have around a house, but for them it's the most incredible thing they would ever see in their lives.

All of this taught me a big lesson. What I have, what we have, is a gift. A computer, or some money might make us happy, but all those kids and families need is a bit of our time to make them the happiest people in the world. It was so touching to see all those disappointed faces turn into faces full of hope and happiness.

Aman Deol

All the fundraisers and other events we participated in such as the fast and calendar sales all seemed difficult to us at first. Even first arriving in Cambodia was a mess. There were so many people to account for and it was difficult to keep focused on the main speaker for

our directions with such a big group. However as we progressed through the week we came to realize all the work we had put into this project and all the experiences we had over the past few months weren't difficult at all. The conditions the people were living in and their lifestyles were really the difficult situations; we just had to put a bit of effort into raising some money and attempt to build houses, and our discomfort wouldn't even be close to what the people of Cambodia experience on a daily basis. The Cambodia house-building trip was one that was an experience that will stick with me for the rest of my life. At first I may have joined for some of the wrong reasons but once we progressed into the year my perspective changed. The 70 students on the trip, including myself, had contributed a large portion of our time and effort into this project; to not have actually gone and witnessed the people and their conditions ourselves, would have been a terrible tragedy. In school we always seem to hear about the charities we support with many fundraisers happening, but up until now, I've never actually witnessed how this money is used and who is working hard to make it useful. It was a great experience to see what we had actually been fighting for these past few months and the satisfaction I got when looking at the faces of the many families we helped is one of the most fulfilling experiences I have ever had. Even though it was a shame we didn't get to build all of the houses I am thankful the money will still go to building more houses and supporting the school we painted in the near future; and I think that even if it wasn't as big as we planned, we still made a difference.

Ananya Avanthsa

The Tabitha trip has been a very spectacular trip. It was a hard working, and also heartbreaking trip. The best part I liked in this whole trip was helping the poor. Once we finished building houses for the respective families, I just felt like I've done something to change this country. The beautiful smiles that had been brought to us by the families was just so emotional, it brought me to tears. Visiting the various NGO schools was delightful. The way the children in the schools welcomed us and how they were interacting with us was just so touching. I loved working with the children and playing soccer with them. I still remember when we had to say goodbye to the kids; they wouldn't let me go. Learning about the Killing Fields and the Tuol Sleng prison made me realize how much Cambodians have faced through the Khmer Rouge and how people are still suffering. If I had to say one thing about the entire experience, starting from when I joined Tabitha and until the trip ended, I would like to say it was the best thing I've experienced and achieved.

Anshuman Nemali

I believe I am not speaking only for myself, when saying that this trip to Cambodia was a fantastic eye opener and experience for anyone who went. Whether it was the sombre feeling that you get while exploring "The Killing Fields" or the heartfelt happiness and content when playing with the kids from various GC's, it is a unique experience which can be easily taken for granted in this modern world. Building the houses was definitely one of the highlights of the trip. Once you go to the actual village, you see the squalor in a completely different perspective than when the BBC plays it on the evening news. You finally grasp what the objective of the trip was, and once that epiphany struck, the sense of duty was so overpowering and compelling, that you start working and don't stop until

someone has to yell at you to come down for lunch or a dunking, let alone take notice of the popped blisters on the palm of your hand. It is truly a humbling experience and one that I would, without a doubt, do again any day.

Arhaan Berry

It's hard to pick out different points of such an amazing trip to talk about. This house building trip was the most fun school trip I had ever been on. It mixes an almost perfect balance of fun and history. The Golden Gate Hotel was a very nice place. The teachers gave us quite a lot of freedom where we were allowed to watch tv or chat with friends and just generally hang out. The history trips were quite depressing but interesting nonetheless. To find out Cambodia's history in such depth is quite scary. To see the bones and the problems Cambodia was facing at the time and to hear a first hand account from one of the last remaining survivors of Tuol Sleng was quite intriguing. It makes me glad that we are learning more about Cambodia in history now so I can learn even more about Cambodia. Now I get to the house building which was a different experience altogether. It was hard work but it all paid off in the end. After seeing the houses the families lived in before made us want to push on more and help them. Hitting in the nails in the walls was hard but really fun, especially when you are on the ladders. Even though sometimes you would hit your thumb with a hammer a couple of times it was still fun to be with your friends helping people. To me one of the best parts of the trip was the handover ceremony. It was quite emotional and it was a very heartwarming experience to see the smiles on their faces when we gave them the blanket and the right to their house which they worked so hard to achieve. Overall this trip was amazing and I will cherish these memories and definitely recommend this trip to my peers.

Barnaby Birkbeck

To be honest I wasn't really looking forward to going to ISF although I knew what a difference UWCSEA has made through all of our contributions throughout time. Firstly we visited the dump site where most of the children involved in ISF were picking litter from ages as young as two. Beside the dumpsite was a very small village where the Cambodians would try to make money. Cambodians had lots different ways to make money; including burning the plastic off wires for the copper inside; per kilogram the copper was worth 2-5 USD.

We went into an ISF classroom where twenty very anxious children were waiting for us. UWCSEA had provided t-shirts for the children to draw on, these children were obsessed with Angry Birds at that time so were pleading us to help draw some on the shirts. It didn't matter how terrible my drawings were, all that mattered was that we were all enjoying it as much as each other.

One particular boy changed my day; he couldn't have been more than seven. He was the most amazing boy I have ever met. We didn't leave each other's sides throughout the whole experience. I drew the most amazing Angry Bird for him. We played in the small playground, us two and one of his best friends: Frisbee, Catch, Football and a Penalty shootout where he nailed me.

When it was finally time to say good-bye the sadness was looming around us however we were both so grateful to have had such a great time together. We shared one last wave and he left along with his friends for lunchtime.

Cai Devine

Wow, what a trip!! Cambodia was one of the greatest experiences of my life. It taught me so much and I will never forget it.

My highlight of the trip was definitely the first day of house building. We all arrived at the site quite sleepy, because of the long bus ride to the site. That tiredness was suddenly washed away by a cold dunk of water over our heads by Ms Kightley to start the work off (which became a common thing during breaks in building). We then separated into our groups and started to build.

In my group, we all started off by getting used to hammering by starting on the floor. By the end of the first minute we all felt as though we had not hit any nails in, but instead hit our thumbs. It was tough!! For about 30 minutes we continued hammering hard and quickly! We became used to it and we were all starting to get good. Until, John decides to ruin the roll we were on and smack his finger. I believed that cursed most of us, as about the next ten nails from everyone missed and smashed their thumbs. With water in our eyes, Leila, John and I took to the task of putting the walls up. Mr Davies had warned everyone before the trip how tough the walls were to do. So, I thought the best thing to do, was to get it over and done with. Me and John stayed down off the ladders to nail in the bottom nails (we got up on the ladders later). We had a load of fun, even though we were terrible. When we started to get used to it, we had a competition to see whose looked best. As we were judging our best ones, along came a pro and smashed in a perfect nail with three hits, when it took us about 10...We immediately got back to work, embarrassed. After a long while of hammering, it became darker and we had to begin to pack up. We said goodbye to the kids we got to know and set off back to the hotel.

The next day we woke up early to do part 1 of the hand over ceremony. That in itself was a hugely satisfying moment. John, Oscar and I went up with our blanket to one of the families knowing what we had accomplished in our minds, and knowing what a difference we will have made to them. It was amazing.

Cambodia 2012 - an experience of a life time!

Chris Kiong

On the last day of the Tabitha Cambodia trip, we all visited the Global Concerns projects. The objective of taking part in a Global Concern is all about giving back to the community. We were all given a preference on which Global Concern we would like to join; Tiny Toones, Aziza, ISF etc.

Just like everyone else, my first choice definitely had to be Tiny Toones. The reason behind my choice was because, first of all, I love dancing and thats what this specific Global Concern's main focus was. Unfortunately, I was put into ISF, at first I was a little bit disappointed that I didn't get my first choice, but this whole experience made me realize that It is not about me or what I wanted, it was about them. Fortunately, the day before Global Concerns Day I had the gracious opportunity to switch GC's with my friend "Ryan Ng". We talked about it, and he was happy to give me his position in Tiny Toones and accept a spot in ISF. I was really excited to dance with the kids, and play with them in a large group!

We arrived extremely excited! We also didn't really know what to expect. We entered the building and their many rooms, and inside was blasting music. We all looked at each other with the biggest smiles on our faces, but before we could go in and dance we had to first introduce ourselves and play a few games that we gladly did. Aman, Cai, Jasmine and I were assigned an English classroom. We sang songs, and played games such as Hangman. After spending 20 good minutes we decided to go outside and get some physical games going. We ended playing Duck Duck Goose, which was instantly a favourite with the kids. We had a lot of fun and we only had a few more hours to stay! So we all rushed into the studio to take our first dance lesson!

We enter the studio and there are kids already dancing! They were all aged from maybe 4 - 20 years old! It was truly amazing how such young kids could dance really well! We started off with a "cypher". A cypher is when a group of people gather up and form a circle while a person dances in the middle. All of us had a turn in the cypher and really enjoyed it. It was heaven for me since I could ask them questions on how I could improve. This really made me learn that dancing really brings the community together no matter where you are from. Everyone was getting along amazingly well and everyone was having an equally good time. Before we knew it, almost 4 hours had past! We were having so much fun that we completely lost track of time. During our time spent with them, we all developed friendships not only through speaking but through dance. When it was our time to leave we were literally holding on to the sides of the room begging Ms. Kightley for us to stay a bit longer. But, every good thing has an end. Our valuable time spent with them will never be forgotten!

Chris Lund

As I set foot out of the airport in Phnom Penh I felt the heat, no change between Singapore and Cambodia, but I knew it was the beginning of a memorable trip. We had quickly made a stop at the hotel to drop off our bags and headed straight for the restaurant, and some people were looking forward to the spiders and some weren't. The highlight of that night was eating the spiders. Not many people had tried it, and as I took my first bite it wasn't bad, it was crunchy and pretty nice. The second day was an interesting day but it wasn't the happiest of days. We first visited the Tuol Sleng prison for an hour and walking around the prison we had empathy towards the people who were in the prison. After lunch we went to one of the many killing fields in Cambodia, we had walked around the killing field for an hour and a half and we were listening to a recorded piece by ourselves. As the day ended we knew that the hard work was coming up. When we reached the village we went into our separate groups and started to build our first house. The whole day we managed to build around 15 houses. The next day we went back to the village to have the hand over ceremony. And as I was handing over the blankets I felt really good about myself. When they received their blankets they smiled and they looked very happy. We repainted the school which took us ages to do but we accomplished it. After that we were told we were only going to build 25 houses and not 40 and we had to decide where the money was going to go. After we had built the all of the houses we left the village and headed back to Phnom Penh. The next day we visited different NGO's and we had to entertain the kids for an hour which was a tiring job but it was also really fun.

What I learnt in Cambodia is that no matter what the situation is, whether it is bad or good, you have to try to find the good out of it and just smile.

Claudia Lee

The Experience of Cambodia

Before I signed up for Tabitha, before I knew what the whole experience was going to be like, my impression of the Cambodia trip was the average impression of what a normal GC trip would be like. Last year I attended the Vietnam trip, which opened eyes and spread happiness everywhere. It was a new, exciting experience. I thought Cambodia was going to be just the same, and I joined because I thought previous trips of mine were wonderful.

Cambodia turned out to be much more than anything I had ever experienced.

When we were still at the first few steps of preparation, raising money and spreading awareness, I was overwhelmed at how much we had to do for a five day trip. In the end I thought that we should have done more, excluding the fact that we raised extra money. The trip was much more than just building houses, painting walls and learning history, even though participating in all that was fun beyond what I thought it would be. It was the effect we made as a whole that really counted in the end. When we walked around all the houses that we built on the last day of Prey Veng, I was proud of our effort and happy to see such gratitude, comfort and love on everyone's faces after all the new homes had been made, because I knew we had changed their lives.

In the process of building the houses, I loved waving at the children and seeing them smile and wave back, and then playing games and making them happy. The overall goal we wanted to reach was to make everyone happy, and on this trip that goal was planning to be achieved from building houses and helping the people in the villages. I know we reached our goal way beyond what we had hoped for. It took days and long hours of hard and somewhat painful work, but it was worth it. All of it.

Painting the school was the hardest part of the Cambodia trip. It was a very new experience for me and some of my other friends. This could actually be seen as a very easy task for many people, but since the building looked quite old and crumbled, with little holes and wide cracks in the previous paint in the wall, with wasp nests and spider webs in every corner, it made the job much harder. Inside the classrooms we had to clear away old papers off the walls and dust everything. It took hours, and seemed like a backbreaking task but with everyone's full cooperation and enthusiasm we got the job done in no time, and we called it a fun day. I enjoyed it, a lot, because it made everyone happy.

My absolute favorite part of the trip was the last day. GC day. Where the entire Cambodia trip group split up into mini groups to go off and hang with their chosen GCs in Cambodia. I went to Tiny Toones. I can promise everyone that it was the most fun out of the entire trip and that we were smiling for hours after we had come back. First I went and helped the children learn some words and was really impressed by how fast they would make a song for each word, and we would sing the tune along with them. I would sit down next to them, listening to the teacher and they would come and sit right next to me, and smile and talk and it was really heartwarming to know that they were so happy that I was there with them. Later I learned how to do lots of dancing tricks and was practising with everyone there. Tiny Toones was the biggest highlight of the trip for me.

Knowing that I stepped out of my comfort zone, reached our goal, brought great happiness to others, changed lives and had fun doing it at the same time, really brought warmth into everyone's hearts. And that was truly the best part.

Dario Merlino

I believe that the way our generation sees the world is unrealistic. We tend to see things negatively and complain about the amazing lives we live that some cannot afford. We take things for granted and leave back the amazing opportunities we have which some cannot imagine.

Our education is an opportunity, our health is a gift and our lives are dreams. Unfortunately we do not realize what it is. We come to school every day always expecting the same things. Boring classes, lots of homework, tests, assignments and then we go home like if it was nothing. To the majority of students in the school it is a mutual feeling but to the world it is not.

However, this trip changed the story. Arriving at Phnom Penh we quickly realized the change. No buildings, no big shopping malls, no clean streets and for some it seemed strange. I always notice the students complaining about small things and not worrying about the important problems they should be getting on.

On the first day I witnessed certain common actions we see in our every day that seem normal to us and an offence to others. When we walk around Orchard Road something we can witness at times is the drop of coins. Either it be a 10 cent coin or even a 1 dollar coin. The worst part is not picking it up. With the stacks of money people's jobs make in Singapore, dropping a 1 dollar coin makes no impact on our spendings.

In Cambodia the poor families make up to 25 cents a day for a living which is barely enough to feed their families considering that some parents may have up to three kids. In Singapore you can probably buy about 0.1% of products available with that amount of money. This fact certainly made me feel something and made me realize the gift I have to even possess enough money to buy myself lunch. It made me learn to save money and to not ask for more than what I am given, sometimes even ask for less. When we went to Prey Veng, I understood the way we live in a different way. I understood the emotional side of our lives and what controls it mainly. Our rich families tend to rely on money. Money is something we all greed for and will do many things to a certain extent to obtain it. But I learnt that it is not money that makes us happy but emotions. Of course I do not mean we should live without money but I mean that buying a Ferrari or a laptop will not expand your happiness and emotions. When I saw the villagers at the housebuilding sites I could see smiles on their faces. I would imagine their lives and how miserable they can get. In my mind it was not clear but until I understood I knew why they were happy. I experienced this as every other human has. I understood that when I was happy was when I was around people. It was clear that because their families were alive and that we had made homes for them they were happy. Not because of the house but because we were there, because they found support and that they felt love and affection due to our presence in their village. It really affected me and made me learn my values by looking at the way these people see their lives. They are happy and try to avoid the negativity in their minds. In the many poor countries I have been to I saw the same, like when I go to Colombia in the winter.

This trip made me learn things but also to understand things and I became clear of what we have available each day and how to treat them importantly. I learnt that in life reality will always hit you hard but solutions will always be there for us and our families will never let us go.

Building Homes. Building Hearts

When we arrived at the village,
The first thing we observed:
They greeted us with smiles,
And already, our hearts were served.

Our thumbs were numb; our hands were bruised
from the hammer in our hand.
Our foreheads-wet with sweat from the heat,
From which we could just withstand.

But we kept on going; we didn't stop
And we couldn't complain,
Because none of our gashes or our wounds,
cut as deep as their pain.

Although every part of this trip has affected me in a great way, what really changed me were the days we were house building and Global Concerns Day. I remember what it was like when we first arrived at the village on our first day of house building. The villagers were sitting outside their broken huts and smiling at us. This already motivated me to put in my best effort into building the new houses. Before the trip, I didn't think the house building would be difficult, but I was wrong. Hitting a nail without bending it on the walls was the most frustrating process. At one point when I put my hammer down to have a small break, I could see the villagers hammering away at their own houses even though they weren't required to. Immediately, I picked up my hammer and got back to work because these villagers work so hard every day. They have muscle, will power and faith. After we had our lunch break, we all sat around in a circle playing 'duck-duck-goose' with the village children. It was incredible to have that moment of connection with them despite us being from completely different backgrounds. All of us had a fantastic time and even the rest of the family members watching us outside their huts were laughing. Although they didn't have much, they were having such a great time and it really touched me.

GC Day was one of the best parts of the trip. I visited the Rudi Boa Centre, an educational centre for children. We had about an hour to spend time and interact with the children. We provided them with t-shirts to decorate. The majority of them were into 'angry birds' and drew them so perfectly it was as if it was drawn by a professional. I was extremely surprised! One of the children seemed to be fascinated with my braces, and every time I opened my mouth to talk, she would point at my teeth and grin. To actually interact with the children and get to know what they were like was an amazing experience.

The journey has changed my attitude towards life, and my way of thinking. I am more thankful for things in life, and have become less self-centered. This trip was definitely worth it.

Dounia Crivelli

The Tabitha trip was an amazing experience. Since the moment we got on the bus to go to the airport until we got on the plane to come back to Singapore. It was definitely something to do again! We had a really good group of teachers and students, everyone was so nice and everyone was so mature about the trip. Sure there was some drama and sure there were some people, and teacher(s) making fun of people but that's what also made the trip so funny and so great and one of our best memories. This trip was definitely a trip I will remember all my life. We all had so much fun and enjoyed it so much. I really like how it was such a chilled trip - we didn't need to run somewhere to get there on time and if we were early we could go to the small shops near the hotel. People complained about the bruises, and the cuts, and their thumbs being flat from hitting their thumbs so hard with the hammer when they were really supposed to hit the nail, but at the end of the day, it isn't about the bruises or the cuts it's about the smile on everyone's faces. The students, for being so proud of building the houses, the teachers for being proud of how well and hard we worked and of course the families that we helped. It wasn't just a fun trip where we got tired from hitting the walls or building the houses but also how we helped a school in need, how we painted and enjoyed it and made the best out of it and how we learnt so much about Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge. I am now finally not behind in history class and that's a pretty big achievement for me. The Killing Fields and the Tuol Sleng prison were so sad and depressing but it made us realize how bad the Khmer Rouge during that time was, and at the same time it was quite interesting. The food was really good and I think we were quite lucky with the weather as it didn't rain and it could have been way hotter then it already was. Playing with the children and going to their schools and seeing their life from a whole different perspective was amazing as well. They were adorable and so respectful at such a young age. Seeing the poor families was also sad but again it made us realize so much, it made us realize how lucky we were to be in such a good school and such a good place to live and that we eat every meal of the day when some people struggle for one.

Elinor Walker

Same Same but Different

Under the watchful and excited eyes of the kids, I finished my origami spinner. One little girl was so lost in concentration and was watching my fingers with such determination I could swear she wasn't breathing. However, when I completed the last fold, she snatched it from my hands with utter delight and ran screaming and laughing to the other side of the classroom. She was trailed by a group of boys trying to grab it away from her, rampaging all around the tiny classroom. As I was watching them, another piece of paper got shoved right before my face by a boy slightly older, around 8. He was smiling proudly, beaming; showing a row of missing front teeth. On the sheet, in wobbly letters, he had written "car". "Car, car, car, car, car!" he shouted as I smiled and said "Well done!" Although he wouldn't understand anything I said to him or I understand anything he said, we communicated easily enough by simply using facial expressions. These kids were extremely cute but unfortunately just as annoying as any other little kids in Singapore. A girl and a boy, barely taller than my thigh jumped on my back and threw their arms around me, pulling my hair with their stubby, sweaty fingers. Yet, when I held hands with the little boy, I realised his

palm was coarse and not soft like how all toddlers hands should be. It was rough, hardened by friction and hard work.

Tiny Toones helped me realise that although the street kids in Cambodia were brought up in a totally different way, deep down we are all the same. These kids go through extreme hardships and suffering at a terribly young age; even the youngest boy has probably seen and done more hardcore things by now than I will ever experience in my whole life. In spite of this, whilst playing with them, I noticed I couldn't tell any difference between their laughter and the kindergarteners at UWCSEA. They were exactly the same except the street kids were screaming something that sounded like "Ching, chang, chong" instead of "I'm telling on youuuu!!" I greatly enjoyed spending a day with the kids and I would love to visit Tiny Toones again.



When in Cambodia..

When the breeze strokes your cheek,
When you stay silent as Mr. Davies speaks,
When the sweat drenches your face,
When your back aches,
When the water trickles down your spine,
When you smash your thumb for the umpteenth time,
When you sit on top of a house and you think you're on top of the world,
When you look out into the wide open paddy fields,
When you wolf down a sandwich bigger than your face,
When parched throats constantly guzzle down water,
When you climb a ladder and nearly topple off,
When you bang a nail into the tin but it ain't going in,
When careless frustration results in crooked nails,
When the sun is at its highest,
When you adjust your sweaty Krama,
When the heat drives you dizzy,
When you are slowly roasted in the sun,
When blisters burst on calloused hands,
When the ringing of hammered tin sears your eardrums,
When your eyes start watering to 'Amazing Grace,'
When you bathe in the families smiles as they revel at the sight of their new home,
When the twinkle of a child's eye leaves a tear in your own,
When you imagine what these people have been through...
Then you know you've been house building...

In CAMBODIA!

Elsemieke Marren

On the History day we went to the Killing Fields and Tuol Sleng. This was on the second day of our trip. I personally found this one of the more tiring days of the trip because it was a lot to take in, and we had such a small time to take it all in. This was the second time that I have been to the Killing Fields and Tuol Sleng. The first time that I went I found it very hard to take everything in properly, I had to sit down a few times just to make sure that I wouldn't fall over. But the second time that I went I could pay more attention to what the guides were saying and I also spent more time looking at the sites of where everything happened.

First we visited Tuol Sleng, the prison known as S21. This was one of the most depressing and horrific places that I have ever been to. Just by looking around I could imagine the pain and torture that the innocent people had to go through. Then, I started to walk around in the rooms of the victims, I could see blood stains on the floors of each room, and the beds with just a metal frame, there was no cushion, no mattress, just a frame. As I walked to the rooms with the smaller cells, I could imagine the pain even more. There was even more blood everywhere and the places where they were kept was tiny. Then, the next room was full of pictures of some of the victims, and there were also pictures of tortured victims. As I was walking through the different cells, I could see what it would have been like as a school with children running around and then I looked back and saw people being killed.

Next we visited the Killing Fields. This looked a little less horrific than S21. But then you walk through the gate and listen to the electronic guides. As I walked around listening to the guide and looking at the sites, I couldn't imagine what had happened there. When the chance came to listen to the personal stories I sat down and listened really carefully, to the detail and the way the story was told. Those were the saddest stories that I have ever heard, especially the one where the boy had to kill his own mother. The worst sight was the killing tree, where the babies were killed, I couldn't believe that someone would even think about that.

This day was one of the most overwhelming days of the trip, we had so much to take in and I couldn't get my head round the fact that someone could kill all those people just because they were educated or because they wore glasses. It made no sense that someone would do that. When we were on the way back to the hotel I noticed that there were no old people walking around, they had all been killed, and the ones that had survived they were all scarred or in mental pain. This was the most depressing and horrific day that I have ever encountered.

For GC Day, the GC that I had been put into was the Youth School, a school for young and older children to go to. On the way to the Youth School we got lost, but eventually we found it. The school was placed in the middle of a shanty town; I thought "this is no place to put a school for children". But there was no entrance, so we drove around to the other side. We got out of the bus and walked down the old railway track. There was rubbish everywhere, people squatting by their houses. When we got to the Youth School all the children were waiting inside at the desks, and as we walked through the door I saw all their faces light up. They were smiling; we separated them into smaller groups. My group played games and sang songs with them, which they all really enjoyed, especially the hokey pokey. The other group made pictures with the children. To just see the faces of those children was amazing; they always had a smile on their faces. This was a great day for me.

Emily Haeger

The Cambodia trip, is a trip I would recommend to anyone. It was an amazing experience and I loved it. My favourite part was the house building. The house building is a part of the trip that I will never forget. The reason I liked the house building was because of the handover at the end. Handing over the houses to the families was an amazing moment because you got to see all the families' expressions of happiness and excitement.

Another event that made the trip "Cambodia 2012" more special was that we got to paint a school. Not every year group that goes on the Cambodia trip paints a school. The reason I liked this part of the trip was because all the children who went to the school watched us and were inspired by the good we were bringing to them. They all played outside in the playground, excitedly waiting for us to finish.

On the history day, we visited the Killing Fields and the S21 Genocide Museum. These both were very moving and upsetting. It helped me understand the history of Cambodia and why Cambodia is like it is today.

Overall, the Cambodia trip was inspiring and if I had the chance, I would go again!

Felicity Lane

The Tabitha trip was an amazing experience for me. I really learnt a lot on the trip about Cambodia's history, I learnt a lot when we went to the Killing Fields and Tuol Sleng. These places did help me to understand the history but they were also very sad and depressing places. Another thing I enjoyed a lot was meeting new friends. On the trip I made many friends because of all the different groups we were put in. There were some rough times in the trip also, like when it was nearly time to go and we had not finished building the house. I was tired and it was getting dark and my thumb really hurt from hitting it again and again. But when I looked at all the smiling faces in the village I did not stop, I just continued to hammer the nails into the floor. I liked seeing how we helped the community and I enjoyed the trip so much and I am very happy I went. Thank you to everyone that made this trip possible.

Fidelia Franto Fong

The Tabitha House Building trip 2012 was very life changing. It made me look at things in a different way. It felt really good helping people who needed our help. Looking at the smile on the villagers' faces would always make my day. To know that they are letting us build their houses when they can do the job much better than we can, made me feel responsible and important. House building was an amazing experience for me. My family never goes on trips like these, and going on this trip just once made me want to go again and take my family along with me. When I came back from the trip, I told my whole family all about Tabitha and how it helps people. I also showed them pictures of the kids zoomed in from afar smiling and collecting nails as if they were precious pearls. At the end of the day, I would always take my camera and look back at the pictures and think to myself, "I really am lucky".

Georgia Moody

Everyone was bubbling with excitement, nobody could contain it. After all the fundraising and Wednesday lunchtime meetings, we were finally going to Cambodia to make all our promises to the people come true. The 6 months of having an infinite number of bake sales, the community fair and getting any cent we could to put toward our final target was all worth it. As we boarded our Jet Star flight and flew away over the high skies of Singapore, nobody knew what was going to happen in the next 5 days.

My first thought of Cambodia when I landed there 5 years ago was “are we still on Earth?” I had never been anywhere like this beautiful country in my life. I have been to Cambodia 4 times since then and it takes my breath away every time. We students didn’t care that we were exhausted or hot, we just wanted to explore the city that awaited us. Boarding the bus to the restaurant, I made sure I was by the window. I find the car journeys to and from the airports the most interesting. It is kind of like your appetizer or introduction to a country. Tuk-tuks and motorbikes were zipping around us, dodging and weaving. Cars and trucks were beeping and honking as loudly as possible. You could tell we were in Asia now. We arrived at the Romdeng restaurant half an hour later. The food was incredible and very spicy to my liking. The best part was when the Tarantulas came out. Everyone was speechless and some were inquisitive; others not so much. Me, I was dared to eat a whole one, so I accepted. You can’t describe the taste, but my closest attempt so far is probably barbeque sauce. A must try in Cambodia!

I found history day very interesting but quite depressing at the same time. The first stop for our half of the students was Tuol Sleng Prison. I visited S21 for the first time when I was 8 years old and I didn’t really understand what it was or the tragedy it really was at that age. Now, however, words can’t speak the feelings you get from seeing all the images and stories of the 17,000 victims that were held captive there for 4 years. Out of all 17,000 prisoners, only 7 survived. As I walked from cell to cell, you could still see the blood stains of the captives on the floor. There is one image that actually shows all the torture methods used by the guards. The rule board of the prison was the most gruesome. Some of the rules mentioned were “No crying, screaming or talking unless demanded to.” Everything the prisoners once were as human beings was no longer given to them, they had no human rights. Some survivors mention in their accounts that animals were treated better than themselves. All I could do was imagine the amount of pain they must have been in and pray that something like this never happens again in the future.

The Killing Fields was the same feeling yet with the Audio guides, every little detail of the Choeung Ek Killing Fields couldn’t be missed. Walking around, everyone was silent, watching and thinking about all the memories of those that were executed there. One of the sad things I saw was the stupa in the center of Choeung Ek where all the skulls of the victims were kept. It was a horrific sight, especially since it was 5 stories high and filled to capacity. It would be impossible to count all of the thousands of skulls kept in there. Everyone around me was feeling and thinking the same thing, ‘never let anything this horrific happen again.’ Even though the history day was upsetting, I learned a lot about Cambodia and how the Khmer Rouge has affected the entire population today. I kept that thought in mind for the rest of trip and I will never forget those that were affected by the genocide.

The trip was amazing all together. It was by far my favorite school trip of all time, in front of the New Zealand one. It incorporates the right amount of learning, freedom and hard work. I admit it was hard to build the houses. At times, I would be frustrated at myself for hitting my thumb for the hundredth time in 1 hour and wanting to give up. But you look around at

the village you are building in and all the families you are building for and all the months of fundraising, the pain of hitting your thumb and 5 days of your Easter break become worth it. You put yourself back to work and know that no words will describe the families' joy and happiness you have given them by building them their own, special home.

Gloria Yoon

Before I begin my reflection, let me introduce about Cambodia's history and Tabitha's programs. The people of Cambodia have endured severe poverty for the past 30 years since the Pol Pot era. Because of this incident, everything was destroyed in that era: family, social structure, infrastructure, and spirituality. Therefore, Tabitha Cambodia is committed to help break that cycle and enable the Cambodian people to help themselves.

The reason why I joined Tabitha was actually to have fun with my friends but I've changed my mind. I really want to help Cambodia with all the strength I have in me. In our trip, we actually had fun time with everyone while we were building houses for local people and painting a local school. Every second I was working was precious, special and beautiful. We built 25 tin houses all together. I wasn't very confident with hammering walls so I just hammered the wooden floors during the whole house building. One of the men who was helping the walls for house building was trying to teach me how to hammer nails on the walls and I tried more than 50 times but all the nails were bent or I tore some parts of the tin walls. When I was hammering the floors for the first time, I was hammering my thumb for loads of times and I still have a mark or a groove on my thumb nail. I'd got blisters and my hammer was very heavy to lift it up and it was also difficult to aim the nail and hammer it down properly. I even had back pain since I was bending my back for several hours. The first house was the hardest and I got better and improved on hammering. While I was building the third house, the small local children were staring at our group and maybe they were curious about what or how we were doing. Then they suddenly went to their house and brought hammers to help us. Their hammering skills were better than us. They hammered 3 times and a nail went straight in. Even though we couldn't communicate properly, we all felt that we were one group, working together. Because of those little kids, we were able to finish it properly. Water break and our lunch time was the best and fun time. Since we were working on hot days, we got exhausted pretty easily so for "refreshment" we had to dunk our head in or pour several buckets of water on our heads. It was actually warm water but for us, it was freezing cold. I guess we were "overheated". Our lunch was a piece of bread with jams and cookies/chips. Of course, they couldn't fill my tummy but I decided to be more optimistic and should be very thankful for all the teachers. After lunch, we got to play "duck, duck, goose" with little kids. I am not a good runner and I didn't want to run too much; I just wanted to participate in the game and watch other people playing since that makes me happy enough. However, the kids kept choosing me so I just had to run at my normal speed. The kids were seriously fast and it was really hard to chase them after. But I was still pleased to see those kids, filled with joy and happiness.

Painting the school was interesting and enjoyable. I'd never done painting before but I am very meticulous so whenever the wall wasn't painted properly I went over the spots again and again. My job was to paint the wooden windows in grey and I painted them for 4 hours or more. Not only the school, we painted the toilet also. The smell was obviously horrible but I endured the odor and painted the back of the toilet which was worse than the front. I

was satisfied to see the result of the entire school and I hope the kids are also pleased and can have ambitions to study hard.

I was so lucky to be chosen for the Tabitha trip and this was very life changing for me. I saw and experienced things that I can't experience in other countries. I can never forget the smiles from the children, family, the tears from the elders, the feelings that touched my heart, the place where the Cambodians live, the children who were looking for food in the garbage dump, etc. All the memories that I received during this trip were touching, sad in one side of my heart, and joyful. If I have another chance to go to Cambodia again, I am willing to go and help them. I can never forget these beautiful extraordinary memories.

Hana Douglas

Tons of thumbs were hit,
And tons of work was done,
But all of it was worth it,
It was all in need, each one.
The people were all smiling, everyone of them,
Hear all their grateful thank yous.
And hope to see them again:)

This trip was probably the best trip I have been to so far. Everything was just amazing. The handover ceremony after house-building was probably the best though. With brand new blankets in your sore hands, and your well deserved Tabitha scarf around your neck, you walk towards the smiling family that earned the new house that you have been building all day. If someone were to take a picture of the moment, it would only appear to be some grade eights giving a few sheets of cloth to a family, but actually standing there, passing off your day of work and bruises to someone who has been waiting for this house that you have built; it is just the best feeling. You see small women with white hair and wrinkles with tears in their eyes with the biggest smile they can give just waiting there for you. And you see the small children by their side eager to go into their new houses. The ceremony was just so good, and I really do not know how to describe it in words.

Honestly, when I signed up for this trip, I actually thought about just quitting the trip half way because organizing bake sales was so much work, and the Wednesday meetings were really annoying because I wouldn't have time to eat my lunch. I was regretting not giving my spot to another person when I was running around trying to raise 2000 dollars, but I never went to take my cheque back. All of these doubts just flew out of my head as soon as I set foot on the plane. I had so much fun in Cambodia, by the time we had to leave, I was hugging my hotel bed not wanting to go back. I actually thought about just staying there through the holidays. So for all the students who are thinking about going to this trip... one word: Go. At first you might think why I am doing this? But I can assure you, you will have an amazing time. This isn't like one of those online charities where you just click a button and feel a little good about yourself; this is about actually physically helping someone. The feeling is just so different, and it's so direct. You can feel that you helped someone; I mean you can see it with your own eyes!

Harry Scott

Painting for me was the highlight of the trip as this was the most satisfying experience. The exterior painting got me 'in the mood' and is where I got used to painting. However, as the exterior was being finished, it was time to start on the interior. It all started off with a clear out. This is where I learnt the extent of how much this school needed a bit of TLC. As each desk got moved, and each box got thrown out, there was dust lurking everywhere. It was in my ears, mouth and eyes. However, the worst was yet to come. As we delved deeper into long left bits of paper and boxes, quite large insects started to be very noticeable. Spiders jumped out at me, and maggots ran away. I could have never imagined a school with such bad hygiene levels. This, though, was a realization of the beautiful state we spoilt people lived in all the time. Every corner of every room in that school was just piled with horrible things of all sorts. Cleaning it out was not only going to be back breaking, but also quite scary.

These 'small little things', though, were nothing compared to the feeling of cleaning it out and repainting it. The whole building looked, felt and smelt new. Knowing that we had made such a big difference to this school building was incredible. To me, it was more satisfying than building houses. During this one day experience, I not only saw the state of some schools, but I realized how much these kids smiled! It was a small observation, but every time I looked at a student from this school, they always had a massive grin on them! It shows how appreciative they are of what they have. It made me feel VERY spoiled.

I think everyone should have an experience like I and 70 other students had. To get stuck into someone else's life and once you get back, realizing the pristine state that you and I live in. It is a true character-building thing to do.

Isabel Hope

The Trip of a Lifetime

After the wednesday meetings and the fundraising, the week had finally come, the week to go to Cambodia. Overall the trip was amazing, it was better than I expected. Building houses and GC day were my favourites.

After waking up at 6:30am, we had breakfast and got ready for the first day of building. Mrs Kightley showed our 'party' bus how to wrap up our fingers with tape, so that we wouldn't get blisters. When we arrived, we saw platforms of houses without walls which had unsteady floors. Our job was to nail in the rest of the floor and the walls.

We got into our building groups, put on our eye goggles and got our hammers, and made our way to the half built houses, then began our building. At the beginning there were many nails being flung around as we were just getting used to hitting the nails. After a while we started to get better at the job, hitting the nails faster and becoming more confident. After whacking the nail in hard, I missed the nail and hit my finger, it hurt so much, but as Janne taught us, we have to put our finger in our mouths (for 2 reasons!).

1. To stop it from hurting

2. To keep us quiet

Even though the job was very repetitive, I still enjoyed it.

As we became experts, it was time to start the walls. After watching Mrs Edwards nail into the walls (she made it look so easy), I decided it wasn't going to be that difficult, so she hit it in half way for me and so I tried and I just hit it slightly harder than I would when hitting the nails on the floor and I did very well. But then I tried without any help and it didn't turn out too well, it was lop-sided and not very pretty. I decided that I enjoyed the floors more and so I went back to doing the 'easy' job.

The next day I decided to go back and try the walls again, and to do a decent job. During this time one of the teachers words of wisdom was 'Show the wall who's Boss'. I took his advice and whacked the nail in as hard as I could! I did it! And it looked good! I then decided to do more and more. I have to admit, some of them didn't look good, but most of them did!

I enjoyed handing over the houses to the villagers and you could see how grateful they were during the handover ceremony, I felt so proud that we had done this, and how much of a difference we were making.

After being in this school since K2 and fundraising for Tabitha from Grade 2 onwards, I now realize why this is one of the main global concerns in this school. It is life changing for the Cambodians and us. Hopefully, there will be more opportunities for us to go back there in the future!

Isabel Capodanno

Sometimes in life, the simplest moments are the ones that stay with us the longest. I found myself in one of these situations on our second day of house-building. Earlier in the week we had been playing the game 'Duck Duck Goose', or 'Tien Tien Kanan' in Khmer, with Cambodian children using a UWC translator. It was great to see the kids having fun and knowing that we would leave them a source of happiness after we left. So, when we were told to go to entertain the children from the village a second time, we were a bit nervous without a translator to help us. Some UWC students were trying to play a game of catch, but the villagers didn't understand what we wanted and we were all a bit uncomfortable. Then a few of us gathered into a circle for an attempt at Duck, Duck, Goose. We were pretty unsure at first, because there was a clear language barrier between us and the village kids. The game started slowly but pretty soon all of them were laughing and playing along with us. As time passed, the circle grew bigger and the Cambodian kids even began to beat us! The younger, shy toddlers cautiously came closer to the excitement and watched us play our game. With the strong sun beating down on us and a smile on everyone's face, we finished up the game and headed back to work. Surprisingly, I think we all enjoyed teaching and playing with the Cambodian kids more when we didn't have a translator. It goes to show, sometimes a simple smile can speak volumes.

Isabelle de Bruin

The trip to Cambodia has been an amazing experience. Building houses, painting a school, playing with street kids in Aziza – it has all been worthwhile to put in so much effort to make it all happen. The experience itself is one I will never forget, as I am proud to see the changes I have made, together with everyone else who went.

House building was very tough and tiring, but at the end of the day, it is unbelievable to see what we as a group have achieved. The endless hammering of nails, accidentally hitting your thumb now and then, and the deafening sound of the hammering that drives you mad, we all got on with it and finished 25 beautiful houses. At first it was hard to imagine building 25 houses in two days, but after all the effort and hard work we put into it, it really paid off! I think we as a whole cooperated very well together, as each group finished their own house and then helped others finish theirs. Nails flew on the first day when we started hammering as very few of us knew how to, but at the end of the first day, we all got the hang of it. The walls, however, are still challenging. The breaks we often got when house building were spent with the children of the village, playing 'duck duck goose' which is known as 'tien tien kanan' in Khmer. The smiles on their faces as they ran around chasing one another really moved me. Knowing that they have very little and still smile the way they do really made my day. I realized how fortunate we all are and that small things shouldn't upset us. The hand over ceremony is one I will never forget. It was wonderful seeing families receiving their house; it was one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen. The house building has been tough but looking at what we have achieved in two days for the people in Prey Veng is incredible.

The Aziza school was great fun. As there were only a few of us, we got all the attention! We played with the little kids, sang songs and did so much more; I even made some new friends. The smiles and the high energy present in the school from the children was incredible. Though we were unsure what to do at times, the children didn't seem to notice as they were enjoying themselves so much! I must admit it was difficult at times to communicate with them as they only speak Khmer, but it somehow worked and through actions we ended up having a great time. It was very fun being able to decide what to do, with help from the kids. It amazed me to see both boys and girls enjoyed coloring. It was an amazing experience with all the children and I enjoyed every minute of it.

I learned a lot about Cambodia's history during this trip and we as a group achieved and helped change so much. I am very proud of all the effort we put in and the amount of money we raised. I also had great fun with all my friends. I still can't believe I ate a spider's leg! The experience has been amazing and I would love to go back to Cambodia and do the trip all over again. We managed to build 25 houses in two days and made a real difference in people's lives; I feel we can achieve anything now.



James Harayda

House building was my favourite part of the trip; it may have hurt, it may have been hot, it may have been long days but the final product was great! In an interesting way, I found it amusing when a nail gets hit in smooth and without a bend. I also found nailing the walls amusing although it was not the easiest part of the house to build. As we came to the end of the first day I felt a sense of accomplishment and was very happy of what I had completed. Staying late to build the houses was hard mentally and physically but in the two days we managed to build 25 houses! This was a great accomplishment for us. I honestly did not think we would be able to finish it but with the cooperation and dedication of the students and teachers we managed to complete the 25 houses. The next day at the hand over ceremony, I really felt relief and happiness, the looks on the local people's faces were amazing! They were all clearly very happy with their new home. If I had the chance to return to Cambodia and build more houses and help more people I would definitely do it and its a chance of a lifetime!

Jasmine Cave Jones

I joined Tabitha for many different reasons. Firstly I had gone on the family house building trip and thought it was brilliant and wanted to redo the whole experience. Secondly I had previously met the founder of Tabitha and thought she was an absolute hero and amazing role model. Her stories are always so inspiring and insightful. And thirdly I wanted to see what it would be like going on the trip with my peers and age group.

The fund raising: at first I was ready to get in there and raise as much money as I could and try raising \$2000 the quickest. But as the weeks went by finding original fun ideas to raise money was becoming harder and harder. I still tried my best to come up with as much money as I could to contribute to my group.

The back ground information: it was hard listening to Janne talk about Pol Pot and the history of Cambodia. It made me sad but pushed me that much harder to finish my designated house at the end of the day with no complaints.

House building: what the teachers said was true. I had forgotten how hot and tiring and painful it was building 25 houses. By the time I had bashed my thumb with the hammer for the 100th time I was just about ready to give up but thinking back to the Killing Fields, S-21 and Janne's story I shoved my thumb in my mouth and kept working.

I really enjoyed this trip. It really extended my comfort zone, maybe even further than Chiang Mai did. It is a once in a life time trip which people would be crazy to miss.

Jayna Viswalingam

The Tabitha trip was a great experience both physically and mentally. Through the trip we were educated about the background of the Cambodians' lives in the past, which made it all the more satisfying when building the houses. I found that the house building was tough at times especially when you had hit your thumb for the tenth time but I learnt to just ignore it and keep going because I realized what I felt was nothing in comparison to what these

people had gone through. It was also quite tiring at times but when you were able to see the happy faces of the families during the handover ceremony it was very fulfilling.

We also visited Tuol Sleng prison, which was really affecting because we were able to see what the consequences of rebelling and disobeying were. We were also able to see how strict and cruel the rules at the time were. We also visited the killing fields, which showed us how many innocent people, were affected by the Khmer Rouge.

I really had fun on the trip and I made lots of new friends and it was great having most of the grade on the trip and meeting people that I otherwise wouldn't have talked to since we were on opposite sides of the grade. I also took a lot from this experience and hope to help Tabitha in the future. It is good to know that we have benefited others that are less fortunate than us and have been through a hard life trying to have a better life. It was a great trip and I am very grateful to all that made this trip possible.

John Tolton

The Cambodia trip was one of the most life changing things I have ever done. It gave me a small picture of what it's like to live in such harsh conditions. I'm glad I could help a country that has been through so much. Five days that really made a difference for me. Every single memory will stick with me forever.

The Killing Fields and Tuol Sleng prison are the most depressing places I've ever been into. I didn't speak a word to anyone the whole time. Every bloodstain on the floor or wall made me think of the people who were here when the prison was active. I was devastated to see pictures of the people who were in the prison. I couldn't even have the smallest picture in my head of what it could have been like then. This sparked my motivation for the next few days.

House building was long and hard but the more you put into it the better you feel at the end of the day. I came into the house thinking this would be a piece of cake, I was wrong. First nail went in after ten minutes working at the same spot. I smacked my fingers over and over again; "Water Break" was called from down the road. My whole group walked over sluggishly, but proud of how much we've done on this house at the end of the road. After getting drenched and chugging down a couple bottles of water it was back to work. I felt amazing after finishing the first house. I knew that I did this for a good reason and someone will be staying in this house tonight. The second house started off really well with everyone working hard but as the day went on I started to get tired and stressed out. Then under the bamboo was a small child who lived in the village picking up the nails that were dropped and he came up the steps and returned them to us. This was the part of the day that made me keep going.

On GC day I went to the Indochina Starfish Foundation where we got a tour of the school and on the top floor there was a small soccer pitch. Seven or eight of the kids were already playing there so myself and four of the other boys got asked to play with them. We played with them for more than an hour. It was the most meaningful soccer game I have ever played. These kids were having so much fun with us and I was having an amazing time myself. I'd love to go back and see those little kids all big and grown up and hope they remember me the same way I remember them.

This trip will stay with me forever. These stories are the ones I'll tell my children and grandchildren. I hope that more opportunities like this will come up for me to go and make a difference. Talking about making a difference and raising awareness is one thing but to go to the place and make a change, big or small, is something that will make a difference in this world. Thank you so much to everyone who went with me and made this trip amazing.

Jostijn Dessing

The Cambodia trip was a really good experience for me. At the house building site you could see how all the villagers were living. They only had very basic materials and they were living very simply. I was quite happy and proud at the handover ceremony, because after raising all the money and building the houses, you could see who the houses were for. It was nice knowing you helped someone less wealthy than you.

I didn't really like day 2 at the killing fields and the genocide museum, because it was shocking for me to see how people had been tortured during the Khmer Rouge regime. Nevertheless I thought it was important to know this past, because almost every Cambodian over the age of 40 has been through the Khmer Rouge regime. Some of the villagers we helped were over 40 years old. At the killing fields you could really get an image of how many people actually died, because you could see loads of skulls.

For me the most enjoyable part of the trip was the house building. I think this because it is what we raised the money for and when you try the walls it is quite a challenge. But I think sometimes a challenge is good.

Julian Williams

Going to Cambodia on the Tabitha trip is one of the best experiences I have had in Grade 8 and one that I will keep reflecting on for a long time. I benefited from the Tabitha trip in many ways and I learnt a lot about myself and Cambodia.

When I went to Cambodia I wasn't sure what to expect. I had signed up for the trip to build houses for people less fortunate than myself but in some ways it was also going to be a great trip with my friends, which it was, but when I started our voyage into Cambodia and I started to build houses my idea of why I had come on the trip completely changed.

We had learnt and heard about the Khmer Rouge and the other wars and atrocities that had come by Cambodia but being there and realising the scale of it shocked me. Almost every single Cambodian family had been affected by the Khmer Rouge and to know that it happened so recently really made me feel for these people that had endured so much hardship. It also changed what I thought of the Khmer Rouge and the genocide because being there and seeing Tuol Sleng and the killing fields is very different to reading it in a history book.

The Tabitha house building was great. For a villager, allowing us into their village and allowing us to build their houses must be quite a scary prospect. But the house building made me feel good because we had worked hard to raise the money so that

these people could be somewhat safer and more comfortable in their houses. Despite flattening my thumb with the hammer I kept hammering because when we handed the houses over it was clear the villagers were happy and I felt good that I had made a small contribution and change to someone who needed it. The same went when we were painting the school. Painting was slightly more relaxed but I still felt that I had to try my best as it's what I would want if my school was being painted. At the end of the day the result was great. The school was done and we had done a good job.

The Tabitha trip also increased my relationships with my current friends and I met many more, including the children at ISF, where I went for my GC. I enjoyed ISF a lot and it was great to meet the kids and have fun with them. I enjoyed doing everything there despite the language barrier.

In conclusion I enjoyed the Tabitha trip and it was a superb experience which I am privileged to have been able to go to. I would definitely do it all again.

Kartikye Mittal

For me, the best part of the trip was the GC day. I visited the Indochina Starfish Foundation which was the biggest foundation that helped children. ISF is located near a dumpsite and aims to get children off it by providing them with education and food for their families.

There was something really special about seeing the smiles on the children's faces at ISF. When we arrived we were taken on a tour of the building. There were many classrooms and many different facilities. At the football cage the older children invited us to play. We joined them for a short but fun game of football. Later we went down to help the smaller children paint their t-shirts. It was quite nice to see how the imaginations of the children were working in painting their t-shirts.

We then went on a tour of the area from which most of the children came from. It was quite dirty and the houses were very small. We even saw the dumpsite which was piled with rubbish and was 5m tall!

After heading back to the campus we played with the children for quite a long time with the toys that we had brought for them. Even though nobody could understand what each other was saying, everybody still had fun.

Katya Ghirardello

After so many weeks of fund raising and stressing out about it, it felt really good to finally be able to go and actually do something. I think that out of the whole trip the house building had the greatest meaning behind it as after the history day it really gave meaning to what we were doing. It was such a humbling experience seeing these families with very little; the first house my group built was for a family who were living in a tiny raised lean-to made of wood and palm fronds. While we were building the daughter came up to see what we were doing and she then started to help as well, she also helped to pick up all of the nails that we dropped. It was just amazing to see this child who has lived in poverty for

most of her life still want to help us build her new home. I think that building houses for these families is one of the best things I have ever done. Just knowing how much it means to them after everything that their incredible country has been through made all the hits to my thumbs completely worth it. And I would do it again.

Kimheang Chham

House building in Cambodia was a really amazing trip. We learnt a lot about the way that the people in a real countryside area live and how it feels to help people. I had many experiences on this trip; even though I'm also from a countryside area in Cambodia. I was interested in three main parts - house building, an interview with a family and working with the kids in the Indochina Starfish Foundation (ISF).

Building houses was a big experience for me and even more for other people from UWCSEA. We had to nail the floors and walls. At first most of the people were hammering their fingers. I've done that before too. The work was tiring, but I enjoyed it so much. During our breaks we played some games with the kids there. Some of them were really shy at first, but later on they came and played with us. They were really happy that they could play some games with foreigners. We built 25 houses in a small village in one and a half days. After the houses were built we gave a blanket, from Tabitha, to each family. We said thanks to the owners in each house in Khmer, "Akun". The families (house owners) were really excited more than words could say and their tears were dropping. Mine were too.

Mrs. Edwards and I interviewed a family about their lives. The couple had 2 daughters and 2 nieces. Their nieces' parents had gone to work in Phnom Penh. I was translating from Khmer to English and from English to Khmer. We were asking them about their job and the answer was "We have a little bit of land that we can do some agriculture. We grow vegetables, a bit of rice to make the food for our kids and the whole family. The farming is not enough for our family's needs; we don't have any money left to buy anything or sometimes even not enough for our stomachs. Because of the natural disaster." We then asked where they lived while Cambodia was flooded. "We went to live on the hills, which was a bit far from our house. Our kids couldn't go to school at that time. The water was about 2 or 3 meters high." Our last question was "What is your big dream for your future?" A lady who was the wife and the mother answered "I want my children to be well educated to make my family's condition better. And if possible, I want them to get a scholarship to go to study in Singapore." After the interview, Mrs. Edwards and I had a lot of tears in our eyes, we were really excited that we had helped them. The feeling after helping people is huge; more than words can describe. (The interview was translated from Khmer to English)

On the last day of the trip, we were divided into groups to go to many different organizations (our global concerns). I was told to go to ISF with about 20 other UWCSEA students. We brought some gifts for them (toys, stationary, etc.) My group was divided into two small groups. The first group went to the dumpsite and my group stayed at the ISF and played with kids. We went into a classroom in a small group of two or three people and helped the kids to paint their T-shirts. In a break time my group and I went to play football. We had so much fun with the kids and they were really good at football. I felt really happy when I saw that they were having so much fun together. After that, we went to the dumpsite and it was unbelievable. The dump was full of rubbish and terrible smells

with a huge amount of flies; it was very polluted and unhealthy. There were some tiny rent-houses. The kids in the ISF live in those houses with 7 or 8 other people in their family. I was thinking, "Oh, my lord! How poor they are that they live here everyday; it is no different to living in hell." However, I'm really happy that there are many NGOs that were helping those kids now. It was a big experience of mine. We went back to the ISF and played with the kids again. There was a little girl ran to me and said, "I thought that you were a foreigner because you came here with them. You are really lucky that you can go to study abroad, but I'm not." I told her that you would be lucky like me, if you try to study hard. After that I realized that those kids also want to be well educated.

This trip was really meaningful. Meanwhile, I would like to thank UWCSEA for providing this program for us students. We learnt a lot while we were helping people, which is sharing and caring. Moreover, as I am a Cambodian I would like to say thank you very much for always trying to help Cambodia in any way. THANKS YOU SO MUCH UWC and everyone.



Kira Khoroshilova

With Heart and Soul

As we arrived at the village, I saw a lot of smiling faces outside the bus window. I was glad that the people of the village were eager to see all of us help them build their homes. As I stepped out of the bus the warm sun was gently heating up my head, which was the moment I realized I needed to wear my hat. I quickly grabbed it and rushed to the crowd who were all listening to the instructions of Mr. Davies. From all that these instructions stated there was nothing that I could not follow so I smiled and decided to wander off and explore the village before the house building. The village was pretty normal, very kind-hearted villagers and small children walking along and doing their own thing. As the house building began, I was expecting myself to smash my finger with the hammer instantly, but quite strangely I managed not to get any bruises on my poor little thumb. I hammered and hammered. There were an infinite number of nails going into the floor and I was very proud of the work I was doing, I helped all the other people that struggled with hammering nails. It was getting late, I was feeling sleepy but still working with great pace and effort as I heard a wild rumble on the ground. As I look down there are some insane cattle running just under the house that we were building, all the little kids from the village laughed at our faces, it was quite an interesting scene to see such a thing. It was dark, and the teacher called all of us out of the houses to get ready to leave. I was very proud of what I had achieved. I put all my heart and soul into the house that I was helping to build and it was the best experience of all. Sadly I got ill on the third day and could not build any longer. If I could go back, I would put as much love into the house that I would build.

Kritika Suresh

We got off the bus and went into the village. Before our eyes, stood people, hammers and frames of houses. After a moment of thinking, it had come to my realization that we, over 70 Grade 8 kids, were going to be building houses for several families. Of course, I had predicted that it would be hard work, building in the blistering sun, but actually being there, made me think of the situation in a 180-degree turn. The houses we built were going to provide stable homes for multiple people. We gathered around a large table, filled with what looked like hundreds of hammers and thousands of nails. After being briefed on what was expected of us, we all reached our hands forward and grabbed the best hammer we could see.

I felt nervous about building the houses on the bus ride over. Having no previous experience in the work of construction, I had several questions running through my mind. Would I be able to execute a good enough hammering job? Will I be able to withstand the blazing hot sun? Would I even be able to hammer a nail? Walking towards the houses erased all those questions from my head. The only thing that filled my mind was excitement. Once we stepped up the wooden platform, into the house, we all sat down and got to work. When demonstrated, hammering a nail into the floors looks easy enough. I hit my first nail in perfectly, even managing to avoid a bad bruise on my thumb. The second nail wasn't as kind. As I hit it, it went flying into the air. Luckily, Its target wasn't anyone's eye. The many nails hammered in after those were much easier than I had initially expected, with a couple of airborne ones, and ones that required the pressure of feet. The cool wind blowing and the buckets of water dunked over our heads made the job much easier and more rewarding.

This strike of confidence continued until the sun began to set. More thumbs were being hit as we could barely see where the hammer was going. My energy to build further had almost drained away. This was until the owner of the house came inside. Even though the house wasn't even finished yet, she had a huge smile across her face. People were actually going to be living in the shelter we helped build. I was recharged instantly and began to build further. Work became more efficient, until darkness came and we had to leave.

Even though we still had more building ahead of us, I felt like this was the biggest accomplishment yet in my life. With the contribution of some service from us, families were going to be able to live in a durable house, without the worries of flooding and invading animals. Before the trip, we were told that we would receive the amount of effort that we put into the trip. Even after just one day, this statement was true.

Leila Fuerst

The Aid of One

Tabitha.

For some just a name,
For some a life changing marvel.
Start at zero, make it to ten,
Eventually reach one hundred.

Start with something covering the head.
Then, nail by nail,
Hit by hit,
One by one,
A house.
Not only a house,
but also a shelter,
A home,
A safe place.

The smile on their faces,
The shining in their eyes,
The true happiness from within.
They have waited long days and rough nights,
They have gone through sorrow, loss and pain.
After the misery, now the joy.

The love within a family,
Nothing can break the bond.
The love between father and child,
The love between mother and child.

Matthew Ames

The floor that you'd been staring at for the past hour, the sweltering heat or the aching in your thumb from hitting it for the tenth time could have prompted you to release your anger by hitting a nail in with the least amount of care possible. It is at that moment that you realize that this is somebody's home, you are doing this for someone else and it isn't about you anymore. After this you ignore the pain in your thumb, and start smiling while the kids whose house you are building laugh at your lack of ability to hit a nail in with any amount of precision. This is when you start to see why you are where you are and why this trip even exists. This is why you had so many bake sales, why you worked so hard, it was all for the experience of doing something completely selfless. To see these families' faces light up simply because we put together four pieces of tin, a roof and bamboo floor really puts into perspective what we have and how lucky we are. To see for at least a second that there are bigger problems in life than failing a Maths test or not getting your pocket money on time for me makes this trip worth it. Overall this trip was probably the best I have been on in my time at UWC. It was a mixture of fun, hard work and reward as we flew back to Singapore, leaving behind 25 houses and taking with us unforgettable memories and an experience you can't find anywhere else.

Matthew Grundlingh

The Tabitha trip to Cambodia was most definitely one of the greatest experiences of my life, not only was it fun it was very interesting to go more in depth about the history of Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge. The first full day was our history day, which was very eye opening to the torture and pain the Cambodians went through with the two sites we visited, Tuol Sleng Prison and The Killing Fields. These are two of the most scary and uncomfortable places I have been through, just knowing that I am standing where thousands of children and adults have been executed. But what cheered the group up from the emotional day out was the excellent and exciting food we had, especially the fried spiders. The next three days were the most rewarding; we managed to build 25 houses for the under privileged, paint a school for a better learning environment and all our hard fundraising work paying off. The handover of the houses to the families is probably the best when you see them and welcome them to their new home. All the time in the village the children are very fun and playful and I do not know how many times in that week we played 'duck duck goose'. It was like my childhood all over again. On the final day it was our GC day where we got split up into little groups and went to different UWC GCs. I was lucky and got to go to Tiny Toones where we learnt how to breakdance and all the children showed us their moves and I had no clue what to do but stand there in amazement. After this trip it would be very hard for other school trips to compete!

Nami Ibaraki

Cambodia 2012. It really was an amazing experience. Each experience is something I will never be able to forget. Out of all the memorable moments, the first thing that I think about when I hear the name 'Cambodia' is the trip to Tiny Toones. Personally, I like playing with young children, so I knew I was going to love this trip, but obviously it was harder than usual as the kids we worked with couldn't speak English fluently.

All the kids at Tiny Toones were so enthusiastic; a few of them were prancing around when we came into the classroom. We got the kids paper and colouring pencils, and everyone started to draw with the utmost concentration. Two girls I had worked with, had nearly made me cry with unconditional happiness. One of them drew those typical drawings a kid would draw, sun in the corner, flowers and a house. I taught them how to say and write what they were drawing in English. I wrote the word 'flower', on a separate piece of paper, showed it to her, and said it to them. Both of them repeated it, and the little artist had written it on her artwork with arrows pointing to it.

Then came the most touching scene. Those two adorable kids, with large smiles on their faces, took out the hand that they were hiding behind their backs, and gave me a mint candy. I lost my words, all I could do was ask if it was for me. They laughed and nodded. I wanted to say thank you, but I forgot how to say it in Khmer, which was pretty shocking, but they re-taught me. I nearly cried on the spot, but I managed to let out a smile, and smiled like never before.

Every time someone had smiled, I knew I had done something to help. All these years I had been in UWC I had contributed to many GCs, contributed to many charities, but actually watching them in person, appreciating the hard work you do for them was different. I learned how to appreciate, and I learned that a smile can get your feelings through. A song says, the universal language is English, but a smile is one as well. The trip definitely confirmed this statement.

Charity isn't always about the money, it's about the feelings and the physical things you do to actually prove that you care. Hopefully, I proved to my grandpa, who's death anniversary was during the Cambodia trip, I went because I wanted to help, because I wanted to change someones life, even if it was just a bit. I went to change something, but I think they changed me.

Naomi Wang

This trip to Cambodia was one of the best trips I have ever been on. It taught me so many things about myself, others and the wider community. I now have more respect and honour for the people of Cambodia, because I know what emotional and treacherous times they have been through. In terms of others, I met so many different people who I didn't know before and we have created strong friendship bonds. And with regards to the wider community, I have learnt to be even more gracious and thankful for everything that I have because I know that so many children just like me don't even have half as much. This trip has really opened my eyes to the real world and has shown me that giving up just a bit of my time can put a big smile on people's faces.

Personally, visiting the Aziza project was the best part of the trip for me. It was a time in which we could interact with the local children and since there were few of us visiting, it meant more quality time too. I loved being able to draw and sing and dance with the children - I even taught them how to make a paper crane. It was great to see them smiling and enjoying our company too. Just to know that I have made someone's life just that little bit better makes me feel so much more fulfilled inside.

On a different note, the hardest (I wouldn't say worst) part of the trip, was visiting Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and the Killing Fields, which had a completely different atmosphere. Both made me so much more aware of Cambodia's past. As I silently shuffled through the narrow wooden cells of Tuol Sleng, I tried to picture what it would have been

like when this was a working prison. I couldn't. The thought was really too horrible to bear. In the next block, rows and rows of photographed victims, alive and dead, were plastered on the large boards. I wondered how any humane person could have killed this many people - and this was only in one prison...The Killing Fields were a little less intense and disturbing, but were still a bit eerie, knowing that this was once a field of blood and dead bodies. From that day, my heart has reached out to Cambodians even more.

Of course, I must talk about the house building, since you could say it was the main activity we took part in on the trip! House building was a great experience. For once I really felt as if I was helping out first hand - not just donating or raising the money, but actually going to the country and doing the work. This was the most special part of the house building for me. Playing with the village children was also really fun. I could tell they liked playing 'Duck, Duck, Goose!' with us as much as we did with them! One day, I hope to visit Prey Veng again to see how the houses we have built have lasted, and how the village has progressed.

These three events I have talked about here are three of the most significant activities I did on the trip. There were definitely many other brilliant aspects of the trip like the food(!), the tuk-tuk ride and the short shopping spree we had on the last night! All these things together have made up an amazing trip filled with love, laughter and fun and I am ever thankful to all those teachers and staff that made it possible. Akun!

Nicola Wong

The tick-tack sound of the hammers nailing in the bamboo and the tin to the floor and the walls slowly dies away. It's break time and all of us students walk out of the green houses to lunch. As I walk out, I see a group of young Cambodian children playing around a log in the sand. They laugh and smile and I notice the brightness in their faces as we walk by. I think to myself that they are the happiest young kids I have seen in a while. And they are playing with nothing but a wood block in the sand. I think of the children that are back in Singapore and what I was like as a young child. Living in our own little world and getting bucket-loads of toys for Christmas or a birthday, always thinking of new things to put on our present lists. I think about how different our lives are compared to theirs. I imagine what they've been through. But then I think of what we're doing. How we're changing their lives. In ten, fifteen years time, some of these children will still be living in the houses we're building. How much their families can do now, with a new home. The idea makes me happy inside, that with my effort and little of my time I can change someone's life.

The whole trip, made a real impression in my mind. I think in some ways it changed my perspective. It changed the way I saw everything I have. Now, I realize that we should always focus and appreciate what we have and where we are, more than where we aren't and what we're missing. I really hope that the joyful sound of their laughs stays in my memory, so that I can forever remember the lesson that they unknowingly taught me. In my mind, I thank them.

Nicole Mueller

The Tabitha trip is definitely the best trip I have ever experienced. It was great to get to know a lot of new people and the experience to be in Cambodia and help out was just great.

Although it was unexpected, the part I most enjoyed must have been the house building. At first all I heard were hammers making a loud noise from hitting the floor instead of the nails. After about an hour all of us got the hang of it and managed to hit a few nails. Taking a glance off the nail, through the cracks we could see the children from the village picking up our nails that didn't quite make it. This gave us all the courage to continue to work hard and precisely. Once it came to handing the houses over to the families, all of us were proud of ourselves with what we achieved and that we could help out.

Another part that was a truly great experience was the GC Day. About 15 of us went to the Youth School in Phnom Penh and as we arrived at the school I noticed it was a tiny house that only had about four rooms. Entering the main room, all the children turned our way and started smiling and giggling immediately. They were aged 5-16 but were all very friendly and easy to talk to. We settled ourselves down and introduced ourselves to the children, making name tags for the children as well. As we took out all the new stationary we had brought a long, the children tried to get to it as fast as they could with big smiles and laughter. Together we all drew animals and objects and played different guessing games that they enjoyed a lot. Each child had to hold up their drawing and we all got to have a good laugh at each other. Time went by really fast, but it was great to spend time with children learning in a different atmosphere.

Lastly I thought the Tabitha trip was both fun and meaningful. I learned a lot out of it especially that we should only take what we need.

Noyonika Ghatak

My Cambodia trip was an amazing experience that I will truly remember for the rest of my life. I simply cannot say which aspect of the trip was best for me because all of it added together made the trip more stunning and unique in its own way. I feel really lucky and privileged that I was chosen to go on this trip, because I learnt so much from it, and had a really good experience.

My initial thoughts of this trip, was that it would be a trip of hard work, long nights, and lots of tiring students. My thoughts were right, but everyone managed to pull through and make the trip a happy and successful one.

The history day was an emotional day for many of us. The prison was especially shocking to me, because of the surroundings and the atmosphere of it. There were bloodstains still left on the wall, and gruesome photos of tortured bodies, that were just horrific and terrifying. Another thing that hit me about this prison was the fact that many kids died here. Kids of all sorts of ages, but still innocent kids, killed and tortured for nothing. And to think that all of this that happened was pretty recent is really sad and startling.

So our trip was off to a sensitive start, but needed to be done, so that we understand the history of Cambodia and what all of the citizens had gone through, as it was a very rough patch of time for the Cambodians.

The house-building part of the trip was one of the main highlights of the trip. Although it was tedious, it was manageable and in the end, I really liked nailing the nails into the floor. The breaks in the middle of house building were really fun, because we got to play with the kids and seeing all those kids smiling and having fun was really sweet and touching. The hand-over ceremony was too good for words. While handing over the houses to the respective families it was wonderful to see them smiling and accepting the houses gratefully. At that moment, I felt so privileged for the life I led, and for all that I have in life. It's at those moments when you feel lucky to be living the life you live. After the handover ceremony, when we were taking a huge group photo, this lady who we had built for, came up to me and gave me a hug. She then whispered something in Khmer in to my ear. A scholar was near by, and he told me that she said 'God bless you' to me. When I heard that, I was so touched, and I realized that all these villagers, are really thankful, for what we have done for them, and at that moment, I felt proud, for all the work I had done.

The GC day was quite similar to the house building, in terms of atmosphere and what we were trying to achieve. Although our GC day was a little disorganized, which meant less time with the children, it was still great, as the kids were happy and very excited. We taught them a lot of games and they seemed to enjoy themselves thoroughly.

The GC day was the last day of the Cambodia trip, and I didn't feel like going home at all! That day at lunch, my friends and I spent the whole lunch, talking about the past week, and the fun memories we had together. I was going to miss it.

Overall I think that I benefited in many ways from this trip, and I am very glad that I went on it. I had so many memories and stories from this trip to tell all of my family. It was an incredible experience, and I loved every bit of it. The good thing was that I had fun, and I also made a difference.



Oscar Settle

Global Concerns Day was on the last day of the Cambodia trip. It is the day where we went to different projects all around the community. We were able to list three in choice of preference. The majority of my peers wanted to go to a project called Tiny Toones, they bring poor kids into their shelter and give them an education and teach the kids how to dance. But I wanted to do a small project that would give back to the community. There was a small project that was in the slums of Cambodia, it was called Aziza and was a little school providing education to young kids in their first years all the way up to eighteen. I thought that this would be an awesome experience because I could just have a one on one time with the kids.

When it was the last day we had to wake up at 7.30am and leave at 8am to get to Aziza on time. I woke up at 8am not knowing what the time was. We were supposed to get an alarm call every morning. I am not sure if they did call me that morning or if my room mate Cai and I just slept through it. I woke up and quickly got dressed and sprinted out of the door as everyone was waiting for me. I got my shoes on and was allowed to grab a quick ham and cheese sandwich. We then raced downstairs to get onto the bus, then realized our bus wasn't there. Mr. Davies quickly waved down a tuk-tuk and then we were on our way. It took us about 10 minutes or so to get to the centre, but we couldn't see where it was. There were rows of buildings and they were all run down and looked very old. We walked through to the end and then walked down an alley, we walked past a computer lab with teenagers having their eyes focused on the computer screens. Then we walked a little longer and saw the classroom with all the children inside. They looked really happy to see us, the classroom looked much better then I was expecting. We walked up to the front of the room and introduced ourselves. Then we sat in groups with the children. I had four super energetic boys, all with massive smiles. After they told me how old they were and their names, we moved upstairs into a room that was quite large and had nothing in the middle of it, just a whiteboard at the front, and a sofa at the back of the room.

We had only two hours with the children until they had to leave for a break, we just played every game we could in that time. We used the art resources we had in the boxes, colouring in elephants and sticking them on the board. We gave them pens that they could keep as their own. There was one little boy who loved to do wrestling moves, he knew every move in the book at the age of four, we were all amazed but pretty much scared by his skills.

When it was time to leave we took a polaroid photo with them and many images so we could remember the amazing time we had with the children. This was the highlight of the trip for me, because we got to meet the children and have lots of fun with them, hopefully they still remember us, because I know I will always remember them.

Phoebe Hutchinson

I honestly don't know how to start this reflection or what to say. Although I have been thinking a lot about what I was going to write about in this reflection, I don't know how I can properly put my experiences into words or sum it all up. But I'm going to try.

To start off, this trip and the whole experience from doing the Tabitha global concern this year was utterly amazing. I have learnt so much about not only Tabitha and Cambodia, but

about myself, and about all the other people who shared this spectacular experience along with me. I can't think of any way at all to improve the trip in order to make it more enjoyable as it was set out perfectly, and I can't think of many who didn't enjoy the trip as much as I did.

The whole experience started off a few weeks after Grade 8 started, when over 80 students in our grade signed up for the trip. In reality we all knew that 80 kids, along with all the teachers going on the trip, was too much to take to Cambodia, so a random 14 unlucky people who signed up were taken off the list. I felt sorry for my peers taken off the list, although I was extremely grateful to still be able to go on the trip, and that a lot of my friends were able to go as well. Once we knew the definite group of students going on the trip, we were put into our fundraising groups. I was extremely pleased with my fundraising group, as we all were competitive, hard working, and most importantly, were going on the trip for all the right reasons. After many bake sales, hard nights of babysitting, chores, sponsored events, and many other ways of raising money for the group, all of our effort and team work throughout the fundraising got us as the equal winners of the \$2000 challenge! We were all very happy and excited that we had reached the \$2000 target well before the deadline, but we were still keen to raise more money. And we did.

Finally, after all of the fundraising groups had raised the required \$2000, on the 29th of March, we left to Cambodia to build the houses we had raised all the money for. All in all, the trip was fantastic. I got everything I put into the trip out of it, and I enjoyed every minute of it! Well, except for the history day. On the history day we went to visit the Tuol Sleng prison, and the Killing Fields. Both of these two historical sites were very gruesome and made me feel depressed and uncomfortable, but seeing the used torture weapons, the blood stained floors and walls, the shower sized cells that the prisoners were chained to, the pictures of the prisoners, the mass graves in which over 8000 people's bodies have been discovered, and the Stupa filled with over 5000 skulls, left me speechless, though more ready to build the houses than I ever had been.

When the first day of house building came, I felt really excited and inspired to help the Cambodian families after all I had seen the previous day at the history sites, and after all the hard work I had put in throughout the year raising the money to build the houses in the first place.

House building was not what I had expected. I expected it to be tiring, sweaty, and painful work, but in my group we all got the hang of it quite quickly, and were chatting normally while hammering almost 10 minutes after we had started. In the first 10 minutes of hammering the nails into the wooden planks, I probably only hammered 5 nails in, while about 20 other nails I had started hammering, were now in the dirt below the house. Not to mention my thumb was starting to go a bit reddish-purple after being hit with a hammer a billion times.

As the day went by, the hammering got much easier, and hardly any of my nails went flying through the wood to the ground. It was a fun day, and we got a lot done!

The next morning before we went to go to paint a small local school donated by UWCSEA, we went back to the building site and did the handover ceremony. Presenting the families with a blanket and a new stable home was one of the highlights of the trip for me. We were all extremely proud of ourselves after the first day of building, and seeing the excited faces of the young children and their families.

The painting took a long time, but you didn't have to concentrate as much as you did in house building so most of us were chatting and having fun with it. And at the end of the long day, we played 'Duck Duck Goose' with the children who go to the school, which was really fun as the kids were all so friendly and cute, and you could tell that they were really enjoying themselves!

To sum up, the Tabitha Cambodia trip was the most amazing experience I have ever had. I couldn't have enjoyed it more, and I have learnt so much. The accommodation, food, and activities on the trip were excellent, and I enjoyed every second of it.

Puthyda Keath

I received an email from Ms. Edward asking "Would you like to join the Tabitha Trip with Grade 8 again this year?" This is what my houseparent said to me. I was so surprised hearing this question because I never thought I would have another chance to get on this trip again. "Of course, yes! I am really really pleased to join the trip again!" I replied back.

You would ask why I got so excited for just going on a trip that I had already been on. For me the Tabitha Trip is the most memorable one that I always remember in my heart and means a lot to me.

Not only learning how to build a house, paint a school and Cambodian history but I had observed a lot about how poor people live in my country. Being a Cambodian student, another thing that no one could do is be able to communicate with local people. I have talked to many villagers and the owners of the houses that we were building for. I couldn't think of any word that could describe how pleased and thankful they were to us. "I am so happy to see you all, young children that came all the way from a very far country to Cambodia and build a house for an old granny like me". This phrase really touched my heart and made me feel even more sympathy for her. I had even thought how would her life be if there was no Tabitha. My tears almost dropped down while hearing that this is the most unforgettable and grateful moment that she ever had in her entire 70 years of life. She had nothing to give us back but only put her hands together with the word Arkun, Arkun.

I think this is the part that I like the most in the Tabitha Trip. Getting to know well the local people and understand how they could get through their hard life. Especially, after the trip I always said to myself that I have done something productive and made a huge difference in people's lives.

How about you? Have you done something productive?
"GO and Build the Change!"

Ramona Kuijntjes

Cambodia was an exotic place with culture and customs far from what I am used to. Not only is the culture different but so is the place itself. The streets, the temples, the houses. The typical house for a villager was not big, in fact, you could barely call it a house. Some houses didn't even have a roof or walls. We learnt that most of these

families living in these poor conditions lived on less than \$1 a day! That I still can't imagine. But it was true. These Cambodians were so poor due to Pol Pot and they couldn't do anything about it. But since they started to get involved with the Tabitha savings program, it has all changed for them. They were finally able to afford some rice, then soon chicken, and in the end, they were able to afford their own house - safe and secure. As students from UWCSEA, it was then our mission to go and build their houses, as nice and safe as possible.

The 2 days of house building definitely weren't easy. It was 2 days of sweating and being dunked, but all I could think of during this was 'we are building a change that will benefit several families, and this is just 2 days of hard work.' Ok, so maybe I wasn't thinking that 100% of the time, but I did consider and think it most of the time - especially after Janne, the founder of Tabitha, told us stories and the expectations of us. She told us that "there will be a time when you get tired, and you've hit your thumb for the 10th time that day, and this is the time when I expect you to smile the most." It was much harder to do than it seemed. After all, hitting your thumb with a hammer is not the most pleasant feeling in the world. But every time I did, I would just look at the mothers and the children waiting anxiously and the fathers trying to help out with the houses. This kept me motivated and determined.

After we finished our first house, I felt so good and I felt a real sense of accomplishment. It made me motivated to make the second and third house just as good! I wanted to go back at the end of the day exhausted with accomplishment and the sense of having done good.

This house building experience has taught me that it is not always about me. That there are others who are far more unfortunate but they keep smiling and get on with things. This experience has taught me to complain less and to think and care about others more. I feel relieved knowing that I took action and did something for other people's benefits.

Rene Lichtenecker

I have been to many different places before, but my most memorable trip was to Phnom Penh in Cambodia. I volunteered to go to Cambodia to build houses for the poor who were in need of shelter. Many high school students had said that it was the best trip they had ever been on and that nothing compared to the experience of Cambodia, but even they did not prepare me for what was waiting for us.

We spent many months fundraising money for the trip, and when we finally reached our goal we were so ecstatic to finally go. But as you can imagine, none of us had the experience or skills of building a house, we were just a bunch of motivated, eager teenagers who wanted to do something meaningful. After we had built a few houses we were tired and hungry, but we knew that this trip was not about us and what we wanted, it was about helping others. After we built all of the 25 houses we had a ceremony with all of the families that we built houses for. It was the most memorable and amazing moment, to see all of the those families smile and laugh, there were even those who cried! In that moment, I was so proud of what I had done and I wished that I could do more, and I knew that I would be coming back next year.

Richard Choi

In Grade 8 this trip and event was the biggest highlight of the whole year. Until now, I have been on many school trips, and some trips such as the Tabitha trip. However words cannot describe how much I have learnt, and gotten out of this trip. The Tabitha Cambodia trip, for me, was the most educational, hard working and yet fun trip I have been on. Generally, there was no part of this trip that I have not enjoyed.

Before we left for our trip, I really couldn't grasp what the trip was going to be like. I was confused between my friends in the higher grades comments; some said the trip was filled with gruelling hard work and some said it was a really fun trip. However when I came on this trip, I had a mix of pretty much every view point I heard from my friends. The trip was overall fun but it involved hard work, and it also had some very heart-aching moments and aspects.

Personally, the most profound memory I have of this trip is the history day when we visited the Killing Fields and listened to the history of Cambodia as we walked and saw what was left of the Killing Fields. I was horrified to see and hear stories about how many children, teens and adults were killed. Even after being fed tons of information and history of the Killing Fields and the Khmer Rouge, I remember listening to Janne as she told us the stories that most of the Cambodians went through and feeling so helpless by the fact that the international community like ourselves did not and could not really help the situation in Cambodia. When Janne had finished telling us the stories, I then finally decided, this trip was definitely worth coming.

During the three days that we have spent house building and painting, I was motivated and tried to work even harder as I saw the faces of the families that we were helping. Despite all the hardships that those Khmer survivors have gone through, they were standing, watching us, and smiling. Their smiles moved me and at the same time amazed me. For me I thought that this trip was going to be depressing and seeing the families would make it even worse for me. However, I was completely wrong, seeing the families smiling and watching over our work, just made our work even more worthwhile and heartwarming.

As I now look back at this trip, I see that the Cambodia trip is not the end for me to be involved in Tabitha or with these amazing experiences I was able to have in a very short time of six days. This trip for me is the start, an opening chance for me to be more aware and start helping in anyway I can whether that be donating, or participating in another trip to help out.

Rohan Iyer

Overall, I liked the trip very much. Visiting the killing fields and the prison was an eye-opener and a different experience. I very much enjoyed when we learnt about the history about Tabitha and Cambodia especially when Janne Ritskes was talking to us at the Tabitha Office. Building houses for the poor and needy in Cambodia who have suffered during the Khmer Rouge regime and who were living in appalling conditions was a very satisfying part of the trip because we knew that all the work we put into raising the money was all worth it and it was very nice to see that the families were happy with their new houses. Painting the school was very hard work but after we finished it, it looked

absolutely amazing with its new coat of paint and after getting the pictures of all the children standing against the school, we knew that they loved what we had done for them. After all of this, we also had our GC day which was one of the best parts of the trip. I went to Rudi Boa and the experience there teaching and playing with the children was absolutely amazing. This Tabitha House Building trip was definitely a satisfying and rewarding experience.

Ryan Ng

Happiness?

I am very appreciative for having had the opportunity to attend such an amazing trip. The experience was truly magnificent. I am grateful to Mr. Davies and Mrs. Edwards for making this trip possible.

I not only learnt a lot about the history of Cambodia from this expedition, but I also learnt a lot about myself. Whenever I became tired from building houses or painting the school, I just needed to look at the smiling faces of the children around me to be further motivated, discarding my fatigued body and mind. I feel guilty about my privileged life back in Singapore. The kids in Cambodia wouldn't even know what 'Heroes of Newerth' is. A virtual online strategy game that I spend my money on. Perhaps next time I complain about not being able to access my account, I can think twice.

Going on this trip has helped me remember how fortunate I am. To be able to access water just by turning a tap, or to open up the pantry and access food at will, just seems natural to me. Looking back on the expedition, I remember lots of kids that looked malnourished to the extent that you could practically see their rib cages. Although they don't have the provisions I have, not nearly as much, they can still smile and be joyful. I can't quite understand how they are able to be so happy given their state of poverty. This perhaps does show that happiness and money may not be entwined. Even though I may not have helped on a significant geographical scale, the little bit of difference I have made to the families in Prey Veng, will stay in my heart for a very long time. The thrill of the journey has subsided. The success of building 25 houses for poverty threatened families still brings me happiness. And hopefully brought them happiness, as well.

Ryan Yuen

When I signed up for the Cambodia house building trip I felt I was doing more than I needed to do. Instead of just participating in a service and just raising money or holding small events, I was actually at the scene of the action, working hard to help those in need. During the 5 days we were in Cambodia, all of us on the trip had a really rewarding experience. From house building, to school painting, we did everything that was fun, and helpful to people at the same time.

What I most enjoyed overall in the trip was house building. If you stood outside the house we were building, you would be able to hear a chorus of hammering coming from the house we were building. Overall, we had a great time but when the time came to build the walls, then we began to fail. All around us crippled nails fell to the ground as we tried and

tried to hammer the nails in to the walls. I even tried...but I failed. But thankfully, the brother of the woman who was going to own the house, came and helped us, so it was ok. Everything was going well until we were going to finish the last panel on the wall, but the problem was that it was missing. So everyone in our group left to find it and... they all disappeared onto the next house to commence building there. I was left with one other group member and we went in a frenzy to find the last piece of tin to complete the house. But when we found it...we failed to nail it onto the frame of the house, and caused awkward looking holes in it. Finally, the woman who owned the house saw our trouble and asked a fellow villager to help. He helped us to complete the house and we thanked him gratefully. In the end, we added the finishing touch to the house - the door - and we were off.

The rest of the Cambodia house building trip went well, with us moving onto painting the school. But soon after that, it was cut short for me when I began to get sick. I had terrible diarrhoea (sorry that I had to be so explicit) and I was terribly sick. I could barely walk or even eat and I stayed in my room for one and a half days before finally heading back to Singapore. I was saddened to miss the last few days of the trip but I was kind of relieved to head back to Singapore.

But the storm was not over yet. When I arrived in Singapore, I began to slowly recover and I was feeling good. But suddenly, I felt an unbearable pain in my abdominal area and my parents brought me to the hospital. On the same day I was admitted to the hospital and I was put on a drip (iv?...I don't remember what it was called). After they had given me some medication the pain had not gone away so the doctors decided to give me an MRI scan and they found out I had an acute case of appendicitis. I was immediately brought to the operating room and the surgeons removed my appendix.

The Cambodia trip has given me a lot (and taken my appendix!), and I feel that the trip was indeed very rewarding. I felt as if I had gone beyond the call. I felt very proud to be part of the trip and I would love to go back again!



Lasting Reasons

An empty building.
Walls echoing with the whispers of lost souls.
Crumbling walls, overgrown grass
The occasional respect of a slab of stone.
But mostly mounds of flaky earth
And a wooden fence to keep the pests away.

It happened for no reason.
They were lost for no reason.
You're here
For that reason.

The pounding of the hammers
And your heartbeat
Almost in perfect time
Under the sticky, honeyed glaze
Of the sun above you.

They watch you.
A flash of pearl against sun-worked skin.
Gestures with callused hands
Helpful, proffering you one small nail.
And with that nail, with that gesture
You know that you've made a difference.

The acrid odor of fresh paint
Magnified tenfold in a stuffy classroom.
Dusty, dim. Dirty, dingy.
Yet when you hear those children play,
Your brush moves faster.
Painting the ugly past over
With a new promise.

Walls adorned with childish posters,
Their edges peeling and drooping down.
Their laughs, their tiny hands clinging on to you as you leave.
You don't want to let go,
For this may be the last time you meet them.
But even if you let their fingers slip through
They will never let go in your mind.

You arrived uncertain
Of how the task would unfold.
But later you realized
That it was not a task, but a gift of hope.
You left behind something new
Hopefully, something better
That will last in their minds
As long as it will in yours.

Sabine Loth

When I went to Cambodia I didn't really know what to expect. I had visited Cambodia before but I never really went to see a poor local village. From the pictures of other Cambodia trips I had kind of made a picture in my head of what it was going to be like, but it wasn't at all the way I had thought it would be. Yes, the houses do look the same as they do on the pictures, but the way people look, what they wear, how the kids play and how they all live their daily lives is what it really is like. You can try to show it from a picture but it will never look quite the same as from the experience.

In one of the meetings before the trip Mr Davies said something that really got me thinking. He said "They're not trying to live the way we do and failing, they are trying to live how they do and succeed". After hearing that my first thought was, how are they trying to live? What is their meaning in life? It was hard for me to imagine it without really having seen it and been there. During and after the trip I started to think about it again. They live together and their religion is very important to them. They may not have technology like we do, or shops and malls like ours, but that is not important for them because they have each other and their religion. I still don't get them completely but that isn't something you can be able to do by being there for a few days. Even staying there for a year wouldn't make you be able to get them completely. Their religion is deep and they are hard workers. In a way they have intelligence that some of us don't have, working full time labour with little pay, living without electronics and truly believing in their beliefs and religion. These are things which are hard to learn and understand but we should definitely try to at least get and respect them.

This trip was a very educational and fun experience! I had an amazing time and really hope we made a positive change in those villagers lives. I will never forget this experience.

Sharon Teja

The Tabitha Cambodia trip was one of the best decisions I've made in Grade 8. What I was expecting it to be like was completely different to the reality of it. It was much better than I expected. My favorite parts of the trip would probably be house building and painting. I thought that house building would be really tough but it surprisingly wasn't so hard. I guess we were quite lucky because both days that we were building weren't so hot and we had regular water breaks. The worst part would probably be the first time hammering the floors because I hit my thumb countless times before eventually getting the hang of it. The best part of house building was the hand-over ceremony because you realize all the work that you've done is worth it for this one moment, because seeing the village peoples' faces smiling at you with gratitude was enough of a reward for me. Painting was very enjoyable because you got to socialize and help the kids. The best part was painting the rooms inside because we would sing while we painted which got the job done faster and got everybody in a good mood. I found that by the end of the day my brush was stuck to my hand and it took more effort than necessary to pull it off. If I could do the Cambodia trip again I would. I have no regrets and look forward to seeing future Grade 8's attend this rewarding experience and have as much fun and learning as I did.

Shayna Sarin

At first when I reached Prey Veng, I never expected the place to be so happy. I looked around and I saw kids playing, and all the adults sitting, talking and working. They all seemed happy. I couldn't have ever imagined living in their position. Having so little yet enjoying life, probably more than a lot of us. They complained about nothing and all I saw were smiles on all their faces. To me the houses weren't something I would ever see myself living in, but when we finished building the houses, they were thrilled to move in. For them it was like a dream come true. After the hand over ceremony, I saw how much the houses meant to the families we built them for and that really touched me. I never knew something as small as a tin house, would actually benefit the families living in Cambodia. After hearing one particular story about this woman and how she had to leave her home for 6 months and go towards the hills every year because of the floods; and every year she would come back to see her house washed away. It was hard for her to support her family and she actually had to give some of her kids away in order to provide for the rest. Listening to this story really made me think how lucky I was to have such a fortunate life, with a good home, family, and education. It definitely made me think twice before complaining about something.

Smilla Huzell

Painting in Cambodia

On Sunday the 1st of April we all set out to Prey Sara Pech school. This school was quite close to the village where we were building our houses. For me, this was a very unique and special part of the trip since the other Tabitha trips did not get to do it. When we got to the school in our little convoy of buses we were greeted by a bunch of kids smiling and waving up at us. At this point I really felt that I was about to do something life changing for a big group of people. The school was in a square compound with 2 bigger buildings standing opposite each other, one old and one new. Next to the old building there was a pile of bricks that used to be a building, in the center there was a courtyard and playground. As soon as I got out of my bus, no time was wasted; I went with my group with all our supplies to the back of the old building and got to work. The chosen colour was a beige/cream colour on the walls and a grey colour for the blinds. Personally, I really liked being on the ladder when painting because I felt like the 'Queen of the World' and I could also socialize with the others on ladders. After a few hours some of us including me started cleaning the classrooms. We cleared the walls and swept the floors and finally put all the furniture in the center of the room. Once all this was done we started painting the walls. It got very quiet so I started singing to myself and soon enough more people joined the classroom painting and more people started to sing along. Towards the end there were 20 of us in the 'Party room' singing songs from Sound of Music, Adele, Beyonce, Beatles, Train and so on... After this we were almost done. I helped clean the courtyard and paint the bathrooms and finally had time to play with the school children.

This was truly a day where I felt really proud of myself and I know that I had so much fun doing it all. If I had the chance, I would do this again because I think it was so fantastic to help these kids improve their learning environment.

Suk Joon Hwang

We have done many things during the trip; painted a school, visited Tuol Sleng, the killing fields and GCs. However, the highlight of this trip was building houses. Nothing could have been better than this. This was an experience that I have never done before and an event that will be hard to do again. It was one of the unforgettable trips.

I had high expectations as I have waited more than 8 months just for this part of the trip. To participate in the trip, we had to raise funds through bake sales, fast for 24 hours, and work in the Community Fair and donate money etc. It was a hard work; nevertheless, everything was worth doing it. I never regret or feel that I have wasted my money and time on this trip. House-Building part of the trip was even better than I have imagined.

Most of the house building was just hammering nails. I knew this fact from the beginning and believed that it won't be hard. The teachers have told us that it will be hard but I have always ignored it. When I started hammering, I hit my thumb with the hammer a few times but everything seemed to progress satisfactorily. That thought only lasted for the first few hours. As time passed, as I hit my thumb it wasn't just a simple pain, it felt like my thumb was falling apart. That time, I really wanted to cry and complain. Whenever I saw the village people I calmed my mind and thought again. I couldn't cry or complain in front of these people, and then I went back to work. Hammering the walls were the hardest. After, just hammering 15 times the pain shot up my arm; it just felt like my arms were falling.

Cambodian people were poorer than I thought. When I saw the houses it looked like they were about to collapse. Some people even didn't have these kinds of houses. I felt good being able to help them; I can be part of building something that they basically needed.

It was unfortunate that I was sick on the second day of house building. I really wanted to build more houses but my body didn't listen to me, it refused to work more. However, I felt pleased when I saw the families satisfied and delighted with their houses. I couldn't feel any pain any more. I still can't forget their faces when they saw their new houses. I guess this was the best part of house building. I really wish there will be another chance for me to go on this trip. It is a trip that you must visit at least once in a life-time. You will never regret it.

Sun Hay Try

Cambodia, my home country, is a small developing country, which was brought down by a Khmer communist leader, Pol Pot. A lot of people living in poverty are living in hope to get their life out of the well of destitution. To help them to take a step closer to their goal is great work to do.

Other students and me were so pleased to join this trip. At the beginning of this trip, we were so lucky to taste some unforgettable Khmer food. Janne Ritskes, the head of the Tabitha organization, told us about Pol Pot's biography and his plans to control Phnom Penh city as well as Cambodia. With a very detailed description and examples, we easily

learnt that information. To learn more about the Khmer Rouge, Toul Sleng and Cheung Ek were good places to gather knowledge. As we arrived at those two places, we felt sympathetic to the dead people during the Khmer Rouge period. Meanwhile, we also learned more about the Khmer Rouge party. Our trip continued to Prey Veng province, where we built 25 houses. All the villagers came with smiley faces and were so grateful for receiving our houses for them. Even though, it was so hard to build the houses, we tried to achieve it. It was such a good moment to see everyone trying hard and using their efforts to make those peoples' lives better.

Generally, having a good school will attract students to study and feel comfortable. We repainted a school there, as we believed that they would enjoy studying because of their new school. Apart from that, we also wanted them to have a new school like those of us at East campus. We put our strong beliefs and hopes to their learning so that they could reduce the number of uneducated people in Cambodia.

At the end, this trip had included two main advantages, learning and charity. Anyway, we want to change the poor parts of the world to be better and different and as such we are helping to reduce the poverty in Cambodia.

Sunehra Malhotra

The Tabitha Cambodia house-building trip was the highlight of 2012 for me. The trip taught us many things out of which the most important was to think about what the families we were building for had gone through and to just get on with building. As part of the trip we had to understand what the families we were building for had gone through, so we visited the Tuol Sleng Prison (S21) and The Cheung Ek killing fields. 'History day' was the first day after we arrived in Cambodia. History day was the most emotional part of the trip. We first went to Tuol Sleng. Just seeing the blood stains on the walls and floors made me feel sick. The cells were in their original form with a single iron bed frame and chains along with an excretion box. The staircases were dark and gloomy. There was wire along the corridor to prevent the prisoners from committing suicide. Just going around into each of the cells made my feel scared. It felt like there were ghosts covering the entire prison. While we were there some of us met one of the seven survivors of Tuol Sleng Prison. It was an amazing experience getting to talk to him with a translator and hear his story first hand. After visiting Tuol Sleng we went for lunch at Friends. The food was really good and was a nice experience. We were the lucky group because we went to 1 site then we had lunch then went to the last site. The other group had lunch then went to both sites right after each other; they said it was very emotionally draining. After lunch we went to the Cheung Ek killing fields. When we arrived we got audio tours and we started our journey around the killing fields. The audio guide really helped us understand what actually happened there and we could go at our own pace and listen to extra things if we wished. There were still a lot of bone fragments in the ground. The fields were not flat and had a lot of mass graves. I learnt a lot that day and from then on I thought about what the Khmer Rouge regime had done to all those people who died because of it and how much Cambodia suffered for no fault of theirs. When we went to build houses for those families I thought about how we were helping them and what difference we were making to their community.

Tara Chandrasekharan

Rudi Boa

I stepped out of the bus not knowing what to expect from the experience that lay ahead of me. By now most of the trip had been over and today was our last day. The area around appeared stark during the bus ride with uninhabited buildings and vast areas of open space all around. I began to get nervous; I could feel butterflies fluttering around my stomach. The ten of us stood in front of 2 rooms that stood side by side. Dozens of students sat at the desks in their crisp, clean white uniforms facing the whiteboard. It was nearing midday and the sun was already scorching as we separated and prepared the supplies we needed to teach the students who were waiting ever so patiently in the classrooms. The 10 of us split into 2 groups of 5. My group walked through the aisle created by the partition between 2 columns of desks in the classroom to the left. I couldn't help but smile as I watched the students in Rudi Boa simultaneously pack their rucksacks. The teacher of the class introduced us as students from the UWCSEA in Singapore. A chorus of students saying 'hello teachers!' followed the introduction. The 5 of us replied by saying 'chum reap sur' in a terrible Khmer accent. Then the experience began. First we taught the students how to draw SpongeBob Square pants along with his best friend Patrick. During the demonstration there were a couple of frustrated faces but after we helped them solve their doubts they became incredibly proud of their artworks. It seemed as though they became so focused instantly but when I looked up at the clock almost an hour had past, we only had 30 minutes left with around 10 more activities planned! As the children were finishing up their drawing we handed out some frames for them to store their works of art. They seemed quite confused with the mechanics of the frame, but figured them out quickly. Our savored time at Rudi Boa was nearing an end. After hugging and bidding the students goodbye something else awaited us, the inspiring life stories of the staff at Rudi Boa, but that was a whole other experience.

Tarini Sipahimalani

The Tabitha Trip was a great experience for me. It taught me a lot about the history of the country and what many of the people there had to go through. It gave me more determination towards the housebuilding and helping out in the schools. When we first arrived at the village, I noticed how all the families had come out from their houses just to greet us, and I realized how much this actually meant to them. After a quick introduction, we started hammering down the floors to each house. At first, I wasn't very fast at it, but once everyone started getting into their jobs and working to get the house up, I also got the hang of it. I found it so endearing that a few of the family members that lived there wanted to take part and help build their houses. It showed me that they didn't take anything for granted and really appreciated everything we were aiming to do there. I found the exact same thing happen at the schools. Everyone was so welcoming and I could see they were all happy and cheerful. Once we started painting the walls, we all got the job done pretty fast. We were told to pick up the rubbish pieces around the area and once they could see us cleaning up the place, some of the children started to help. I thought it was so encouraging and caring of them wanting to help and make their education a cleaner environment. This motivated me to help do more for them so when we got into the classrooms to paint the insides, I took the initiative to help clean/sweep out the

area of dust, bugs and the bits and pieces of rubbish. After the day at the school, I felt so good about what I had achieved and I had learned even more from just that one day. Like the whole trip, the GC day really taught me a lot. I saw that after all their families had gone through, the children all had big smiles on their faces and listened to their teachers at ISF obediently. They appreciated and were grateful for everything they had and that showed me how lucky I was to have what I have and the chance to go on this trip.

Tiger Hills

It didn't end with one swift blow for them, nor a sharp gunshot; a direct hit to the end of their lives. It ended the way they lived. A long painful death, suffering with every hit. Weeks of extreme torture, cramped conditions and eternal pain, years of starvation and exhaustion finally end. A blessing to escape the world in which the Khmer Rouge dominate.

Digging your own grave, working for food that will not be consumed. The horrors of the regime will never be erased, they live on today. In the minds of the people, through stories, in pictures, in video; the memory can never be erased. No more year zero.

The serene memory of walking through the fields, seeing the sweet red flowers blossoming on the side of the path. Stray off the path and you run into the meadow of clothing scraps and shards of bone that retain the memory of the Khmer Rouge. The friendship bracelets that encircle the mass graves and the killing tree. Listening for the wind, the rustling of the trees. Focusing on the stories that are being told. In the centre of the field, a tall ornate spire, decorated with flowers, stuffed with skulls.

Over 1 and a half million Cambodians died in three years.

Out of 17000 detainees in S-21;

7 survived.

3 live today.

Their lives' approaching an end,

But the memories will live on,

Forever.

Vincent Harrold

What I really liked about this trip was the first 2 days where we just went around and visited history spots in Cambodia. This was very useful for me but at the same time very sad. This is because of the way Pol Pot simply went and changed the lovely school into a prison camp which changed the lives and killed many of the families in Cambodia.

What I really liked though was the house building which was probably everyone else's favorite since we could hammer in the nails really easily and chat to a friend. Or if you had

a bad day just let out your rage so that you could hit the hammer with full force. The house building was also very nice because we could go and eat when it was our turn and only get nice bread which tasted not that bad slap some peanut butter on the bread and you're ready to go. It did not taste bad at all. Then you could grab some water melon seeds and go back to work a few minutes later.

What I disliked about the trip was the water pouring on the head and school painting to be honest, because the water was wet naturally but I did not like getting wet all over me which just ruined my experience. The school on the other hand got a bit boring because the teachers were too strict. I found the grey paint took ages to get off while the other paint ran out.

Overall it was good which I found quite odd because we had such a large group but I was happy because in the end we finished the job even though we did not build all the houses originally planned, which was kind of annoying since you would think you would break a record.

Vitika Agarwal

Going to Cambodia was one of the most remarkable experiences that I have had. It was an extremely fun trip and all the fund-raising, house building and school painting was worth the time and effort. Building houses for the families living in poverty showed what a huge difference we made to their lives. It's a completely different lifestyle from what we live in. I had never used a hammer and a nail before and it took me tons of hits on my fingers to get used to it. At the end of the day, we were all so tired and worn-out but it all paid off during the ceremony where we handed over the houses to the families and we saw how happy and grateful their families were. Painting the school was a lot harder than the house building, but a lot more fun too. We had to clean piles and piles of dust and cobwebs, but it was nice to know that the kids will have a better environment for education. For Global Concerns day, I went to the Youth school. We played games, sang and did artwork with the kids and they were so enthusiastic and cheerful. I loved our bus rides, duck duck goose with the kids, our meals: baguettes with nutella and Pringles, spiders and all the other amazing food we ate, the dipping of our heads in water and all the other small memories that made the trip perfect. Looking back at the trip, I'm so grateful that I got an opportunity like this, and I'm so proud of the huge difference the Grade 8 group made this year.



Wendy Van Horen Carneiro

Memories

Memories.

A simple word, yet so meaningful to us all.

We cherish them for years to come.

The vibe emanating from the Killing Fields evoked feelings of despair,
and loneliness.

The stirring melody shading the cries of torture makes me shiver to my bones.

The vacant look on the faces of those in Tuol Sleng,
who were tortured and killed will haunt me for eternity.

The floors stained in blood in each room,
the despicable treatment that a human being could inflict upon another.
These horrible images bore deep into my soul.

But, I couldn't remember Cambodia without
seeing the excitement and joy in the children's eyes when we played 'Duck, Duck Goose!'
when we would look at them and wave,
or when we break danced with them in Tiny Toones,
the social, economic and cultural barriers went down with every bass heard.
The fire within them fills me with hope for a brighter future.
Never before have I had a chance to contribute to the improvement in someone's life.
The feeling of making a difference is something I would wish to everyone.

While building,
every nail hammered went with my wish to a happier life,
to not consisting of fear throughout their future,
what a pleasant feeling to interact with such jubilant human beings.
The look on the families' faces were unforgettable during the hand-over ceremony.
So full of joy, gratitude and loyalty.

Painting was tiring yet so rewarding.
Every brushstroke brought the colours of peace to the school,
to inspire the children to a new path of life.
It's that deep sense of contentment that keeps you going through the darkest moments of
your life and Cambodians have exactly that.
This trip has brought so many memories to my life that I will hold on to forever.









Smilla Huzell & Sunehra Malhotra

HEY PREY VENG

(to the tune of 'Hey Soul Sister' by Train)

V1: Woke up real early,
Got up and changed into my house building gear.
Yes, it was quite early but Mr. Davies made me, get up and eat.

V2: Some good bread,
With some nutella and bananas on as well.
Can't forget my water, my hat and sunscreen on my body too

CH: Hey Prey Veng,
Don't you want some houses over,
Here, there and some other over there.
Hey Prey Veng,
We are here to help you build your houses... TODAY!

V3: On the bus,
We laughed and sang and talked the whole way there,
Tape on our fingers, a hammer in our hand and eye gear too.

V4: In our house,
we got a system and it aint gonna stop us now.
Water breaks right now; water splashes on my head,
And it's cold so I'll go get my drink now.

CH: Hey Prey Veng,
Don't you want some houses over
Here, there and some other over there.
Hey Prey Veng,
We are here to help you build your houses... TODAY!

V5: Suddenly I hit my thumb,
It really hurts but I keep going on.
Don't wanna stop right now
Cause you're the one I'm thinking bout somehow.
The walls are up, the floor are done
This has been so super duper fun.
I want the world to see UWC help you.

CH: Hey Prey Veng,
Don't you want some houses over
Here, there and some other over there.
(Hey Prey Veng,
We are here to help you build your houses...) X2 TODAY!

BUILD THE
CHANGE

