

My name is Jess and I was part of the short-term missions team from Student Outreach to the World (SOW) that visited in December 2022. We spent our first leg of the trip in the village and I can say that this place truly holds a piece of my heart and I'm sure the rest of the team would say the same.

We arrived at the village around 10-11pm and we took a couple hours to settle in. Just as I was about to wash up and sleep, I opened my suitcase only to find an exploded jar of chunky pasta sauce. I never thought I'd be scooping up pasta sauce with my hands into a plastic bag at 2am in the morning but it's funny looking back on my first night in the village. I had no idea what else God had in store for me and the team.

From the next day onwards, our schedule was filled with various activities for the students. We taught multiple music and English lessons, games, and bible study sessions throughout the week. Everyone gets so into it, the energy and eagerness to participate is so infectious.

I always thought that I needed to have a skill to serve but I spent a lot of time helping to cook and clean in between lessons (note: I am not particularly gifted at either haha). But it was so precious because I was able to spend time with Sokha in the kitchen and just see the way she and her family serves the community through hospitality amongst many, many other things. I loved seeing how the missionaries and staff members did life with the students, sharing meals with one another and spending quality time. You could see how their availability and presence helped nurture the community and how they each were being godly role models to all the students.

I wish I knew more Khmer but despite the language barrier, there were so many great conversations, intentional interactions, and precious memories that were made during our stay. Just as full as our days felt, my heart was the same and it only took a week to bond with everyone, grow in affection for one another, and for there to be tearful goodbyes when it was time to leave.

I'm sure you can already tell but I left feeling so encouraged. There is so much love in the community and you could feel how much the kids enjoy being there. I remember on Sunday morning seeing young kids (maybe kindergarteners?) on bicycles rocking up at the front gate at 5am for church - my team members and I were all gobsmacked, I could not imagine that happening back at home.

I wish I could explain it better and do the village justice with my words, but what I witnessed was missions work done so faithfully. A place where the parents felt safe to send their kids and where they trusted the missionaries and staff. To see so many students have the opportunity to hear the gospel and learn English was incredible. I came back to Sydney realising that more than anything we did, my team and I went to witness and report back how God is raising up the next generation of Cambodian Christians and I am more than grateful to our faithful God to allow me to partake in His kingdom building work and have a small glimpse of that.

In Christ,
Jess Choi











