

Andrea Lim, 17 years

Location: Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Mission: To help at Don Bosco Schools with ACTS, Dec 2012

Duration: Approximately 1 week

Takeaways

On the children:

The first thing I thought when I saw the Cambodian kids was: “Wow, they’re cute.”

On living conditions – observed during a village tour:

I never could imagine what “poor” meant until I saw how the villagers lived – in self-made houses built from rotting wooden planks. Some children do not have any clothes, not even undergarments. The stench of manure and decomposing bodies of dogs filled the air. I simply could not understand how people could survive in such horrible conditions. Despite all this, the kids shared the sweets we gave them. Then I knew how fortunate I am.

On volunteering – teaching in the school:

I woke up at 5 am for the first time in my life. After breakfast, we set off for Don Bosco Church for mass, then we went to the school. I was assigned to teach a class in action songs, origami and numbers. During break, I was chased around by the children, carried here and there and given flowers. For the next few days, I danced, sang, taught, packed goodie bags, played and had fun. On our final day with them, we had a Christmas party. There was singing, Gangnam Style, skits and, best of all, delicious food. The last goodbye was filled with crying from both sides. The experience was incredible and the memories will last forever. Anyway, there is always next year!

