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# **VOLUNTEERS** from the **BASQUE COUNTRY** (Spain) at UNESCO in Cambodia

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## **10** Years of Achievements



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Phnom Penh Office

“Baserri”, Traditional Basque Home





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## PREFACE 1: FROM RUPER ORMAZA, UNESCO ETXEA

The Basque Volunteer programme is one of the best loved projects by all us in UNESCO Etxea, the UNESCO Centre Basque Country. Set up in 1997 and financed by the Basque Government, this programme has provided the opportunity so that hundreds of young Basques have been able to obtain work experience in different international bodies.

UNESCO Etxea was one of the Basque Government's first partners in this adventure and is still one of its most active participants: since the programme started, we have been able to send over 120 people to 45 UNESCO field offices.

All parties win in this programme. UNESCO wins as do its field offices which have capable and enthusiastic young people to support their work and the decentralisation process. The recipient country wins as it receives new energy which often turns into friendships and permanent professional relations. The home country, the Basque Country, definitely wins because through this programme it increases the number of trained young people who form part of its social and economic network: people with international experience, connections and awareness of international issues and cultural diversity which remains with them forever. We also win in UNESCO Etxea given that many of our professionals were trained through this source of good professionals, namely the Basque Volunteers programme. It is therefore a clear example of a win-win programme.

UNESCO Etxea has been congratulated on numerous occasions by UNESCO due to the quality of the volunteers/Interns/Consultants and it is now time for us to give our recognition and thanks: to the Basque Government for its vision and continuity; to UNESCO for every year allowing the possibility to become a reality; to the UNESCO field offices for their interest and constant assistance; and of course to the volunteers themselves who, through their excellent work, have left an excellent impression of the Basque Country and UNESCO Etxea.

One of the offices with which we have had an exemplary relation is the Phnom Penh Office in Cambodia. Since 1998 this Office has welcomed seven Basque volunteers into its different departments: Education, Culture, Natural and Social Sciences, and Communication. We sincerely thank this Office for its special efforts to always provide the best learning and development opportunities to our young professionals.

This publication justly recognises the work performed by the seven volunteers over the last 10 years: Asier, Cristina, Nerea, the two Anas, Isabel and Teresa. We heartedly add our voice to this recognition.

Here's to another 10 years!

**Ruper ORMAZA**  
President, UNESCO Etxea – UNESCO Centre Basque Country





UNESCO Etxeako kideok gehien estimatzen dugun egitasmoetako bat dugu Euskal Boluntarioen Programa. Programa hori Eusko Jaurlaritzak sortu zuen 1997an, eta, orduz geroztik, Jaurlaritzak berak finantzatzen du. Egitasmo horri esker, nazioarteko hainbat erakundetan lan egiteko aukera izan dute hainbat euskal gaztek.

Programaren hastapenetatik izan da UNESCO Etxea Eusko Jaurlaritzaren lankide nabarmenetako bat eta, gaur egun ere, programako parte-hartzailerik gogotsuenetako bat da: programa hasi zenez geroztik, 120 pertsona aritu dira lanean UNESCOk tokian-tokian jarri izan dituen 45 bulegotan.

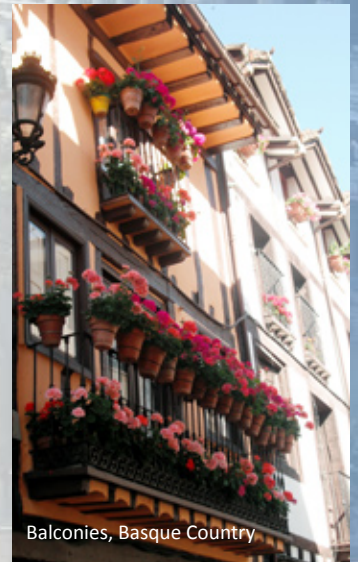
Programako partaide guztiak jasotzen dituzte egitasmoaren onurak. UNESCOk eta tokian tokiko bulegoek urtero hartzen dituzte lanerako gogoz eta deszentralizazio-prozesuan parte hartzeko prest izaten diren gazte trebe eta gogotsuak. Harrera-herrialdeek bere egiten dute lanerako gogoz bertaratzten diren gazteen energia, eta, sarritan, harreman horien ondorioz, laguntasun-harreman eta lan-harreman iraunkorrak sortzen dira. Gazte horien jatorrizko herrialdeak ere, Euskal Herriak, jasotzen ditu egitasmoaren onurak. Programa horri esker, nazioarteko esperientzia, nazioarteko harremanak eta nazioarteko arazoekiko eta kultura-aniztasunarekiko sentsibiltatea eskuratzen dute gure gazteek, eta horrek guztiak eragin onuragarriak izaten ditu, betirako, gizarteratzen direnean eta lan-munduan sartzen direnean. UNESCO Etxeari dagokionez ere, bertan lan egiten duten profesional asko Euskal Boluntarioen programan trebatu izan direla aipatu beharra dugu. Beraz, esan dezakegu win-win motako programen adibide argia dela euskal boluntarioena.

UNESCOk behin baino gehiagotan zoriondu du UNESCO Etxea programa horren bitartez lanean aritutako boluntario, bekadun eta aholkularien kalitatearengatik, eta orain guri dagokigu gure esker ona adieraztea: Eusko Jaurlaritzari, bere senagatik eta programari jarraipena emateagatik; UNESCOri, urtez urte aukera hori egi bilakatzeagatik; UNESCOren tokian tokiko bulegoei, beren interesagatik eta ematen diguten laguntzagatik; eta, batez ere, boluntarioei, beren lanari esker, Euskal Herriaren eta UNESCO Etxearen izen ona munduan zehar zabaltzeagatik.

Kanbodiako Phnom Penh hiriko bulegoko arduradunekin harreman ezin hobea izan dugu. 1998az geroztik, zazpi euskal boluntario izan dira bertan hainbat gai-sektoretan lanean: hezkuntzan, kulturen, natura-zientzietan, gizarte-zientzietan eta komunikazio-lanetan. Gure eskerrik beroenak eman nahi dizkiegu bulego horretako kideei, ikasteko eta heltzeko aukera bikainak eskaini baitiete gure profesional gazteei.

Aldizkari honetan, azken 10 urteetan lanean aritu diren zazpi boluntario horiek egindako lana eskertu nahi dugu: Asier, Cristina, Nerea, Ana, Ana, Isabel eta Teresa, jaso itzazue gure eskerrik beroenak.

Ea beste 10 urtez jarraitzen dugun!



## PREFACE 2: FROM TERUO JINNAI, UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE IN CAMBODIA



It has been a privilege for UNESCO Phnom Penh Office to warmly welcome young, enthusiastic and talented Basque volunteers, from Basque Country in Spain, in their inspiring effort to apply their knowledge and skills in an Asian post-conflict country, Cambodia. The volunteers technically assisted our Office in various fields of UNESCO's specializations based on their interest and competence. There are three core units in Phnom Penh Office: Education, Culture, and Communication and Information. Our Basque volunteers, since the past 10 years, have been assigned to play key supporting roles in working with several public agencies and development partners of the Royal Government of Cambodia, particularly, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, Ministry of Information and other

related academic institutions and NGOs in Cambodia.

We are proud of their commitments and achievements. They have brought to our Office with numerous successes – and they also gained a great deal of professional and personal achievements through working with our professional staff, government officials, and their local and international partners against cross-cultural working environments and challenging tasks.

Our Basque volunteers are open, willing to learn and share. They acquire the local language and culture of Cambodia impressively – and they also introduce their language and culture to colleagues in the Office to know and understand Basque and its people better. We thank them for their commitments, enthusiasms, and contributions to our Office in particular, and to Cambodian people in general.

We are grateful to the Basque government and people for their support in sending their volunteers to Cambodia. I trust that our colleagues and many Cambodian people who have worked and currently working with the Basque volunteers will treasure their good memories and will join me to wish them greater success in their future endeavors.

## WELCOME NOTE: BUREAU FIELD COORDINATION, UNESCO PARIS

Within the framework of the Working Agreement signed between UNESCO and the Basque authorities, Spain, the Basque Government is financing the participation of young volunteers for one year in several UNESCO Field Office, to assist in the implementation of the activities of their offices.

Since the initiation of the programme in 1997, The Bureau of Field Coordination at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, has been coordinating the management and implementation of this programme, in close collaboration with the UNESCO Centre for the Basque country (UNESCO Etxea), on behalf of the Basque Government.

Throughout this collaborative effort, some 130 qualified and competent young volunteers, have been assigned to a large number of UNESCO Field Offices, where they have in most cases left very impressive results. This is evidenced in many cases, where their assignments with various field offices, have been extended by the Basque authorities beyond the initial year.

The programme is now in its 12th year of implementation, whereby the 11 volunteers selected will soon be joining the UNESCO Field Offices to which they have been assigned, before the end of this year.

The Bureau of Field Coordination deeply acknowledges Unesco Phnom Penh office in its effort to promote and foster this cooperation agreement with the Basque Government by publishing this book which gathers the personal stories of the seven volunteers who have been working in the Cambodian office and their priceless contribution, but also some interesting facts about the Khmer and the Basque people; which will result in a better understanding of both cultures.

## QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE BASQUE COUNTRY AND CAMBODIA

BASQUE COUNTRY	CAMBODIA
<b>Population:</b>	
1.546.203 (2009) Female: 779,658; Male: 766,545 <sup>1</sup>	13,388,910 (2008) Males: 6,495,512; Females 6,893,398 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Land Area</b>	
7.235 sq km	181,035 sq km
<b>Official Languages</b>	
Spanish and Basque	Khmer
<b>Religion</b>	
Catholic	Theravada Buddhism (95%), Islam (3%) and Christianity (2%)
<b>Currency</b>	
Euro: 1 Euro 6,372 khr	Riel: 1 usd: 4,100 khr
<b>Government</b>	
Constitutional Monarchy	Constitutional Monarchy <sup>3</sup>
<b>Life expectancy (years):</b>	
Male: 77.3, female: 84.5 <sup>4</sup>	Male: 57, female: 64



<sup>1</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística

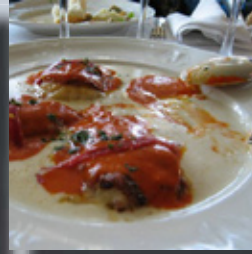
<sup>2</sup> NIS, 2008

<sup>3</sup> RGC webpage

<sup>4</sup> Eustat



basque volunteers: 10 years - 11



## INTRODUCTION TO THE BASQUE COUNTRY (EUSKADI)

### LOCATION

The Basque Country region is an Autonomous Community of northern Spain. In Basque language it is called Euskadi, which means “collection of Basques.” In a very narrow sense it refers to three provinces: Guipúzkoa (whose capital is San Sebastián), Bizkaia (whose capital is Bilbao); and Álava (with its capital at Vitoria). But Euskadi, the autonomous community of the Basque Country, should not be confused with the larger Basque Country (Basque:

“Euskal Herria”) of which it is a component part as this one refers to the northern part of Navarre and three provinces in France, including the famed resort of Biarritz. The Basque Country borders with the provinces of Cantabrian and Burgos to the west, the Bay of Biscay to the north, France and Navarre to the east and La Rioja (the Ebro River) to the south.

### GEOGRAPHY

The Basque Country territory has three



Bilbao, Basque Country



distinct areas that are defined by the two parallel ranges of the Basque Mountains. The main range of mountains forms the water divide of the Atlantic and Mediterranean basins. The highest point of the range is in the Aitzkorri massif (1551 m).? If you wher asked of which color the Basque country is, you will immediately respond: green.

### COMMERCE

Industrial activities were traditionally centered on steel and shipbuilding, mainly due to the rich iron ore resources found during the 19th century around Bilbao. These activities decayed during the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s, giving ground for the development of the services sector and new technologies. Today, the strongest industrial sectors of the Basque Country's economy are machine tool, present in the valleys of Biscay and Gipuzkoa, aeronautics in Vitoria-Gasteiz and energy, in Bilbao.

Other active sectors in the region are Agriculture and Fishing (1%), Industry (29.3%), Construction (8.9%) and Services (60.8%)<sup>1</sup>.

### HISTORY

The Basque people (Basque: Euskaldunak) are a group of people inhabiting adjacent areas of the North of Spain and the South of France.

The Basque people are the oldest traceable ethnic group in Europe. According to some theories, Basques may be the least assimilated remnant of the Paleolithic inhabitants of Western Europe (specifically those of the Franco-Cantabrian region) to the Indo-European migrations. Basque tribes (like the Vascones and the Aquitani) were mentioned by Roman writers Strabo and Pliny, and there are also some other evidences that show that they already spoke Basque in Roman times. Unlike the Basques, all other tribes in the Iberian Peninsula had been, to a great extent, linguistically and culturally assimilated by Roman culture and language by the end of the Roman period.

Basque people's language, Euskera (also spelled Euskara, Uskara, or Eskuara, depending on the dialect), does not belong to any of the commonly spoken Romance languages and its origins, like that of the Basque race itself, have not been identified.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.eustat.es/about/a\\_euskadi-general\\_i.html](http://www.eustat.es/about/a_euskadi-general_i.html)



There are many competing theories. One is that the Basques are descended from the original Iberians, who lived in Spain before the arrival of the Celts some 3,500 years ago. Conqueror after conqueror, Roman to Visigoth to Moor, may have driven these people into the Pyrenees, where they stayed and carved out a life for themselves filled with tradition and customs practiced to this day.

Franco's authoritarian regime arised in 1930 and continued until his death in 1975, after which a new Spanish constitution provided for the union of three provinces, Álava, Biscay and Guipúzcoa, in the guise of the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC), while Navarre, which decided not to opt into the BAC, was made into a separate autonomous region. Between 1979 and 1983, the Spanish government granted the Basque Autonomous Community wide self-governing powers ("autonomy") including

its own elected parliament, police force, school system and control over taxation.

### CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

The particular orography of the Basque Country, with valleys that are difficult to be accessed, has contributed to the maintenance of a solid popular culture full of myths and legends, costumes, rites and folklore as well as the conservation of the Basque language, Euskera, who's origin, ancient, is unknown.

The Euskera, a millenary language dating back from before the Indo-European languages, suffered, for different reasons, serious setbacks within the Autonomous Community, but over the last thirty years has undergone a strong recovery, such that at present 75.3% of pre-university pupils carry out their studies in Basque<sup>2</sup>.



Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Basque Country

As a picturesque manifestation of the Basque tradition, we have the rural sports, which reflect the daily life of ancient Basques. Harrijasotzaileak (stones lifters), Segalariak (trimmers) or Aizkolariak (trunks cutters) revitalised the traditional work of the habitants of the “Baserri” (Basque house). The Basque ball and the boat race or “trainera”, the most popular Basque traditional sports, make their lovers vibrate all along the country. And the traditional music, instruments and dance which represent as well important social activities and civil and ecclesiastic manifestations instilled to Basque people costumes.

The Basque country takes its food seriously. The typical dishes and ingredients of the cuisine of the Basque people include meats and fish grilled over hot coals, marmitako and lamb stews, cod, Tolosa bean dishes, paprikas from Lekeitio, pintxos (Basque

tapas), Idiazabal sheep’s cheese, many vegetables and legumes, txakoli sparkling wine, and Basque cider.

#### CLIMATE

There are distinct climatic areas of the Basque Country: In the northern valleys, oceanic climate is predominant, with its wet weather all year round and moderate temperatures. Precipitation average is about 1200 mm. The middle section of the region has a more Continental Mediterranean climate, but with some influence of the northern oceanic one, which causes dry and warm summers and cold and snowy winters. The Ebro valley has a pure Continental Mediterranean climate, winters are cold and dry and summers very warm and dry, with precipitation peaking in spring and autumn. Precipitation is scarce and irregular, as low as 300 mm.



Donostia, Basque Country

## INTRODUCTION TO CAMBODIA



### LOCATION

The Kingdom of Cambodia, is located in South East Asia with Thailand to its west and northwest, Laos to its northeast and Vietnam to its east and southeast. In the south it faces the Gulf of Thailand. Most of the geography of Cambodia, consists of rolling plains although there are several mountainous regions, as the Cardamoms, bordering with Thailand and to the east of the plain, ranges of undulating hills separate Cambodia from Vietnam.

### GEOGRAPHY

The tenth largest river in the world, the Mekong River, is the longest river in Southeast Asia and the most important water source in Cambodia together with

the Tonle Sap (largest lake in South east Asia), which connects with the Mekong River in Phnom Penh. The Tonle Sap enlarges to four times its normal size when the Mekong rises during the monsoon season thus causing the Tonle Sap River to flow northward into the Lake.

### COMMERCE

Agriculture has long been the most important sector of the Cambodian economy, with around 59% of the population relying on agriculture for their livelihood (with rice the principal crop).<sup>3</sup>

Garments, tourism, and construction are also important. In 2008, foreign visitors to Cambodia were 2,125,465.<sup>4</sup>

### HISTORY

- Khmer Empire: 802 - 1431
- Dark Ages: 1618 - 1863
- French protectorate period: 1863 - 1953
- First administration of King Sihanouk: 1955 - 1970
- The Khmer Republic and internal conflict: 1970 - 1975
- Democratic Kampuchea (the Khmer Rouge): 1975 - 1979
- People's Republic of Kampuchea 1979 - 1991
- United Nations Transitional

<sup>3</sup> World bank, Cambodia Country Memorandum

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Tourism



Administration in Cambodia (UNTAC)  
1991 - 1993

- Kingdom of Cambodia 1993 – present

The golden age of Khmer civilization was the period from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries, when the kingdom of Kampuchea ruled large territories from its capital in the region of Angkor, west of Cambodia. The Angkorian monarchy survived until 1431 before the capture of Angkor Thom and the Cambodian king fled to the south of the country.

From the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries was a period of decline and territorial loss as the country struggled between its two increasingly powerful neighbors. In 1863, King Norodom signed an agreement with the French to establish a protectorate over his kingdom. The state gradually came under French colonial domination until October 1953. A partial agreement was struck by Sihanouk and independence was eventually declared, from 1955 to 1970 this period was considered as the First Administration under Sihanouk. The Cambodian foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s was based on neutrality. In 1970, while Prince Sihanouk was absent, General Lon Nol deposed Prince Sihanouk in a coup d'état. The Khmer Republic's leadership was plagued by disunity among its principal figures, by 1975 the Republic collapsed to Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK).

Immediately after its victory, the CPK ordered the evacuation of all cities and towns, sending the urban population into the countryside to work as farmers.

CPK was trying to reshape society into a model that Pol Pot had conceived. The new government sought to completely restructure Cambodian society by collectivizing agriculture and abandoning the industrial base or placing it under state control. This period would be known as the Khmer Rouge, in which the numbers are unknown of the people that died at the hands of during the regime between 1975 and 1979 from execution, starvation and disease.

Democratic Kampuchea's relations with neighbors worsened as a result of border clashes and ideological differences. In 1978, Vietnamese forces entered Cambodia, announced formation of the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (KUFNS) and drove the remnants of Democratic Kampuchea's army westward toward



Monk, Cambodia

Thailand. By the beginning of 1979 the new People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) was established. Several Cambodians were displaced during the Pol Pot era and the international community responded with a massive relief effort for the refugees.

Solid estimates of the numbers who died between 1975 and 1979 are not available, but it is likely that hundreds of thousands were brutally executed by the regime. Hundreds of thousands died of starvation and disease. Some estimates of the dead range from 1 to 3 million, out of a 1975 population estimated at 7.3 million. The CIA estimated 50,000–100,000 were executed and 1.2 million died from 1975 to 1979.<sup>11</sup>

Much has been achieved since the signing of the 1991 Paris Peace Accords and Cambodia has made important progress

in ensuring peace and security, including rebuilding institutions, establishing a stable microeconomics environment, and a liberal investment climate. Notwithstanding these achievements, the development agenda remains daunting. Poverty rates remain very high with around 30 percent of the population subsisting below the poverty line, and some 15 percent living in extreme poverty. Economic growth remains narrowly based, and has not yet led to reduction in poverty.

Cambodia is at a crossroad in its development as it moves from a post-conflict situation toward a more stable development paradigm. Several decades of isolation and conflict devastated much of Cambodia's physical, social and human capital.



Royal Palace, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

## CULTURE

The culture of Cambodia dates back many centuries and it is very rich and varied, heavily influenced by China and India.

Music and dance are present in everyday life in Cambodia, being the Apsara dance, one of the main symbols of Cambodia.

Khmer cuisine is similar to that of its Southeast Asian neighbors. It shares many similarities with Thai cuisine, Vietnamese cuisine and Chinese cuisine.

Clothing is also a very important aspect of the Khmer culture; Cambodian fashion is divided by the people's differing castes and social classes. Cambodians traditionally wear a checkered scarf called a "Krama".

## CLIMATE

Cambodia's climate, like that of the rest of Southeast Asia is dominated by Monsoons, which are known as tropical wet and dry because of the distinctly marked seasonal differences. Cambodia's temperatures range from 21° during the months December to February, peaking up to 40° around April.



National Museum, Phnom Penh, Cambodia





20 basque volunteer: 10 years

Koh Kong province, Cambodia

## INTRODUCTION THE BASQUE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

In 1997, the Basque Government Development Cooperation Department started to collaborate with international bodies with the aim of revitalising the Basque public development cooperation system and incorporate new actors.

One of the results was the establishment of the BECAS ONU (UN GRANTS), through which different NGOs and Basque social and academic institutions with stable relations with international bodies can publish calls for one year stays, with the possibility of an extension, to train young aid workers in the Field Offices of the international organisations.

UNESCO Etxea, the Unesco Centre Basque Country, has been an ally of this programme right from the beginning and has been collaborating year after year with the programme: over 120 people have taken advantage of their grant at UNESCO offices in 5 continents.

This is a long-term call which is very positive for both the collaborating bodies and for the young Basques who have had the opportunity to start their career with this international experience. Some have decided to continue along this path and still work for international organisations, while others have returned bringing all of their experience, knowledge and awareness to their current jobs: in companies, NGOs or in the public sector.

7 people have collaborated over these years in the UNESCO Office in Cambodia. This Office wishes to recognise and celebrate through this publication this extensive experience over 10 years. We add our voice to the celebration and we thank the UNESCO Centre Basque Country for its work and we urge them to continue along the same lines as over the last twelve years. In this way, through continuous training and effort by all of us, we will make Basque cooperation more transparent, professional and effective thereby contributing towards a fairer and more egalitarian world.

**Marta Ares Godoy**  
Basque Government Director of Development Cooperation

1997. urtean, Eusko Jaurlaritzako Garapenerako Lankidetzak Zuzendaritzak nazioarteko erakundeekin lankidetzan jarduteko bideari ekin zion, garapenerako lankidetzako euskal sistema publikoa dinamizatzeko eta bertan beste eragile batzuk ere jarduten hasteko.

Ekimen horren ondorioz, NBE BEKAK sortu ziren. Hala, gizarte- eta irakaskuntza-esparruetan jarduten diren eta nazioarteko erakundeekin harreman egonkorrak dituzten GKEek eta euskal erakundeek deialdiak argitaratu ditzakete; urtebeteko egonaldiak eskaintzen dituzte, baina luzatzeko aukera ere badago. Beka horien helburua da kooperante gazteak nazioarteko erakunde horien bulegoetan prestatzea, tokian bertan.

UNESCO Etxeak, EAEko UNESCO Zentroak, hasiera-hasieratik babestu izan du programa hau, eta urterik urte hartu du parte programan, inoiz etenik egin gabe: 120 lagun egon dira UNESCOk 5 kontinenteen dituen bulegoetan.

Ibilbide luzea du programak, eta esperientzia positiboa izan da bai parte hartu duten erakundeentzat, bai lan-ibilbidea nazioarteko esperientzia honetan hasteko aukera izan duten euskal gazteentzat. Batzuek bide honetatik jarraitzea erabaki dute, eta gaur egun NEetan jarraitzen dute lanean; beste batzuk itzuli egin ziren, eta bertan hartutako esperientzia, ezagutzak eta sentsibilitatea beren gaur egungo lantokietara ekarri dituzte: enpresara, GKEetara edo administrazio publikora.

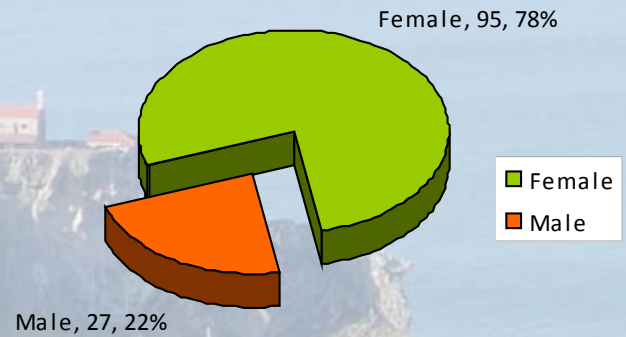
Urte hauetan, 7 lagun aritu dira Kanbodiako UNESCO Bulegoarekin lankidetzan. 10 urteko esperientzia luzea izan da, eta Zuzendaritza honek, argitalpen honen bidez, lan hori aitortu eta ospatu nahi izan du. Ospakizunarekin bat egiten dugu, EAEko UNESCO Zentroari egindako lanarengatik eskerrak ematen dizkiogu, eta orain hamabi urte hasitako bidea jorratzen jarraitzera bultzatzen ditugu. Izan ere, etengabeko prestakuntzari eta denon ahaleginari esker, euskal lankidetzak gardenagoa, profesionalagoa eta eraginkorragoa izatea lortuko dugu, berdintasunean eta bidezketasunean oinarritutako mundu baten alde lan egiteko asmoz.

Marta Ares Godoy  
Eusko Jaurlaritzako Garapenerako Lankidetzako zuzendaria

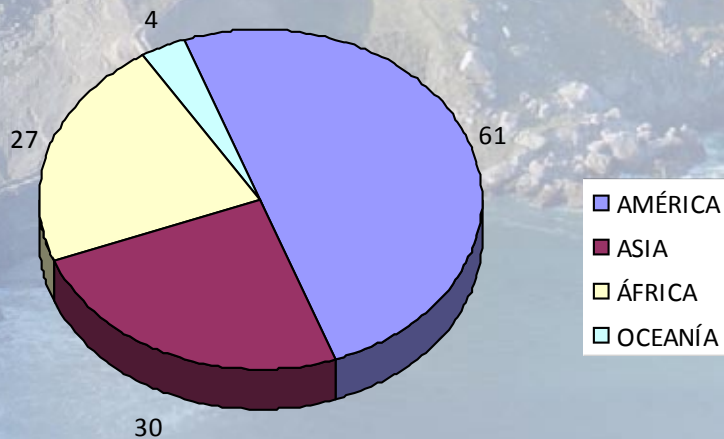
## QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE BASQUE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

**120 volunteers since 1997...**

UNESCO Volunteers by sex

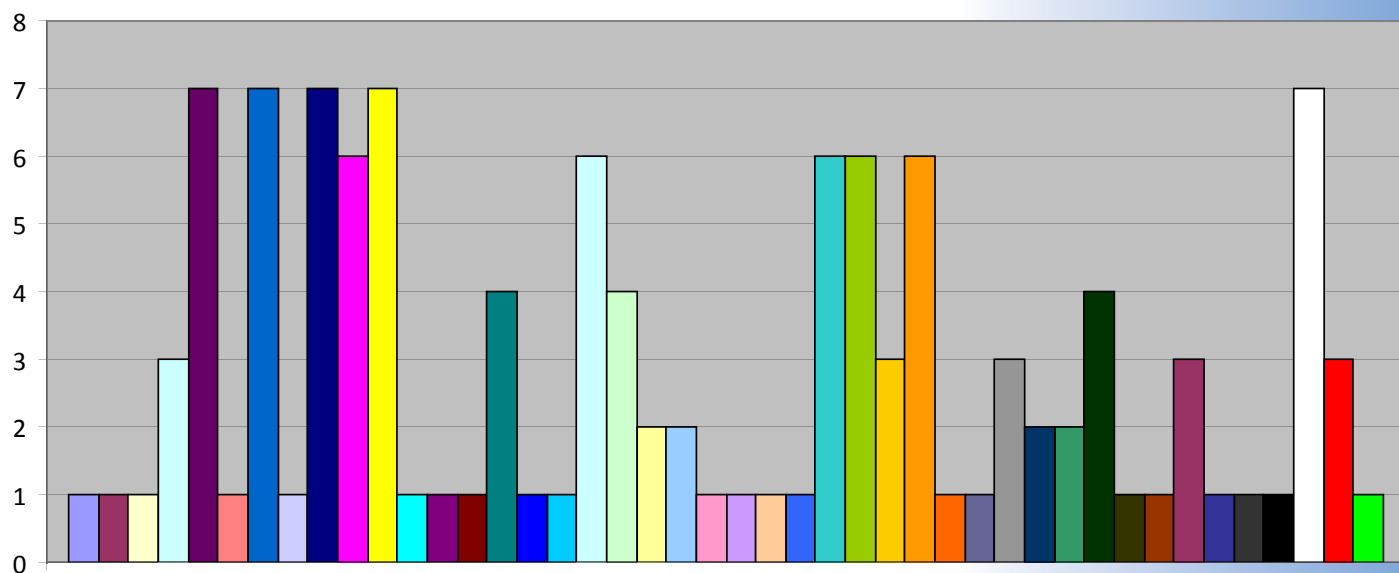


UNESCO Volunteers by Continent





# basque volunteers: 10 years - 23



NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS

- |                  |             |               |                        |                     |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| ■ Bangladesh     | ■ Benin     | ■ Bolivia     | ■ Brasil               | ■ Camboya           |
| ■ Camerún        | ■ Chile     | ■ China       | ■ Costa Rica           | ■ Cuba              |
| ■ Ecuador        | ■ Egipto    | ■ El Salvador | ■ Ghana                | ■ Guatemala         |
| ■ Guinea Conakry | ■ India     | ■ Indonesia   | ■ Jamaica              | ■ Jordania          |
| ■ Kazajstan      | ■ Kenia     | ■ Libano      | ■ Malasia              | ■ Mali              |
| ■ Marruecos      | ■ Mejico    | ■ Mozambique  | ■ Namibia              | ■ Nepal             |
| ■ Pakistan       | ■ Panamá    | ■ Perú        | ■ República Dominicana | ■ Samoa             |
| ■ Senegal        | ■ Sudáfrica | ■ Tailandia   | ■ Tanzania             | ■ Trinidad y Tobago |
| ■ Túnnez         | ■ Uruguay   | ■ Vietnam     | ■ Zimbabwe             |                     |

24 - basque volunteers: 10 years



Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Basque Country

## VOLUNTEERISM AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION<sup>5</sup>

Several theories have linked volunteerism with the development of stable democratic societies and have posited that this leads to economic growth.

Theories of “social capital”, for instance, have been used to link civic engagement and participation with the development of democracy.

The establishment of trust is a key component of the social capital concept, because it enables people to cooperate to reach shared goals. Social capital is also broken down into bonding, bridging and institutional social capital. Bonding links occur within groups that share common interests but may exclude other people or groups, and thus have negative development impacts.

Volunteerism has been suggested as a way in which to develop social capital. A research report by Innovations in Civic Participation (2004) said, “[W]hen youth are positively engaged through service, research indicates that social capital and citizenship increase ... Service fosters trust between citizens and helps develop norms of solidarity and reciprocity which are essential to stable communities”. Key to this understanding of volunteerism is the idea of service for a nation or a community, leading to more and improved civic participation. Prevailing social norms and cultural ideas will clearly dictate patterns of social engagement.



Royal Palace, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

<sup>5</sup> “Volunteerism”, 2008. Youth Star Cambodia in collaboration with United Nations Volunteers.





Ethnic Minority, Ratanakiri, Cambodia

# 10 YEARS, 7 STORIES

- **Asier Segurola** 1999 - 2003
- **Cristina Artero** 2002 - 2002
- **Nerea Bilbatua** 2003 - 2005
- **Ana Gonzalez** 2005 - 2007
- **Ana Telleria** 2006 - 2008
- **Isabel Gonzalez-Rojo** 2007 - 2009
- **Teresa Diez** 2008 - Present



## ASIER SEGUROLA

I arrived at the UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh on 1 March 1999 full of professional and personal expectations. My initial assignment, funded by the Basque Government was initially for one year. It was therefore difficult to predict, at that stage, that I was going to spend over four years in a unique, exciting and challenging country - Cambodia.

I had recently finalised my academic law training, specialising in international law and human rights law. Development cooperation and international relations constituted my particular areas of interest, and consequently I was eager to join a prestigious and respected organisation such as UNESCO. I was especially excited about the prospect of learning and contributing to the work and actions of UNESCO at country level, particularly in the fields of education and culture – areas which had always attracted my attention.

Since my arrival in the country, I became fascinated with Cambodia, its people, culture and troubled history. The country was then slowly coming out of years of political instability, insecurity and conflict. I felt privileged to be there at a time when the Cambodian nation was recovering its proverbial smile, and Angkor regaining its past splendour after years of neglect and looting. Phnom Penh, with its decaying French colonial architecture, its beautiful sunsets over the Tonle Sap river, its chaotic traffic, and its markets and small coffee-shops scattered all over the place, soon became a home to me.

At the same time, over the years, I became increasingly aware of the enormous challenges and problems afflicting Cambodia – the dire poverty faced by the majority of its population, the dilapidated state of its infrastructure and social services, and the need for Cambodians to come to terms with the legacy of a quarter of century of violence and war.

The UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh and its staff members welcomed me with open arms from the beginning. Many of them were to become close colleagues and friends after long years of joint efforts and common undertakings. Progressively, I became involved in the day-to-day running and operations of the office, and had the opportunity to contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of projects and activities in the different fields of competence of UNESCO.

Of all the work that we carried out at the time, I was particularly fond of the UNESCO



efforts to assist the Cambodian Government in the development of a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of its unique cultural heritage and for the curbing of the illicit traffic of cultural property. The support provided by the Organisation resulted in a significant reduction in the looting and pillaging of Khmer artwork from the World Heritage site of Angkor and from other vast archaeological sites located around the country.

Another area of work that I found particularly useful was the role played by UNESCO as chair of the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG), the coordination mechanism for all development partners providing support in the area of education. At the time, the Cambodian education system was facing enormous challenges both in terms of access and quality. In response, an ambitious sector reform programme was then initiated by the Ministry of Education and supported by a large number of bilateral and multilateral donors, leading to rapid improvements both in terms of enrolment and educational outcomes. The work of the ESWG resulted in a greater coordination of the technical and financial assistance provided by the development partners, and ultimately contributed to the expansion and enhancement of the Cambodian education system.

In addition, I took part in the actions of UNESCO in support of the Cambodian authorities for the establishment and management of the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve. This wetland area constitutes a unique ecological site, as it supports a tremendous amount of biodiversity,

including plants, reptiles, mammals, birds and other animals. The Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve Secretariat, which was initially established with assistance from UNESCO for the development of a coordinated management strategy for the Great Lake, has been strengthened in recent years with support from other actors, such as the Asian Development Bank.

I left the UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh due to family reasons in April 2003, with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I was saddened to depart from Cambodia, a country to which I was deeply attached, and to leave



an interesting and stimulating job. On the other, I was leaving South-East Asia with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment after four years of hard work. At the same time, I was eager to face a new challenge in Namibia, the scenic, arid and sparsely country in Southern African where I was heading.

Since my arrival in Namibia in 2003, I have had the opportunity to work in various positions with different donor agencies and local organisations. Since 2007, I am employed as Project Officer for the Spanish Cooperation Office in the capital city of Windhoek, where I am responsible for the management and follow-up of bilateral programmes and projects in the social

sectors, such as education, health and water supply.

In conclusion, I believe that my work at the UNESCO Phnom Penh enabled me to grow enormously both in the personal and professional fields. This experience was particularly important for my professional development, as I managed to acquire key skills required to become a competent professional in the field of development cooperation, including project and programme design, management and monitoring, institutional and donor relations, and report writing.









## CRISTINA ARTERO

“Appearance of reality” is not unique. Equally, nor is the vision we may have of a country and its people. Even the same person, on different visits to the same place, changes his or her way of observing, perceiving, feeling and interpreting what appears to be “possible reality”.

Whenever possible, I tried to look with clean eyes, leaving my mind free of prejudice, this way to perceive sensations and to live experiences which, very possibly, others did not or will not be fortunate enough to enjoy. Thus I can say that among so many contrasts and contradictions, for me Cambodia is above all, a smile: a wide, frank smile, a choir of the white, pure, naïve laughter of childhood. It may seem strange when they have lived through so many years of horror, destruction and fear.

A few years ago I was on the point of going to Nicaragua with UNICEF but in

the end it fell through. Therefore, when I was chosen for the UNESCO scholarship I felt really privileged. On one hand, it was a dream for me to get to know how an international organization worked on the ground, something which I had studied so often and seen in documents and books, and on the other hand, that Cambodia was my country of destination was a real surprise..... I had the opportunity to get to know a culture totally unknown to me yet very attractive.

So I was filled with enthusiasm, joy, as well as nerves and respect for the unknown, not to mention doubts as to whether I had made the correct choice..... But the desire to learn new things was greater.

I will always remember that trip from the airport to the city, hundreds of people on motorbikes, cycles or on foot, passing each other in authentic traffic chaos, without respecting any traffic regulations; people eating in the street, dust, dirt, discarded rubbish all over the place... I thought: Will I be able to cope in such a different environment?

I was welcomed on arrival at the office, and I was able to meet most of the personnel then working at the Phnom Penh UNESCO office at a general meeting. The director was then Mr. Etienne Clément. I spent the first days familiarizing myself with the general operation of the Office, this is, getting to know each of the areas where UNESCO was involved in Cambodia.

At the beginning of my stay in the Office I was assigned to any specific work, but

rather it had been foreseen that I would be available to help in the activities of the diverse departments wherever reinforced manpower was necessary, and particularly I would monitor the work dossiers which were in French.

Later on, once I had familiarized myself with the diverse UNESCO projects in Cambodia, my work was centred in the section of Culture in the Programme of Protection and Safekeeping of the cultural patrimony of Angkor, I collaborated in the preparation of the contracts of experts who had travelled from Paris - among them the scientific consultant in the culture sector, - to evaluate the works of the different teams of archaeologists working on the recovery of the temples of Angkor; I attended the meetings in SIEM REAP between the experts from Paris and APSARA; I contributed in the later elaboration of a report on the Development of the Programme of Cultural Tourism. In the same way, I participated in the preparation of the annual meeting of the International Committee of Coordination for the Safekeeping and the Development of

the Region of Angkor (ICC), attending later the meeting at the beginning of July 2002. Fundamentally I monitored the dossier of Cultural Tourism programmed between UNESCO, French Agency of Development and APSARA (elaboration of contracts, bills and accounts).

Although I was very enthusiastic, neither the beginning nor much of my stay in Cambodia was easy. There were even days of absolute desperation and saying "I can't take any more" and "I am going home."

However, most of the time I found people willing to give me a hand, both Cambodians and foreigners working in Phnom Penh. People with whom I immediately started to spend free time at weekends and on a daily basis.

The Cambodians always had a smile on their face. I was struck by their hospitality, their desire to get information and ask questions, their continuous jokes, their calm rhythm, their street life... . Also, on the other hand, the identification of people





in the street, that a foreigner meant dollars or bargaining.

You smile when walking among palms, among florid bushes, when seeing the groups of schoolchildren all wearing the same uniform, when seeing the face of a boy who looks at you and touches you with curiosity because of the colour of your hair, when sitting down next to a saleswoman in the market while she tells you her life story, when contemplating the cheerful colours of the silks which are hanging and in heaps at the stalls. And you cry because of the solitude, you cry because of the absence of strength to stand the day by day under difficult conditions, you cry because of impotence in the face of poverty, you cry in the face of the carelessness and imperiousness of those who call themselves your fellow citizens, you cry because of aggressiveness which humans can show towards the weakest.

After the period living in Cambodia, I moved to Oviedo. There I worked for some time as a lecturer of International Public Law, International Organizations and International Public Function at the University of Oviedo.

The experience I lived thanks to UNESCO meant that the personal approach to matters dealt with in these subjects, especially the programmes developed by International Organizations, acquired another different vision for me and I transmitted this in the classes.

Surprisingly, in Oviedo I coincided with other people that had links with Cambodia, either professionally or sentimentally, which always filled me with pleasure and it even triggered the beginning of some combined project from the academic environment. Also, from Spain I made contact with foreign, fundamentally French professionals, specialists in the Asian country. Interest in the political, social and economic events of the country and of its geographical surroundings has remained with me since then.

However, the profound mark which that period of my life has left on me, is the important personal bond which originated and continues to exist with people from Cambodia. The ties of friendship continue and are reinforced with the passing of time. I hope it will be like this for many years.











## NEREA BILBATUA

I joined the UNESCO office in Cambodia in March 2003 until December 2005.

I had already got some information on the profile requested by the Phnom Penh office at the time of my interview with the UNESCO-Etxeateam, during the recruitment phase. The first Basque Volunteer, Asier, and I had studied the same Master (on Human Rights and Democratization) and I understood that the Cambodia office was looking for somebody with a similar background. In this regard my expectations matched pretty much the reality of my work once in Phnom Penh: being able to work on a diversity of issues, to coordinate with multiple partners as well as to prepare reports and draft an array of documents, speeches etc.

Upon arrival I was assigned to Mr. Clément's office and during the first months I worked

on the Natural Science programme. I have no background at all on this issue so I found quite hard to fit in it; at the same time, this was my first experience working with different counterparts in the country (including the Cambodian National Commission for UNESCO, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the UNESCO Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific in Jakarta and the ADB in Manila) and it was interesting (although sometimes frustrating too), and at the end, it resulted in a good way to understand the different dynamics better. However, and fortunately, a few months later a UNV specialized on Natural Resources Management joined the office so I moved to other areas of work.

As Asier was planning to leave I started taking over some of his responsibilities, working mainly as assistant of Mr. Clément; this included both internal (liaising with Programme Specialists in Education, Sciences, Culture and Communication) and external coordination tasks (such as establishing and maintaining close relations with the national authorities, UN agencies, development banks and NGOs for the design and implementation of UNESCO programmes, participating in various working groups and inter-agency meetings such as the UNDAF or coordinating of the ESWG, and, finally, ensuring coordination between the UNESCO Office in Cambodia and other regional offices and the Headquarters in Paris).

In addition, I acted as a Programme Officer for the Communication and Information (CI) programme. My duties included

implementing the UNESCO CI programme during 2004-2005, which mainly focused on the areas of access to information, promotion of freedom of expression, training of journalists and support to community radio in remote areas, as well as designing the CI programme for the biennium 2006-2007. This part of my work was really great as it was more directly linked to my primary area of interest (human rights) and was also much more specific than coordination, making a nice counterbalance. I really enjoyed working with the CCI and the different journalists associations in Cambodia, and it opened a window for me on the use of ICT for development, something I was totally ignorant about before!

Finally, I was also in charge of coordinating UNESCO's external communications tools (speeches, website contents, press review, press release and annual report) as well as of drafting reports, briefings and external / internal correspondence on the various programmes and activities implemented by the UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh.

During the time I spent at the UNESCO office I worked directly with some short-term volunteers and I think it is fair mentioning them here, as I shared this specific part of my work with them and we supported each other.

Spending almost three years of my life in Cambodia was indeed a changing experience, both at personal and at professional levels. Sometimes I found it so beautiful and sometimes I could not bear it anymore.... Although the first eight

months or so were quite hard I soon loved the city and made a solid group of friends. Though not all, some of them were indeed my colleagues at UNESCO and even after all this time I am part of their life and they are part of mine, whereas still in Cambodia or in Spain, the Netherlands or Sudan... this shows how often personal and professional mingle. I remember, for example a trip to Kept (but there were many others as Cambodia is such a beautiful country!) and how nice was sitting by the beach and watching some of my colleagues playing with their children, or just sleeping on a hammock, and how different they looked! Sharing my work with people from so many nationalities is a great experience that has taught me to look at things from very different angles and to never take for granted that my way of looking at them is the "obvious" one.

Of course there were (lots of) frustrations and bad moments, but in the balance the good ones weight more. As said before, my work as the Representative's assistant put quite a lot of pressure (sometimes hard to bear) but it also gave me the opportunity to be part of processes that otherwise I would have not been able to grasp. It perhaps made me a bit more skeptical of the "development world" but it also shed a lot of light on governments, UN, donors, NGOs and consultants' roles and this was key for me to realize what I like and what I don't like in this area and, therefore, to move forward in my career.

At the beginning of 2006 I moved to Bangkok and started working at the International Secretariat of GAATW (Global

Alliance Against Traffic in Woman). GAATW is a world-wide network of NGOs (including human rights, women's rights, anti-trafficking and migrant rights organizations, self-organized groups of migrant workers, domestic workers, survivors of trafficking and sex workers, and direct service providers) working on the human rights protection of migrants and trafficked woman.

Since January 2009 I have an exclusive European regional focus and have moved to live and work in Madrid, still within the same organization. As part of the GAATW-International Secretariat my work is to coordinate the activities of the Alliance, collect and disseminate information, research, and advocate on behalf of the Alliance in Europe for a human rights based approach to anti-trafficking.

On one hand the experience gave me the opportunity to apply some of the skills I had learnt at the university or at the Master in Human Rights at a practical level. On the other hand it provided me with new ones that I would not have acquired unless working at an international environment and in such a position. I do apply all these skills (coordination, planning, analysis, listening, getting consensus and negotiating) in my current work and they have proved valuable.

Another important contribution is that it helped me knowing better what I wanted to do afterwards; the decision to move

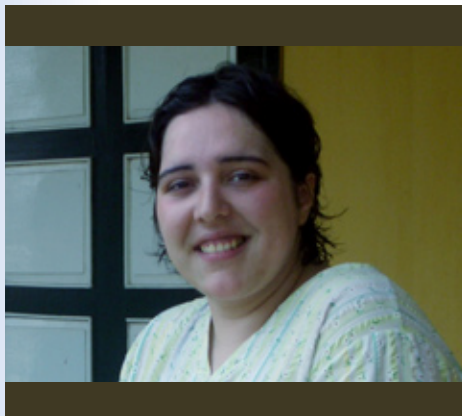
back to an NGO-based Human Rights work was partially the consequence of what I had missed whilst working with UNESCO, and now I feel much more balanced at a professional level, because I know both worlds from the inside.

And finally among the skills gained are those linked to the fact of having lived in Cambodia, a country that I have not stopped missing, and how this mere fact gives you maturity, focus and helps you (or at least it helped me) to put things in perspective. To me this experience is not just about having worked at UNESCO, but about having worked at the UNESCO office in Phnom Penh.









## ANA GONZALEZ

I've just wanted to thank you all for your work and your help in these two years that I spent at UNESCO Office. I can only hope I will find other colleagues as good and competent as you have proved to be, and as friendly as well. It's been a real pleasure for me to work with you all and hope we will meet each other again.

Ana was the fourth Basque Volunteer at the UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh staying from 14 May 2005 to 15 May 2007. She has shown great interest in the work as focal point for the UNESCO Communication programme. She has supervised a project for a Computer soft programme in Khmer language implemented by a NGO, coordinated the organization of a meeting with several associations of Cambodian journalists to celebrate the

World Press Freedom Day, ensured the important function of the Secretariat for the Education Sector Working Group of the donor partners. All and all she ran a good show and we were all thankful to her for her excellent work and good personal relationship she maintained. She always looks for new and exciting challenge to use her experience and skills acquired during her volunteer assignment. All the best wishes and good luck to her.









## ANA TELLERIA GALLASTEGI

I arrived at UNESCO Phnom Penh office in mid-July 2006 as a Basque Volunteer within the joint UNESCO/Basque Government Programme.

I have an international business background and although I had taken part in different training programmes in development and also had volunteered within NGOs based in Europe, my professional life had been primarily focused into the private sector. I did apply for this grant because I always wanted to know the everyday reality in a developing country. I had travelled as a tourist in South East Asia but I wanted to be involved in developing projects and work for a developing country and above all I wanted to grasp that gap that exists between theory and reality, especially in delicate fields like these.

Since my arrival, I considered my objectives at UNESCO Phnom Penh a professional and above all a personal challenge. From the very beginning, I had the opportunity to assist in the implementation of the activities of UNESCO office in Cambodia. In particular, I was assigned with two important roles in two different areas of UNESCO's five thematic areas. I worked for the Education Sector Working Group and in the natural Sciences area in coordination with Cambodian authorities and UNESCO cluster office in Jakarta.

I participated in the Education Sector meetings with donors and government representatives as part of the UNESCO Secretariat. This group played an important role in coordinating donor assistance in the education sector in the country, and in promoting a common and integrated program approach. It served as the principal formal mechanism for donors to discuss strategy and policy making. It also served as a forum for donors to exchange information on planning and programmes implementation status Education Sector Working Group members also met once every two months with Education governmental authorities to share information on the implementation status of the Education Strategic Plan, formally ratify major policy documents and statements, and agree on strategic directions for the sector. In May 2007, Cambodia received the Fast Tract Initiative grant, which meant a big step towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Within the programme of Natural Sciences and thanks to the kind support of Mr. Han

Qunli, former Natural Sciences Specialist in Jakarta, Mr. Kim Nong, and Dr. Bonheur, the Ministry of Environment participated in the nomination process of Peam Krasoab Wildlife Sanctuary(Koh Kong Province) as the first Coastal Biosphere Reserve in Cambodia under UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme.

An Environmental Educational Program was also implemented in several communities of the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve in close collaboration with OSMOSE NGO. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the Environmental Education Manual in Khmer Language was also published and disseminated.

Jointly with different environmental NGOs working in Cambodia and UNDP, UNESCO Phnom Penh office continued making efforts to inscribe Cardamon Mountains in the UNESCO Natural Heritage List. Unfortunately, the project did not succeed. Cambodia is rich in natural resources, a treasure to protect. Cambodian people live close to the natural environment and rely on these resources for subsistence; I deeply hope the value of this natural treasure will be shortly appreciated and protected.

I learnt a great deal about what it entails to be engaged in fieldwork. We spent much time struggling with such simple practical things that elsewhere are taken for granted! Over there, we had to forget all about our own western or westernised logic. I learned many lessons about development and international affair from Cambodia, but this experience specially enriched me personally. I had the opportunity to watch every day Khmer's people struggle to simply survive. My experience in Cambodia

set me on my own path in life: I discovered why people in some countries live well, while in other countries people barely survive. I learned that people everywhere want the same things for themselves and their families and that they are willing to work hard for these goals if the right opportunities are provided.

My stay in Cambodia meant a turning point in my career. Back in the Basque Country I wanted to improve my knowledge of development and international cooperation issues. Therefore, I decided to study an online Masters in International Development Strategies at Hegoa, Institute of Development and International



Cooperation Studies, at the University of the Basque Country. This master is allowing me to strengthen my capabilities in relation to project planning, to go through a structured study of a wide range of issues related to integrity and development, and build a strong analysis capability towards more work related to developing countries and geographic areas worldwide.

I also started working for the Spanish Red Cross in my hometown Donostia-San Sebastian. I now work for the Immigration Department, Social Integration area of assistance as a technician supporting the integration of low-income immigrants into the Donostian society. My job involves working with immigrants providing useful advice and helping young immigrants to develop their Spanish communicative and social skills. We also provide emergency provisions for those facing severe hardship to giving orientation support and friendly advice to the most vulnerable.

After years of work in the private sector, once again it was because those two years in Cambodia that I realised what to dedicate my professional career to. I am now aware of what surrounds me and a more open minded person towards cultural, ethnic and racial change. Cambodia taught me we are all here to make our best in our lives.









## ISABEL GONZALEZ ROJO

I arrived in Phnom Penh on 14 November 2007. Almost two years after I am writing this piece. I was glad to be assigned to come to Cambodia. Particularly because I had previously been living in Surabaya, in the East of Java (Indonesia), where I had a wonderful personal and professional experience working as an intern in a local NGO which focused on urban community development. Prior to Indonesia, I had also lived, study and worked in various countries in Europe as well as in India and Nepal and I had visited other Asian countries. I had experience on international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance issues through the Masters Degree I did on that subject in my home town Bilbao, as well as in Germany and Australia -where I become closer to the Asian realities and studies as I was placed at the Monash

University Asian Studies Institute, I had understood the concept and meaning of conflict situations, conflicts resolution and mediation through participating few times in activities organised by Gernika Gogoratuz, the Centre for Peace Research in the Basque County. Those experiences, among others, facilitated me arriving here for sure, and all the people I met will be in one way or another inherent to the lines and between lines of this relate.

Coming to Cambodia meant coming back to South East Asia and get the chance to live again in a region that interested me a lot, and continues. As for the idea of working with UNESCO, I was also pleased and excited. I did not have previous experience working with any UN Agency but as I said before, I understood and had some experience in development issues and I was especially familiar with some of UNESCO's Sectors such as Education and Social and Human Sciences, where before arriving in Phnom Penh, I was expecting to be performing my tasks. However, when I arrived in the office I was assigned to be the focal point of the Communication and Information Sector as well as the facilitator of the Education Working Sector Group (ESWG), which is the consultative group formed by the country's main donors for education which has the central objective of assisting the Government on the improvement and implementation of the education policy and strategies at national level.

The facts of not having previous formal experience in the UN system, not having specific experience in the Communications



field, and being the only person working in this Sector in this office has been since the very first day a great challenge. I have been provided with the support of the Communications and Information Advisor for Asia at the UNESCO Office in Bangkok as well as the colleagues at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris when needed; I have had the suggestions of our Office Director and I have always had the back up of my national and international colleagues from the other Sectors such as Culture, Education and Natural Sciences.

All these has enabled me to gradually learn the UN and UNESCO systems; the way of doing things in this particular country; the UNESCO Communication and Information Sector requested proceedings; and the extension in which I can perform my duty and core objective of supporting the

Communications Sector in Cambodia by following UNESCO's mandate, in relation as well to other countries in the region in several occasions.

I have been given a lot of responsibility; I have learned by "doing"; and I currently find myself in a position in which I feel confident enough to perform my work by taking into consideration the related thoughts and ideas that I have now, and this is due to the experience, inspiration and motivation that I have assembled during the time working in this Office.

Thanks to this output that has been achieved with the support of my colleagues, among others, the following results have been accomplished: Two Community radio stations are currently run by indigenous people in two remote provinces journalists





and media students are trained on different important subjects on their field; The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives are now the first Documentary Heritage in the nation that have been recognised to have global historic relevancy by UNESCO, in relation to the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme 15 provinces in Cambodia are having the chance to enjoy cultural events and cinema through an itinerant film festival in collaboration with the French Cultural Center; and in particular on the promotion of the study and teaching of Philosophy are being implemented by the UNESCO Phnom Penh office for the first time and the Cambodian philosophical circle is being empowered and integrated in the regional one.

Even that, as I have said before, prior to coming here I was expecting and excited with the idea to work on the Education Sector Programme, I am now glad that I have been given the opportunity to explore the assorted Communications Sectors where I have found to have a great interests

and realized its crosscutting links with the Sectors of Education, Culture and Heritage, Natural Sciences and Climate Change, and Social and Human Sciences with a focus on Philosophy, with which I am currently working in several joint activities.

All these professional experience notes are of course linked to knowledge obtained from the performance of my work and from the relationships with my workmates, as well as, undoubtedly, linked to the personal experiences arising as a result of living during two years in Cambodia, a developing country with its very particular history; heritage; politics and social system; current development results and progress visions; a unique mostly green flat landscape with some inimitable highlands and remote islands; the wide and vast Mekong river; and a cheerful colourful population that accompany and builds up once own daily life in this country.

I trust and wish this experience will facilitate mapping my upcoming professional and personal life in a constructive way.









## TERESA DIEZ

My arrival in Phnom Penh was very eventful because of the Bangkok riots which started the very same day of my flight, and which forced to close down the Thai airport for several weeks. This delay did nothing but to increase my nervousness and excitement about the travel and the new life that I was about to commence.

After having my flight rescheduled for several times, I managed myself to arrive in Phnom Penh on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, full of expectations and a bit nervous, as it was only when I felt the heat, I saw the crazy traffic and I smelt the street food, that I realized that I was going to live in this challenging country for 2 years.

My academic background was first headed towards business administration but after being in the private sector for several years I realized that I wanted to redirect my

career towards the field of International cooperation and development. That's why 4 years ago I decided to quit my job and go to India as a volunteer with a local NGO from Bangalore, where I worked as a volunteer in an orphanage for 14 months. During more than one year, I worked very closely with the children, their teachers and the private donors to enrich their education in a holistic approach where society, environment and economy play a very important role.

After my experience in this absolutely fantastic country, I was very much looking forward to have the opportunity to work with UNESCO, which I felt was the best place to deepen my knowledge and acquire a better understanding of the educational and environmental challenges in developing countries.

Although Phnom Penh is a very "easy going" city, the cultural shock can be quite stressful during the first months: its hard to get used to see all these luxurious cars (as if you were in Montecarlo), and at the same time, all the poverty, street kids and lack of social services, which are the consequences of the prolonged conflict that this country lived for more than 20 years.

Unesco office in Phnom Penh is from my point of view, the best place to have the first contact with the United Nations' work. I am very grateful to all Unesco staff for the warm welcome and their continuous support which, from the beginning, I felt very encouraging as this is a very demanding country and sometimes I feel lost and overwhelmed.

During the first months, I have been working mainly in the education department, although lately I have been very much involved as well in the Natural sciences department, as its focal point. Having the opportunity to work in both departments, allows me to have a better idea of the overall functioning of the office, contributing to the design and implementation of projects which link both sectors.

My first assignment was the organization of the First Science and Technology Camp in Cambodia, with the objective of encouraging interaction among children and youth with different nationalities and to raise awareness of the importance of interactive Science and Technology education. The project was a great success and more than 100 students and volunteers from 9 different countries attended the camp.

One of the projects that interests me the most, is the literacy project that we are conducting in Anlong Veng province, which was the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge regime and the place where Pol Pot died. UNESCO together with a local NGO, designed a 6 months project to improve the livelihoods of the deprived former Khmer rouge families in this post conflict area. I have had the opportunity to be actively involved in the design and implementation of this project, which has given me the opportunity to visit the village, meet the people and see with my own eyes, how this activities (literacy, numeracy, lifeskills, health skills...) can improve their lives.

In addition to my work with the Education

Unit, I'm also the Natural Sciences focal point, and as part of my role in this department, I'm working very close to the Government, the National commission and colleagues in Jakarta and Paris, towards the nomination of the Cardammom Mountains as Biosphere Reserve. The Cardamom Mountains contain exceptionally high biodiversity of wildlife communities and an outstanding number of threatened species, forming the most pristine wilderness region in mainland Southeast Asia, and this nomination will improve the livelihoods of the communities in the area ensuring a sustainable development and reduce the biodiversity loss.





Pursuing the sustainable development of the Tonle Sap Lake and the Angkor World Heritage site, linking culture and Sciences, we organized in June the First Water Colloquium, with local authorities, ministries and private institutions.

This Water Colloquium was the framework to establish the Siem Reap Water Working Group that will focus on issues related to water resources and management for sustainable development in the Siem Reap region.

Although I have been working in Unesco Phnom Penh office for 11 months, I can certainly say that this is being a unique experience, both personally and professionally. I believe this experience will give me the opportunity to have a better understanding of the threats and challenges that we, people all over the world, are facing, and become an active part of those who think that we can contribute to change this world for the better, and that everybody should have the same opportunities, regardless where are we born, although it might sounds very utopian-like sometimes!!









Thank you!,  
Okun Chroen!,  
Eskerrik asko!

On behalf of all the Basque volunteers who are working or have worked in the UNESCO PHNOM PENH office, we would like to take this opportunity to express our most sincere thanks to all the people that are working hard to make this program a great success, The Basque Government, Unesco Etxea Bilbao, Kooperera and Unesco Paris BFC.

Our special thanks to all UNESCO Phnom Penh staff that over these 10 years have always welcomed the volunteers with open arms and that without their help and support our life in Phnom Penh would have been much less rewarding.

## WRAP UP NOTE BY TERUO JINNAI

Relationships between UNESCO Phnom Penh and Basque volunteers are highly recorded in both our professional achievements and personal memories. We are wholeheartedly thankful for their tireless assistance to make our Office so popular and successful in our fields of assistance to the Royal Government of Cambodia.

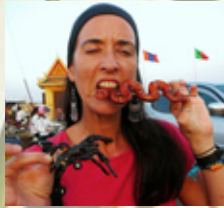
Personally, I have been lucky as I have had chances to meet and work with all Basque volunteers who had been assigned in the UNESCO Phnom Penh Office. Mr Asier Segurola, a young legal expert, was the first Basque volunteer integrated in our Office on 1 March 1999. During his time with us in the Office, he and I shared not only many memorable professional experiences, but also built an excellent personal friendship between him and my family. With his successful experience, he currently continues to devote to peace work in Namibia.

Then, we received Ms. Cristina Artero Perez, the second Basque volunteer assigned to our Office after Asier. Cristina was a young scholar. She teaches at Zaragoza University in Spain after leaving Cambodia. The third volunteer, Nerea Bilbatua became an expert for education on HIV/AIDS and today helping people through her work with an international organization in Thailand, while the fourth and fifth Basque volunteer, Ana Gonzalez and Ana Teleria, after successful achievements, are now back in their native community and contributing to the local community.


Last but not least, we thank the two volunteers who are currently working with us. Ms. Isabel Gonzalez-Rojo's close coordination with the Cambodian government and her devotion to the Communication and Information Unit of the Office contributed to the registration of Cambodia's Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum as the Memory of the World in 2009. Isabel will complete her two years volunteer assignment soon but has decided to stay as consultant with the Office to promote the press freedom in the UNESCO's Communication and Information programme also to assist in promoting the philosophy study through UNESCO's Science and Education programme in Cambodia. Ms Teresa Diez, the seventh and current Basque volunteer, took up a key coordination role immediately after her arrival to set up an important regional event, a Robot camp. More than 60 young people from 8 ASEAN countries joined the regional event and built their friendships through this science and technology educational activity.

Overall, this publication highlighted the achievements of all Basque volunteers dedicated their time, knowledge and skills to Cambodia through UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh. Hence this publication attempts to provide useful information of the work of Basque volunteers to the people of Cambodia, Basque and Spain, and all partners and staff of UNESCO. We look forward to further support and receiving more volunteers from the Basque country.









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