

Speech of Mr. Joseph Green, United State Volunteer/Representative from Peace Corps
3rd Youth Networking and Team Building Camp
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Thank you very much for inviting me here today.

My name is Joseph Green. I am a United States Peace Corps Volunteer. I teach English at Preah Reach Samphea High School in Kampot. I am very proud to speak to you on behalf of my organization and my nation.

Peace Corps was officially started in 1961 by the late President John F. Kennedy. He and many other leaders were concerned with the growing negativity and terrible violence in the United States and in the world. Kennedy believed a service organization could be a means of countering this negativity; especially in emerging nations.

Kennedy encouraged Americans to use their educations and their talents in service to people in developing nations. The purpose of that service is to promote world peace and friendship even in the face of great suffering, challenge, and hardship.

The program officially has three goals:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their needs for trained workers
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served
3. And when a Volunteer returns to America, to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans

Since 1961, more than 190,000 people have served as Peace Corps volunteers in 139 countries. These volunteers have provided assistance in training workers through programs as varied as English and agricultural education, AIDS awareness, community health and hygiene, computer technical skills, and small business training.

Peace Corps Volunteers develop not only their professional skills, but also they strengthen their hearts and minds through service. By choosing to challenge themselves in a new environment they find out how they can be useful to:

first, their new community in the host nation, and second, they find out how to improve their American communities and be more active citizens in the United States because of their service experience.

Volunteerism is at first glance a simple idea. Work for others without expecting financial or material reward. Here in Cambodia two groups of Peace Corps Volunteers are currently working with that idea in mind. The volunteers work along side Cambodian teachers in high schools and regional teacher trainer centers.

Our mission is to improve the language abilities of the English teaching staff in our assigned schools, so that when the volunteers depart the skills we brought to the schools will remain in the teachers for years to come.

Also, volunteers work with Cambodian teachers in classrooms to help students increase their speaking and writing abilities.

I arrived as part of the first group in February 2007. Service is a very important part of my life.

My mother and father taught me how to share my talents with others. It is by their example that I choose to live a life of service. When I arrived in Cambodia, I thought that service was a simple idea. Work for others without expecting money or gifts.

Serving my community has been much more difficult than I thought. Khmer is a really difficult language to learn. Cambodian society is much more complex than I could have ever imagined.

I was much more powerless than I thought. That is what I told myself. I have experienced many surprises and benefits as a volunteer in Cambodia. I have also been given many things better than financial or material reward. The biggest reward of my service has been my opportunity to experience the tremendous hospitality of the Cambodian people.

I had the opportunity to learn Khmer with my host family in Kampot and Kampong Cham. I got the opportunity to learn about Khmer culture and take part in many celebrations while I've lived here. I even had the pleasure of meeting the King.

I have seen my heart grow because of the love of my new Cambodian family, friends, and students. The people that I thought I would teach, taught me that I am powerful.

Volunteerism is at first glance a simple idea. However; Volunteering your time will not help you put gasoline in your motorcycle or your car. Volunteerism will not allow your community to build a new bridge or repair a broken road. Choosing to help improve your community in your free time does not put food on the table.

Why would anyone choose to serve? What is there to gain from service? Volunteering is something that is dismissed quickly because it doesn't solve problems the easy way.

It takes a great leader to inspire people to do something they think is impossible. It takes a loving family to encourage you to try your best and find a way to solve the most difficult problems.

You need to have food on your table and transportation. You need to see opportunities when they are in front of you. You need to study with quality teachers that care for you and want to see you succeed. I think the partnership between the United States Peace Corps and Cambodia is a positive one because, the Peace Corps didn't come here to tell Cambodia how to be modern or to fix Cambodia's problems.

That is a job that is going to be left to people who know Cambodia the best. You. Peace Corps Volunteers will support you in your task.

Meas Nee said in his book *Towards Understanding*, that Cambodian Society is like a basket that has been broken and the pieces scattered. The pieces are still there but not everyone can see them. What has been broken can be remade slowly and gradually, but only by those who will take the time to stay close to the village people and build trust with them. He knows for certain that this can be achieved, even though it must be done slowly and carefully. Eventually the village people are the weavers themselves and they carry the task forward further. The basket will be better than before but first it must be something like the same.

It is our goal to put the pain of violence behind us and to resolve our differences. The future will be a time of exciting challenge. In time many good things will come to your community and terrible things will come as well.

You will be prepared for these things because you considered the questions I asked today.

You must never forget you are powerful.

You are the future leaders of Cambodia.

Thank you.