

MoesGoes to Cambodia

MARCH
2016

SAME, SAME BUT DIFFERENT

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. - Romans 10:12

"Same, same but different" is a common phrase used around here, popular with vendors in tourist markets to highlight how "real" their knock-off goods are. These vendors understand that while there is a slight difference between their product and the one the buyer is familiar with, they are basically the same thing, often made in the same Khmer factory, and that their similarities to the real product outweigh the differences.

In Cambodia, I'm often made aware of how different I am from those in my community. Often it's pointed out to me because of the shade of my skin, which as a "barang sa'at" (beautiful white person) is lighter than my friends' or students'. Sometimes it manifests itself in matters of money, where I'm told that because I'm American, I can certainly afford to pay an extra fifty cents for my tuk-tuk (probably true). Other differences are smaller and more subtle: confusions of language, showering schedules, preference for soda instead of energy drinks, educational expectations (photo below with one of my classes), and, of course, my sub-par squatting skills.



PRAYER REQUESTS

*For myself and fellow YAGMs, that we may find continued optimism and presence in each moment as we live out our last months of service.

*For those in Cambodia that are struggling with water scarcity and all of the problems that arise when water is not plentiful.

*For all citizens of this broken world, that we may seek out our similarities in Christ's love instead of our differences with one another.

But then there are a million times each day where the common humanity I share with my brothers and sisters here is so obvious. We have the same fears (cockroaches), same frustrations (with desires for academic and professional success), same celebrations (weddings and birthdays - photo above), same humor (farts are universally hilarious), and, especially, the same love for one another. Our similarities manifest themselves especially in moments of worship, when we sing and pray together, but I find commonalities with all the members of my community.



As my time in Cambodia lengthens, my love for this community is also changing from a honeymoon infatuation to a deep, full-bodied affection, rooted less in newness and difference and more in the beauty of the relationships I've grown into. My days remain often routine, but each one grows a little more precious for the different moments that emphasize our sameness.

WITHOUT WATER

Black oxen move across the charred rice fields like clouds of slow-moving smoke. When I bike to school, my mouth fills with the red dust kicked up by my wheels. Our village pond is an ankle-deep mud pit, I dream about the rain.

It's the dry season. When I first arrived in Cambodia, every afternoon welcomed a monsoon complete with puddles and natural streams. My neighbors would bathe luxuriously with soaps and shampoos and perfumes. I'd dodge lines and lines of laundry on my daily walks. The fields, the trees, the mountains - everything was vividly green, popping in color against the bluest sky that stretched forever, punctuated with the fluffiest, soapiest clouds I've ever seen.

Now, however, there hasn't been rain since December. We wash dishes carefully, using the basins of collected rain water sparingly. My neighbors shower less despite the heat, because pumping water (if you even have a well) takes that much more work, or water from the field ponds will need extensive boiling and filtering, not to mention multiple trips to have enough for cooking, washing, and flushing latrines (photo below).



Worst of all are the fields. After the harvest in December, the rice fields are barren (photo right). Most families burn their crops to create fertile soil to plant in next June, because Kruos Village, like most rice villages in Cambodia, is a one-crop-per-year kind of place. Lack of irrigation and access to high-yield seeds leaves the village with no other choice. And changing climates may limit even that as rainfall shortages diminish yield and leave families struggling more for food and income.

Kruos Church, while no Buckingham Palace, boasts a lot of amenities in our community: semi-regular WiFi, electricity, and an electric water pump, which means even during the driest part of the year, water isn't too much of an issue. But luxuries like water pumps are expensive. When our water pump gave out a few weeks ago, we found out that a new one was out of our church budget. We tried fixing it ourselves for about a week until funding came through, and during that time I had a small glimpse into the water hurdles most members of my community overcome daily: public showers, inability to flush the toilet, hand-pumping water for boiling clothes when I got lice (yeah, that sucked).

The lesson learned? It takes a lot of time and energy to live without easy access to water, that infrastructure is often complicated, and that the water that flows from my tap is so valuable - and so needed - for so many.



THANK YOU

I'd like to express my gratitude to those that have sponsored a day of my year in Cambodia, especially those who have sponsored days in January or February:

Brown Family	Jill Moes
Doug & Angela Erickson, on behalf of the Waterstone Charitable Trust	John Moes
Kathy & Ken Kies, in memory of Michael	Glen & Sally Quant
Jim & Sylvia Kelly	Tom & Jeri Quant
Mark & Lisa Leutem	Pat & Kathy O'Connor Family
Ben & Sharon Moes	Tom & Diane Segler, in honor of Madalyn
Cassidy Moes	Buster & Helen Schneider
Jackie Moes	Frank Schneider
	Alex Thomas
	Dave & Val Youngren



JESSICA MOES

follow along at:

www.moesgoes.com

jessica.moes@gmail.com

**KHMER WORDS
OF THE MONTH:**

ដូចគ្នា

Dauchaknea
"Same"

ខុសគ្នា

Kawkahkneuh
"Different"