



MAY 2020

# STEP 1- INTERVIEW SUMMARY

WHY AND IF CFI SHOULD GET  
INVOLVED IN ETHICAL  
TOURISM?

**01**

# ABOUT THE STEP 1 - QUALITATIVE STUDY

For the first step of this project, it was important to understand if CFI should, or should not get involved in ethical tourism. It was therefore necessary to connect with other NGOs, tour providers and social enterprises, to get an overview of what has already been created, what works and what doesn't. The aim was to have an insight of what it means to deal with tourists, and what it implies.

## PARTICIPANTS

NGOs, tour providers and social enterprises from Battambang, Siem Reap and Phnom Penh participated in this study. For the purpose of the study, the names have been deliberately changed

1. Nina - NGO event and workshop manager
2. Mike - Volunteer
3. Sofia - NGO partnership and development manager
4. Morgan - NGO founder and executive director
5. Lola - NGO volunteer and partnership manager
6. Cathy - Educational center manager
7. Nat - TO founder and manager
8. Sreyrath - TO founder and manager
9. Brad - TO founder and manager
10. Rachel - NGO International coordinator

Due to the situation with COVID-19, six interviews had to be postponed.

## RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

“ I definitely define it as tourism which has a do no harm approach. Something that is beneficial for the community, but also is in partnership with the community that it works in.

**Lola, volunteer and partnership manager**

With the improvement of transportation, new technologies and the reduction of travel barriers, travelling has never been easier. The number of tourists travelling each year has shown a rapid growth; having unprecedented impacts on our environment and culture. Institutions, governments and tour providers are now working on implementing more responsible tourism practices in order to reduce the negative impacts of mass tourism\*. While codes of good conduct and charts are being implemented by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), responsible tourism still hasn't been officially defined.

According to six of the participants, responsible tourism is a form of tourism that has a do no harm approach on the country visited. It is about reducing the impact on the environment by reducing plastic consumption, and respecting the local culture. One of the participants also mentioned that responsible tourism is about having a fair distribution of tourism profits. To him, tourism should be beneficial and empower local communities.

*\*Notion studied and presented in the first part of this two year thesis research  
The impacts of solidarity tourism on a country's local development, Alisha FRAPPE  
Under the direction of Jacinthe BESSIERE, 2018/2019*

## 03

## INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING

**When helping hurts.**

One of the responses to responsible tourism has been the emergence of alternative travelling practices such as international volunteering. Travellers from Global North countries started to come Global South countries to help local communities and make their travels more useful. What initially came from good intentions, quickly shifted to a business opportunity. Fake orphanages were massively created to respond to the demand and due to its high number of NGOs, Cambodia became one of the most affected countries\*.

According to one of the participants, there are ways to volunteer responsibly and ways to be a responsible tourist. Thus, depending on the length and type of activities, volunteering can be a responsible or harmful tourism practice. Most of the participants agreed that in most cases, the shorter the volunteering period is (going from 1 day up to a week), the more noticeable negative impacts. Most commonly referred to as voluntourism, these types of volunteering activities are the ones that most commonly put local communities at risk.

Furthermore, volunteers who have a direct interaction with children, such as in orphanages or schools, are proven to be very harmful. Yet, orphanage tourism was; and is still common in countries like Cambodia. For Lola (NGO volunteer and partnership manager), volunteers are not aware of all the negative impacts they can have despite their good intentions.

“*I don't necessarily believe that it is possible to volunteer for one or two weeks in ways that are healthy for the community.*”

**Cathy, educational center manager**

\*With Best Intentions: Study of attitudes towards residential care in Cambodia, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation with technical support from UNICEF, published in 2012.

# 04

## PROS OF INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING

*“I think this is one of the biggest part of a volunteering year, which most people don't have in mind: your volunteering year really starts when you get back.”*

**Mike, volunteer**

As Morgan (NGO founder and executive director) said, international volunteers are helping Cambodia to engage with the wider world. They enable organisations to upskill their local teams and help in capacity building. Foreign professionals are able to train and mentor local teams in fields like physiotherapy, psychology or mass teaching. Furthermore, volunteers also have the advantage of having English as their first or second language. They are therefore able to help in communication, writing reports or proposals. For Cathy (educational center manager), they are also valuable in helping with donor relationships.

But the local impacts volunteers have, are nothing compared to the long term impacts a volunteering activity can have on them. Mike (volunteer) noticed a clear change between the beginning and the end of his times at a local NGO. And this change is something he will bring back to Germany, and share with his friends and family. My personal volunteering mission in Tel Aviv led me to Cambodia and encouraged me to do this thesis research.

International volunteering is not only about providing a practical help, but creating long term advocates!

## 05

## CONS OF INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING

“

*There is always going to be so many layers of culture that are influencing values and decisions making that we just don't understand.*

”

**Cathy, educational center manager**

Even if having international volunteers has a lot of advantages, they can also bring a lot of misunderstandings and challenges. Lola (NGO volunteer and partnership manager) recognized the fact that the most common problem they have with volunteers is due to cultural misunderstandings, whether it is because of the language barrier or volunteers' expectations. In many cases, volunteers "think they know better" (Morgan, NGO founder and executive director) and expect to have high positions involving decision making. They often have the feeling that their professional experience is not being properly utilized but don't take in account that they wouldn't be able access those positions in their own country.

Cathy (educational center manager), also mentioned that foreign volunteers, because they are not native and don't speak Khmer, will never be able to understand all the different layers of culture that influence values and decisions making. According to her, it takes years to peel off those layers and, build trust and understanding. Letting a foreign volunteer, who doesn't understand the culture and the context, make decisions, has never been successful and healthy for local communities.

## 06

# HELPING PEOPLE TO HELP

## PROVIDING ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

*“We can't stop people from wanting to help, but we can help them to do it in an appropriate way”*

**Morgan, NGO founder and executive director**

As mentioned above, we can't, and SHOULDN'T prevent people from helping. Whether it is a short-term or long-term volunteering activity, people mostly come with good intentions but little knowledge about the local situation and the potential harm of their actions.

Organisations such as Phare Circus, ConCERT and Rok Kern are working every day to give people the right information to see the bigger picture and to help in an appropriate way. They organize workshops, provide online sessions, welcome visitors and are trying to raise awareness.

Those alternatives have double sided impacts:

- They educate travelers and contribute to safer tourism practices.
- Plus they provide financial support without harming local communities.

Other initiatives can also be implemented to raise funds and awareness. Free To Shine (F2S) decided to launch a 'Shine and Dine' campaign in partnership with Cambodian and Australian restaurants. For one month, partner restaurants designate a Shine and Dine dish, and for every dish sold, a percentage is directly donated to F2S.

All those little actions give people opportunities to help local NGOs without getting involved in a potentially harmful volunteering activity.

## 07

# HOW CAN CFI CONTRIBUTE TO THAT?

## FINDING THE RIGHT ALTERNATIVE

*“It is also about us, associations, to help tourists to adopt good practices while travelling and meeting with other cultures”*

**Nina, NGO workshop and event manager**

A lot of NGOs are present in Cambodia and are dealing with challenging situations. They are all a part of Cambodia's culture and history, that visitors should have the opportunity to see.

Protecting the children and their families at CFI, also implies educating people who would like to help them. Opening CFI to visitors would enable people to learn more about what local NGOs are doing and how they can best support them.

Even if it would be a great financial support for CFI, it is also about sharing, not only money or value, but knowledge and understanding to improve our society.

CFI is on a journey to figure out how we can do it in the safest and most appropriate way possible.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Clear objectives** – identify what we are trying to achieve and implement it in the safest way possible.
- 2. Being upfront** – have clear guidelines and communication strategy to manage expectations. Also being upfront of what we will allow people to do or not.
- 3. Staff allocation** - having people in charge and leading the project.
- 4. Cultural communication training** – for every staff who is going to be involved with visitors.
- 5. Remain in control** – not letting ourselves be pushed away from our work.
- 6. Two folded benefits** – having something that does not only benefit us, but also participants.
- 7. Creating partnerships** - working hand in hand with other partners.

All the participants in this research agreed on the fact that when a project is well implemented, the negative impacts are almost imperceptible. The most important thing is to be clear on what we want to do, and how we want to do it. Once this is clear, our communication needs to be flawless! Whether it is with visitors or with our staff, communication is the key to understanding and to a successful project!

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

### WHO RUNS THE WORLD?... GIRLS!

After gathering these first pieces of information and thinking of different alternatives, our first idea would be to propose a workshop where participants would learn more about the challenges of being a girl in Cambodia.

The topics would cover education, job opportunities, traditions VS modern society and gender inequality. In groups, participants would have to discuss and react to different scenarios. The aim would be to open a dialogue and give people a better understanding of what CFI is achieving.

We still have to gather empirical data in order to understand what people are looking for while being in Battambang. We are therefore going to undertake quantitative research using surveys targeted travellers and expats in Battambang.

We are also going to share the first results with our staff in order to gather their opinion, advice and concerns. The aim is to have everyone on board and involved in this new project.

