

She may be wearing a suit by the time you read this, but look closely to see if Tanya Seeley, Director, Equity Finance, is still sporting her flip-flops. Tanya's just returned to work in London following a six-month voluntary placement in Cambodia teaching English to schoolchildren.

"I went travelling around the world in 1995, and I spent a lot of time in Asia. It left a huge impression on me, particularly that many Asian women don't have the opportunities or choices that I've had – about going to school, where they live, who they marry. I don't come from a particularly privileged family, but I ended up with a good education and a good job, so I vowed to myself that one day I'd return and give something back.

"I'm based in Siem Reap, the town nearest the Angkor Wat temples so I was also interested from a commercial point of view in how the town is changing. And it is changing rapidly. It's only had an international airport since July 2006, with direct flights from Hong Kong, Vietnam, Singapore and elsewhere.



**IF YOU'RE HAPPY
AND YOU KNOW IT...**



“I can’t just leave this place and think that’s my six months done. I need to continue supporting what I’ve done here. I can earn a good salary in London and support a very worthy cause – so I’m going to think twice before moaning about the Tube as well!”

People come for the weekend, they blitz the temples and then disappear. There are stark extremes between what they see and the huge poverty 15 minutes away.

“Primary school teachers earn just \$25 a month here so children often get charged for attending school, therefore they can’t go. SCC (Schools for Children in Cambodia) sponsors five primary schools in the area – some 2,000 children – and the teachers aren’t allowed to charge the children. Unlike some charities, SCC doesn’t charge volunteers so when I raised about £1,500 from friends and family it all went straight to the charity. Every penny goes to the schools and children. And a dollar here goes a long way.

“Until 1998 there was no serious education system, which made Cambodia a tragic, tragic place

from an educational point of view. The result is you have 17-year-olds still at primary school. I’m also working at the Sangkheum Centre for Children, an orphanage. I teach English and play a lot with some of the younger orphans!

CLAP YOUR HANDS

“A lot of children are sponsored – most of them couldn’t possibly get through an education without sponsorship from a benefactor abroad. I knew I wanted to have an on-going link with these wonderful people, so I’ve decided to sponsor a whole house of eight children at the orphanage here.

“As for getting the approvals to take a career break, it couldn’t have been easier. My boss and my department couldn’t have been more supportive. David Giffen [at the time, Head of Equity Finance]

wanted the department to support an event while I’m away so I organised a football tournament for about 350 14- to 16-year-old boys and girls, which I really hope will become an annual event. I broke down what it would cost – roughly \$6,000 – and within 48 hours we had the money. It’s not a great deal in the scheme of things at RBS but I was just blown away.

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“I’ve got so much more out of this than I ever expected. Every single day something rewarding happens – it might just be a small kid smiling at you. And I learned more about myself – I hate karaoke but I can stand up in front of a class of 35 children and sing, “If you’re happy and you know it...”



For more information on Schools for Children of Cambodia, check out www.sccambodia.org. For more information on the Sangkheum Centre, visit www.sangkheum.org