

Award winning ethical, responsible, sustainable volunteer travel



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## April newsletter 2020

### Editorial



### Challenging times!

Firstly I hope you are all safe and well in these extraordinary times, I am sure one day we will return to normality and our volunteers will be able to travel again.

I am sure there will be a lot of work for the volunteers to help our partners in the future and be assured we aren't going anywhere

Even at these worst of times the kindness and help I have personally seen from people in all walks of life has been amazing, in a way I am lucky that I can still go into work, if I had to lock myself in my house I would go mad!

### Nigel Pegler

Many of you will be aware that there have been important changes to the data protection act recently - we at people and places welcome them - we have already emailed you about this but please take a look at our policy here

<https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/privacy.aspx?category=14#.WyfOcdR95pg>

and if you have any questions please email [sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

Any comments and volunteer experiences welcome at [newsletter@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

## **its not all about money there are other ways to show your support!**

Firstly we need to say thank you to all our volunteers who have recently returned – or indeed had to cancel their planned placement - for taking the time to write reports and stories for our newsletter when we know you have huge demands on your time. And a special mention for past volunteers - many of whom have been in touch to ask how they can help and some of whom have written to tell us about initiatives they have started to support their projects....and future volunteers who have expressed their commitment to travel when they can....we are truly blessed.

And now we must be honest; we are all working in hope, but cannot be sure that all the projects and local partner organisations we work with will be able to survive – we know they are not dependent on volunteers to survive – but – all need to raise funds – at a time when most of us have no funds to spare. This is the stark reality – but we also know – all of the projects and partners that we work with are resilient – just read the stories in this newsletter

Next, we must emphasise that this newsletter is not a vehicle to ask you for financial support for the projects we work with – we and our partners are very aware that these are challenging times for everyone. This newsletter is meant to keep you up to date with the projects you care about – and suggest ways that you could help if you wish – and again – not just financially!

This newsletter is full of volunteer stories – some of whom completed their placements before lock down - some were there when lockdowns started and some who couldn't make it.

And a commitment from Dianne, Kate and myself – we WILL be here when this crisis is over – we are continuing to work to prepare volunteers for their placements when we are all able to travel again....but we will not ask you to travel until we are confident that you and the communities you have chosen to work with will be safe...and we are asking for no financial commitment from you until we are all confident you can travel safely

If anyone has any ideas how we can communicate with you all better, has stories or reflections you would like to share – or has ideas about how we could communicate as a community please do email

[sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk) or [dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

And finally we know that many of our volunteers are frontline workers – health and social workers – teachers and education support, essential workers etc. And we know many of you own your own businesses – our thoughts are with you.....Go Well.  
Stay safe – stay in touch  
Sallie Dianne and Kate

## 'Fantastic students, so keen to learn, EFA Morocco'

This from recent volunteer Wendy

On Monday, we had a meeting with all the wonderful House Mothers at Dar Asni 1. Latifa, lead House Mother and in charge of Dar Asni 1, took us on a helpful orientation tour in order to locate Dar Asni 2 and 3, the bank, post office, pharmacy, good food shop and souk. In the afternoon, Khadija, House Mother of Dar Asni 3, introduced me to all her staff: Deputy House Mother, Khaoula; Housekeeper, Khadija; and fantastic chef, Latifa and took me on a tour of the building. It is a lovely and immaculately maintained space, reflecting the team work there and the kind, creative, focused and thoughtful ethos generated by Khadija. The classroom is a pleasure to work in and the computer suite is well used by the students who have the benefit of expert help from Khaoula who has a degree in IT. We had lunch and I was introduced to the lovely students. I was given a timetable with lists of students, which was brilliant.



In addition to my requested teaching brief and through discussions with Khadija, we were able to focus teaching aims. Khadija wanted academic support for her students so I asked for copies of the Lycée's English Syllabus/Programme of Study so that I could see what the Common Core students and first and second year Baccalaureate students had worked on so far, so that I could support their schoolwork, as well as build on the work with previous volunteers.

In the first lesson, we worked on introducing ourselves and our lives and our dreams: 100% of the Lycée students at the EFA boarding houses went to University last year, which is a real credit to House Mothers and EFA. The range of ambitions was brilliant – from Mountain Guide, to Nurse or Doctor, to Journalist or Astronomer. In the second lesson we began to work on the notion of Culture which is a common thread in the syllabi. Having established what we meant by that, each student chose a topic to pursue: popular topics included traditional music, costume, festivals, food. We used the computer suite to research. I started each lesson with an objective and some key vocabulary. As I listened to them talk, I was able to pick up on grammatical issues they were having problems with and do some work around that too. We wrote a little every lesson in the exercise books provided for volunteers, so that students can remember what they have done with us.

In the second week, Dianne and I found ourselves whisked away by the House Mothers who had arranged for us to go with them to a presentation by 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Bacc students at the Lycée for International Women's Day. It was a brilliant and fascinating experience: students had created drama, a film and a debate around women's lives and their rights. House mothers, maintenance staff, doctors and teachers were presented with certificates. I was introduced to one of their lovely English teachers. Khadija and I thought we might seize the moment and get the girls to research and present something around International Women's Day – it also ties in with themes in the Bacc Syllabus. I gave the students the choice of carrying on with Culture or moving on to this. The Bacc students were keen to move on and most of the Common Core students wanted to carry on with what they were doing.

We read the factsheet and profiles of inspirational women from the IWD website and used their own ideas and Khadija's link from Morocco News to research historical and contemporary role models. For both themes, students began to work towards presentations in poster form or dramatized interviews for television. We were working towards a big presentation in the third week, after school when the news came in that Morocco would be closing schools and shutting down international flights. I sent a summary of what I had planned to do next with Khadija and will attach any resources to this.

At lunchtimes we painted plant identifiers: Khadija is a keen gardener and her mission was to label them in Arabic, French and English. The garden is lovely – a space for everyone to relax and learn. It was a pleasure to chop food too in the kitchen supervised by Latifa and housekeeper Khadija. Meals are absolutely wonderful – traditional Moroccan cooking. They had much fun teaching me Berber, Amazigh and Arabic. "Ish, ish" for "eat, eat" and "Szwwin" for "delicious"...at least that is what I think they were teaching me!



We really only had one weekend free, Mike McHugo very kindly invited us stay at the Kasbah de Toubkal which is an amazing experience and well worth a visit. Really beautiful, breathtaking and so friendly. We met up with Chris McHugo there and learnt more about EFA and the Kasbah's role in the community.

The highlight of my experience was working with the students and Khadija and her team. As well as eating in the garden with them! My memory is full of laughter, and light and birdsong.

Sadly, our volunteering was shadowed by the rapidly developing coronavirus emergency. In our first week we persuaded girls and staff to elbow bump and foot greet. By the second weekend it became clear we would probably have to leave, and with the announcement of school closure which would include all the boarding houses, we realised it was the most responsible thing we could do in the circumstances. I think the last thing you want to be is any kind of liability to your hosts or their country in a situation like this.

Finally, or rather au revoir Inshallah, my thanks to Khadija and her lovely team and all the students for making me feel so at home and so welcome. Their work there is so inspiring and it is a pleasure to work with and alongside them.



If you feel you could offer remote support to this project while we are unable to travel due to the coronavirus pandemic please email [dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

If you would like to learn more about volunteering at the Education For All boarding houses read here [https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/257/Education-Support-for-Girls-in-Morocco-\(ED\)](https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/257/Education-Support-for-Girls-in-Morocco-(ED))

## a trip with a difference-to Morocco as the virus breaks

From our programme and placement coordinator Dianne

How quickly things change! Just 6 weeks ago my friend Wendy and I set out to volunteer in Morocco – the first time I've persuaded a friend to come with me to volunteer – thank you Wendy! We were going to Asni to work with our local partners, Education for All, at the girls' boarding houses which enable girls from the Berber tribes in the High Atlas Mountains to access secondary school education. Wendy was going to teach English to the girls at Dar Asni 3 and work with the house-mother there; I was going to work with Latifa, the head house-mother on aspects of their volunteer programme. (You can read about Wendy's volunteer experience in [another article here](#)). I was thrilled to be going back to Asni and to have the chance to introduce a friend to such a worthwhile project - I first visited Asni in 2011 and most of the girls I met then have now been able to go on to university and into employment – what an achievement!



For me, the highlight of the trip was working with the wonderful house-mothers, Latifa, Aicha, Khadija, Badiaa and Fatima – as always they were so welcoming and went out of their way to be helpful. I was delighted to be able to spend time in all five of the boarding houses, including a visit to the newly opened house, Dar Tinmel 2, in Talat n'Yacoub, which will enable girls from this rather remote town to access full secondary school education without having to move down to Asni.



However unfortunately the developing coronavirus pandemic not only meant our placement had to be cut short, it also dominated the second week I was there as I tried to balance the work I was doing in Morocco with the need to maintain regular contact with all our volunteers about the rapidly developing situation in the countries where they were planning to volunteer, and to keep abreast of developments in countries where volunteers were already on their placements. I would like to thank Latifa in particular for allowing me to be so flexible in the use of my time with her.

Having to leave early was difficult – instinctively I wanted to stay and see how I could help our friends in Morocco rather than leaving early to come home. However I knew this would be irresponsible – our guesthouse needed to close for their own safety, the house-mothers needed to be free to return to their own villages without the responsibility of looking after volunteers, and as strict social distancing was introduced very quickly it would have been impossible to work alongside local people anyway. So we managed to move our flights back a few days, and even though the borders were closed by that stage we were able to get a rescue flight home (and how good it was to have an air traffic controller nephew who tracked flights for us so we knew a flight was coming to get us even before the ground crew at Marrakech airport!)

Since returning home I have kept in regular touch with Latifa and Karima from Education for All. Despite my strong desire to stay and work with them, it has proved just as easy to continue our work from home – all the work I had planned to do in my final week has been completed electronically, and although it would have been lovely to talk everything through with Latifa face to face working together remotely has been effective. If the school closures continue for a long time in Morocco meaning that the girls have to do their school work from home, or if international travel is slow to get going again, both Wendy and I have offered to support their English work via the Internet, much as Wendy was doing in situ in Morocco, and in this way, if they wish, our support for their learning could continue. Education for All's current focus is to support the girls in their villages - their house-mothers remain in touch with them and the Moroccan government and schools are producing online lessons and learning resources - EfA are currently raising money through [a JustGiving appeal](#) to provide smartphones and to pay Internet access charges for those who need it to make sure all girls are able to access this learning and support.

We know that, like us, many people are desperate to offer support to projects where they have volunteered in the past. I for one am finding it hard to wait – however I recognise that everyone is struggling to deal with the impact of the pandemic on their own community and that the time is not right for us to rush in. We will get there though – we are committed to continuing to support all our volunteer projects in whatever way is appropriate when the immediate crisis of this pandemic is over, and you can be sure that as soon as we know what kind of support each of the projects needs we will let you know.

If you are able to offer support for this or any of our volunteer projects remotely, please email me: [dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

If you would like to learn more about volunteering in Morocco please read here [https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/257/Education-Support-for-Girls-in-Morocco-\(ED\)](https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/257/Education-Support-for-Girls-in-Morocco-(ED))

## EfA Morocco - supporting the girls in their villages

Education For All's current focus is to support the girls in their villages - their house-mothers remain in touch with them and the Moroccan government.



Our programme and placement coordinator, Dianne, is working with EfA to identify ways that she and other volunteers can support the house mothers and girls with remote learning - especially English.

If you would like to offer to help this initiative please email [dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

To learn more about Dianne's recent visit to EfA [take a look here](#)

EfA are currently raising money through [a JustGiving appeal](#) to provide smartphones and to pay Internet access charges for those who need it to make sure all girls are able to access this learning and support.

To learn more about the volunteer programme at [EfA take a look here](#)



## **Doctor Caro and Teacher Sue tell of their volunteer experiences in Cambodia**

Caro and Sue were volunteering at Treak Community Centre as the coronavirus pandemic started to develop. School closures meant their placements were cut a little short, but this did not impact on their enjoyment of their time in Cambodia or the value of the work they did there.

### **CARO**

As a retired GP I wanted to work as a general volunteer but somewhere where my skills and knowledge as a doctor would be useful. After several discussions with Kate and Dianne at People and Places with regard to my wish to volunteer it was decided that a suitable placement would be in Cambodia.

My role was to check and update the main first aid kit and organise small simple kits for each classroom. To give First Aid training to key staff members. To discuss issues revolving around general health and hygiene. To do a few talks to the early evening students ( aged 15-20 years ) about my work and experience together with advice on how to have a healthy body. I also helped support and assist the teachers in the English classes.



The whole team in Siem Reap were amazing, welcoming and dedicated and all kept the best interests of all the children who attended the school at the centre of every action. A safe guarding course was facilitated by Michael which was excellent, I have been on many during the course of my career and this was appropriate for issues that were universal but also those that were relevant to Cambodia bearing in mind cultural differences.

It was a joy to be involved and I have developed a new and great respect for teachers!

I feel that I was of assistance on several levels during my placement. I think that the teachers are now more confident to deal with first aid problems. I was able to use my medical knowledge to help a couple of staff members and several children which was great. I was just disappointed that because of the Coronavirus pandemic the school was shut suddenly and I was unable to say farewell to all the children and most of the teachers.

I opted to use a bicycle as my means of transport rather than a Tuk-Tuk, nerve wracking as last rode a bike >30 years ago ! However this was a highlight, you got the sights and smells of Cambodia as well as a sense of achievement, I would recommend it! There were numerous other highlights - finding other volunteers staying in the same guest house and some working at the same school, the sheer joy of working with children from very poor families and feeling that you are helping them by teaching English which will improve their prospects of further education and a good job in the future, the difference in one's understanding of a country and its problems when visiting as a volunteer and not purely as a tourist.



I cannot end without making special mention of Michael, Salin, Sophea and Sary who are all doing an amazing job in carrying forward their aims of creating opportunity not dependency for the community that they are supporting. Their aims are laudable and I saw at first hand how Michael has trained and supported all the Cambodian members of his team so that they can take ownership of the project and continue it for their community, the children, their parents and everyone else involved.

## SUE

During the first week I identified students whose reading skills were such that they couldn't read anything teachers were writing on the board. I suggested that the teachers could make their own lists of students they thought could do with extra help and then I could take small groups out of class for 30 minutes intensive Jolly Phonics teaching. This worked quite well .....The groups made very good progress during the seven full weeks I had them.

I did four presentations to teachers outlining what the Jolly Phonics programme is and why using it is an effective way to teach students to read. I also showed them some techniques and practise activities. All the staff attended every session and I was very pleased to get really positive feedback from them and to see them using the activities in their classes.



Dara encouraged the staff to come up with a list of topics which they felt would benefit from volunteer training and input. There were two Dutch student teachers on project who did a really good training session on classroom management. I prepared the following training sessions but never got a chance to present them.

1. Teaching the 4 basic skills.
2. How to make your lessons more interesting
3. How to teach general knowledge to students

Again Dara has the presentations.

Dara asked for my input into the general studies classes which are a 'teachers' choice' of content. I suggested some basic Geography and did a trial run in one class. We did a week of learning about deserts. What are they? Where are they? What animals live there? Storytime *How the Camel got its Hump* songtime *Alice the camel*. All on Powerpoint. The teacher found the plans easy to follow and the students were engaged for the whole week. So I have got to work and left Dara with lessons on several more geographical topics. I am now working on some more topics for him currently Ancient Egypt.

The students usually have at least one lesson a week which is art and craft. Teacher Dara and I had the students find a story they liked in the library (either Khmer or English), summarise it, make puppets of the characters, build a puppet theatre and perform.





Lots of highlights of my experience –among the best was seeing the confidence of some of the students in my small groups grow, not just with me but back in the main class. Dara showed a picture flashcard of an elephant – the whole class shouted *elephant* and then one of my boys at the back said *it is an elephant*. I could have hugged him.

My only disappointment was that I had to leave early.

If you would like to learn more about volunteering at Treak Community Centre read here [https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/320/education-%26-community-support---Treak%2c-Cambodia-\(ED\)](https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/320/education-%26-community-support---Treak%2c-Cambodia-(ED))

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## **Treak Cambodia -Our focus now is to provide some home learning for our students**

Treak Community Centre has been closed since 6<sup>th</sup> March.



Here is the most recent update from the Treak team.

Headteacher Dara has set up a Messenger group for the staff. They have been meeting regularly online and he and the staff have been busy updating children's records, producing learning materials, researching websites and other suggestions provided by volunteers and supporters for online learning materials, tackling various outstanding administrative jobs, and planning how we can run the school once we are allowed to reopen. We had always planned to close the school for 2 weeks on Friday the 3rd of April for the Khmer New Year holidays. We allowed the staff to have their break and Dara has now resumed his Messenger meetings.

We were initially told that the schools would close for 2 weeks but this was quickly extended to Monday the 20<sup>th</sup> of April, following the Khmer New Year holiday. We heard late on Saturday 18th that (as expected) schools will remain closed for a further unspecified period and have not reopened today. Our focus now is to provide some home learning for our students and Dara and Rhonda are working with the staff to see what is possible. The students can be divided into 3 groups: Nursery/pre-school The regular English and IT classes The oldest students who attend the 5.00 to 6.00 classes (young adults) Of these 3 groups, the oldest students are the easiest as most of them have access to a smart phone or computer; Dara and Sameth have already started preparing for this group and are setting up Zoom accounts for them.

Our thoughts for the middle group include guidance materials for parents on how to help their children study at home, work books to revise what we have been covering in the classes, designing additional activities and lessons, allowing the children to take library books home etc.

We feel that it may not be possible to produce anything meaningful for the nursery children(though we are open to suggestions!)

All our plans will be discussed with the Commune Chief to ensure they meet the required safety and academic standards.

Finally we would like to thank everyone who has helped us over the last 3 weeks by: suggesting online learning resources, designing and planning fundraising events, donating funds, and simply sending us messages of support. All of these have been very much appreciated.

**There are 2 ways that you could help us:**

- 1.** Help for Dara and the education programme remotely
  - a. Dara wants to use the time the school is closed for the staff to complete any outstanding jobs. He also wants to continue with training and staff development. If anyone has any suggestions or materials that you could share with him remotely then that would be very helpful.
  - b. If the school stays closed for an extended length of time he would then like to develop some exercises that the students can do at home. As most of our students don't have computers or smart phones, these need to be paper based.
- 2.** Kate Howard volunteered with us last year; she and her friend Ian Walker have set up a [JustGiving page](#), which enables people to donate online. To learn more about the education [volunteer programme at Treak take a look here](#) – link  
If you would like to offer help to Treak please email [sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

## how to volunteer with your granddaughter!

This was a first for us! Yvonne, our longest standing volunteer, announced that she would be doing her final placement this year .... and she wondered if her granddaughter Ellie could volunteer alongside her! It seemed particularly appropriate that Yvonne's granddaughter should accompany her on her final placement - Yvonne is 'Grandma' not only to Ellie but also to so many people at the projects where she has volunteered over the years ([see this article about Yvonne written in 2018](#)). This time she acquired a new name - Ellie calls Yvonne Nana and at the school where they volunteered together (Mary's Little Lambs in The Gambia) the children call their teachers Aunty - so Yvonne's new title is Aunty Nana!

This is what they both had to say about the experience.

### YVONNE

This was quite a special trip this year - I had decided to make it my final volunteer as I had a significant big 0 Birthday in March. Then I had the idea of asking my Grand Daughter Ellie to volunteer with me.

Our flight was uneventful till we landed in Banjul - my luggage was there but not Ellie's! There was unorganised chaos in the baggage reclaim area as 3 flights came in at the same time and loads of luggage was missing. It took ages to fill in the claim form and we left the terminal and could not see any one to meet us, then Adama arrived he thought we must have missed the plane. I was amazed at Ellie she did not panic or moan. Eventually we arrived at our apartment and had fun unpacking my luggage and finding things like spare toothbrush etc. for Ellie. She travelled very light, fortunately I take everything bar the kitchen sink.

The next day was free so we did a little shop and explore, it was like when I took the grandchildren away on holiday on my own we were a law unto ourselves. On Monday we went to school, Ellie wearing some of my clothes, even though she is taller and much thinner she has always raided my wardrobe for retro outfits. When I went to school wearing some of these clothes the older children wanted to know why I was wearing Ellie's things

Ellie mainly worked with the Little Lambs but she also helped with sport. They were preparing for their sports day and this she was very good at. She also did some craft work with year 3 (8/9 year olds) - this was a real combined effort we spent all evening in the apartment preparing material I had taken out and making up "Here's one I did earlier", it was a cross between Blue Peter and School practice and never a cross word. She also did some music with them - she learnt local songs and drumming and they were the teachers. Her high point was taking over the IT lessons - they have a small bank of computers enough for the whole class to at least have one between two. However the staff although computer literate were not trained to teach the subject. Ellie gave them the lessons as she had learnt at her own school.



Yvonne giving out prizes at sports day

We went out to eat a lot trawling the tourist area for good places. We were soon recognised by the restaurant callers and the small supermarkets, market stall holders and the taxi drivers. After she had returned Sue a fellow volunteer joined me in her place - everywhere we went to eat or shop we were called out to "where is Ellie?" The taxi drivers hailed us "where is Ellie?"

It was a great experience for me I just hope she enjoyed it as much. If you try it yourself just choose your Granddaughter CAREFULLY!

## ELLIE

I had the luxury of going to the Gambia with my Nana who has volunteered through 'people and places' on a number of occasions so her own experience and insight was particularly helpful and helped massively before my departure.

Although it was assumed that I would spend most of my time in the Nursery at MLL, in reality I spent much more time in the school with the slightly older children – and I was really happy with this. I felt this suited me better as I was able to make more of a long-lasting impact on the children and school by helping them learn new skills such as I.T. and allowing them to be more creative through subjects like Art. I enjoyed these two subjects in particular as I was able to lead the teaching rather than just assisting in the classroom and I enjoyed being able to deliver a lesson myself, which is something I did not know if I would be fully comfortable with at first. It was great to see the children so pleased with their final pieces of work and explore different ways of using art that goes beyond drawing and colouring.



It was also encouraging to see the children so engaged with the I.T class and they picked up on things really fast! It was great to see them helping one another and be proud of what they had learnt in such a short space of time.

Music and P.E were also two other lessons that I enjoyed helping with. I introduced one new game in P.E. to the teachers/children and the feedback for this was very positive. I think introducing games (which involves physical exercise) is a really fun way to warm up the body for sports and is more engaging for the children.



Ellie with the nursery children



My overall experience was incredible and I loved every second of it. The highlight for me was getting the opportunity to meet and connect with new inspiring people (particularly Lisong, Adama, Abdourahman, Elsie and Jo) who I learnt a great deal from and enjoyed sharing many stories, insights and hopes for the future with. It was amazing to see all the hard work that the teachers put into MLL's daily – they are incredibly passionate about the wellbeing and education of the children and there is a very positive and uplifting energy which I felt there. A volunteering placement should not only be about the time you spend in the classroom, but also the ideas and conversations that are exchanged which help shape ways of thinking about life, learning and love. It was very obvious to me that there was a real hunger to learn and expand amongst both teachers and students and to achieve the very best school possible. I had a very special two weeks in the Gambia.

LISONG at Mary's Little Lambs tells us that a visitor to the school was so inspired by seeing Ellie and Yvonne volunteering together that she is now in the process of convincing her own granddaughter to go volunteering with her! So – are there are more of you who would like our help in planning inter-generational volunteer placements? – we would love to hear from you!

If you feel you could offer remote support to this project while the school is closed during the coronavirus pandemic please email [dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

If you would like to learn more about volunteering at Mary's Little Lambs please read here [https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/230/nursery-and-primary-school-support-in-The-Gambia-\(ED\)](https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/230/nursery-and-primary-school-support-in-The-Gambia-(ED))

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## Yes-No-my children - safety advice from The Gambia

Wonderful video from Mary's Little Lambs in The Gambia, written by Lisong Bah - performed by children and teachers - easy to understand advice on avoiding the virus - the answer is always "Yes" or "No, my children". The video made by Adama and Lisong in The Gambia.



This is an updated version of an [earlier video about washing hands](#) made before advice on social distancing

To learn more about the volunteer programme supporting Mary's Little Lambs take [a look here](#)

If you would like to support the team at MLL remotely - particularly with ideas for supporting the management team with remote working - please email [sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

## the storms aren't helping in eSwatini - Swaziland

Our partners in Swaziland, All Out Africa, are working hard to distribute food and soap in the poorest communities where they work ....whilst the rains are normally welcome they are a challenge now!

This just in.....

'Despite terrible road conditions after recent storms, we made our delivery target to 24 families today that are run by either elderly grandparents or children as young as 14 years old. Their homes are run down and lacking basic needs, built in out of reach mountain sides, but fully cautious and sensitized to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was an interesting experience arriving at these homesteads expecting to deflect a handshake as we friendly Swazis love to do, only to be told to stand at a distance. Proud moment. All the families express their extreme gratitude for your assistance. Thank you All Out Africa Friends



We are very proud of the All Out Team and recognise how strong we are, and the value of each member of our family. We hope that the steps that we have taken help towards efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus as well as keeping everyone safe. We look forward to guests joining us again when borders are open and it's deemed safe to travel. Stay safe everyone.

We are very concerned as you would imagine, about our communities and have started a fundraiser on Global Giving so we can distribute food, soap and sanitizer and educate on the pandemic.' [www.globalgiving.org/fundraisers/savethecommunity/](https://www.globalgiving.org/fundraisers/savethecommunity/)

If you would like to read more about volunteering in eswatini / Swaziland please follow this link [https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/316/childcare-support-in-Swaziland-\(CDS\)](https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/316/childcare-support-in-Swaziland-(CDS))

If you would like to offer help to this project please email [dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

## COVID-19 animated video from South Africa

Good Work Foundation has sent us videos they have produced to educate their local communities about how to stay safe from the virus. They have asked us to share these videos with as many people as we can so that they can be used to inform and educate as many people as possible about the dangers of the virus and how to stay safe.



The following is a message from Kate, founder of Good Work Foundation:

'Did you know that South Africa has 11 official languages? Unfortunately, there has been limited educational content about COVID-19 in all of these languages so many South Africans do not have access to basic, easy-to-understand information on the novel coronavirus in their first language. As we are an education NGO, we thought we would keep with the education track through this time - our mission was to create a low-bandwidth visual communication that could be shared quickly online as well as on cell phones. We knew the best way to help our communities was by creating educational content about COVID-19 in as many South African languages as we could. We are proud to add these videos to an already long list of initiatives and campaigns that show that South Africans are collaborating to respond decisively to this crisis.'

GWF's COVID-19 animated video is now available in six languages: isiZulu, English, Sepedi, Xitsonga, Siswati and Afrikaans, and a Xhosa version will also be available shortly.

Kate says: 'We would love anyone to use the videos if they find them useful'.

If you would like to download a high-res version of one of our COVID-19 videos, please [click here](#). Please feel free to use these videos if and as you wish. Maybe you have something similar which you have already produced? If so, please do let us know so we can share your ideas too

To learn more about the education volunteer programme at [GWF take a look here](#) -

If you would like to offer help to GWF please email [sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

## **so disappointed to have to postpone**

Flights booked, introduction to the local team completed, placement outlines finalised, not long to go.....this was the situation for a number of volunteers when restrictions started to be put in place as the coronavirus pandemic rapidly escalated. In countries around the world school and businesses started to close down as did hotels and guesthouses, borders started to close and airlines started to cancel flights. For the safety of all concerned, volunteers and local people, it started to look increasingly unlikely, and then rapidly impossible, that these placements could take place. We were so disappointed, so were our local partners and so were the volunteers - we are so grateful that all of them are talking of taking up their placements at a later date rather than cancelling altogether. Here is what some of them have to say.

'My wife, a primary school teacher, and I were at a point in our life when we could take a month or two out to join a volunteer project in Africa.

Our plan to volunteer in Swaziland evolved over a few months. First of all we thought we'd be helping work with the teaching staff and lessons in the NCPs. We then found out that my computer skills (I am a software consultant) could be used with older children. I got hold of some mini computers that I could bring and donate, and was put in touch with a volunteer on the ground in Swaziland. Together, we worked out a plan to start a coding club, which would be a new part of Homework Club run for school children who'd previously attended the NCPs.

Initially we were to fly out in January, but we were delayed when another teacher at my wife's school left unexpectedly. It meant she could still volunteer, but later, and not for as long. Even so, we were excited and hopeful. We rescheduled so that I would start in mid-March, and she would join me in early April. Friends of mine were holidaying in Ethiopia, so I bought tickets to fly out with them to Addis Ababa at the end of February and then on to Jo'burg for Swaziland, whilst my wife's departure flight was 3 April. We'd return to the UK at the end of April.

I followed the Covid-19 situation from Ethiopia on WiFi, or sometimes a TV in a hotel lobby. For the first 10 days in March it looked as if we'd be able to go to Swaziland as planned, and I was trying to find time to plan some lessons while experiencing amazing mountain scenery, wildlife, and history in northern Ethiopia.

Things changed quickly in mid-March, first South Africa announced UK citizens could not fly there because they were considered at risk of carrying the virus. I tried to contact their embassy to explain I'd left the UK the previous month, but the next day it became clear that Swaziland was going to follow its neighbour's policy, close schools, and lock down. Also this day my friends' UK return tickets were cancelled, and all of us realised there was not much time left to arrange air travel. My wife could not fly out from the UK now, and despite the disappointment we both felt, I had to abandon any plan to continue to Johannesburg, and head for home with computers and all.

We're very disappointed we couldn't get to Swaziland and join the programme, especially after all the planning and preparation we'd done. Clearly, all programmes are on hold, and we all wish for the day when the threat of the virus will subside. If we can go out later in the year, we really want to. Moreover we hope that the people in Swaziland, who the programme is in support of, come through this unscathed.'

[learn more about this project here](#)

'Off to The Gambia!..... Not off to The Gambia!

Instead I am at home in Chicago, Illinois, USA under quarantine due to the global pandemic. How life moves on such a different path than the one I had planned.

I temper my disappointment by entertaining thoughts of my eventual trip to The Gambia and the exciting challenges I will be taking on. I have every expectation I will be able to work with Mr Adama Bah on several projects we had discussed. The needs are great and our focus will be a blend of general education, business courses, business opportunities possibly a vegan restaurant or a retail shop. Additionally we were deciding whether to build a new school or combine the property (on land donated by the government) into rental space to generate income to sustain additional projects. It is all so exciting and challenging!

The lure of volunteering in The Gambia has not diminished at all. If anything I am more excited by the future opportunity to offer whatever I can to further economic and educational opportunities in The Gambia.

Be well. Be safe.'

[To learn more about this project take a look here](#)

I was really excited about my intended volunteer placement to The Gambia starting April 1st. At the age of 61 it was something I had thought about for a long time. Finally the kids were out of university, the mortgage was paid off and at last I could free up a bit of time and money to take the step.

The placement sounded interesting and challenging and something I felt I could really get my teeth into! Final details were in place – the placement role, the flights, insurance, DB checks, accommodation.... it was all systems go until COVID19 reared its ugly head. With only 2 weeks to go before my flight it was clear the situation was becoming more and more serious. I agonised over a weekend about whether to go or not. I was being pressured by my family not to go! In the end I decided it was too big a risk. I was so disappointed, but also somewhat relieved. Within 2 weeks the Foreign Office removed the option to travel anyway, just a couple of days before my flight was due to take off! Who could have foreseen this terrible disaster and the toll it has taken. Once we are on the other side of this pandemic I hope to take up the option again. Until then, STAY SAFE everyone!

'My volunteering placement with People and Places was due to go ahead in April 2020, lasting a gorgeous two months on the island of St Lucia. St. Lucia, to me, was more than just a place to volunteer – my father's side of the family are from St. Lucia and I am very in touch with the culture over here in the UK. My dream was always to go and visit my family and see the beautiful landscapes I had always seen through the pixilated photo camera screens that Aunties brought back after their vacation or on lazy Sundays watching 'Homes in the Sun'.

So when I heard the news about Covid-19, because of how much I had worked towards this placement, how excited my family and I were for it – with just 20 days before my flight took off into the sunshine – hearing that it had been cancelled, initially left me feeling very flat and upset. It was something that meant so more to me than just a volunteering placement – it was a step closer to exploring my heritage, giving back to the island and shaping the work I want to go into in the future in international development. Nevertheless after hearing the increasing worsening of the situation with Covid-19 it came apparent that it would not have been a safe option regardless. Health is most important, and I have vulnerable family members over 70 years old, posing a threat to them would've been detrimental for their health.

One thing that I have heavily reflected on over the weeks leading up to when I would've been in St Lucia is how grateful I am of the experiences that I had gained in the lead up to this placement. The people I met, all due to me needing to raise the money for my trip. If this experience had been handed to me on a plate – there is no way that I would have met the people I have. It has opened my eyes to the experiences that are around me and showed me that if I want something, I have the capacity to work hard for it.

I had started working towards this placement as soon as I finished my A Level examinations – I was going to volunteer at Lady Gordon Opportunity Centre, a centre which aids children with disabilities and special educational needs. As I was completely financially independent of my parents I had to work hard to raise the money and committed to three jobs. I decided to carry on as a waitress at the university of Oxford full time, but I also wanted to get as much out of my free time as I could. I decided to volunteer in my local community as I felt as though I could really prepare myself for my placement and furthermore help those who needed it in my immediate area. I soon came across an organisation called 'The Parasol Project' a charity that works with the most vulnerable children – some who are severely disabled and others who have no SEN needs but come from a family experiencing hardship. The Parasol Project aims to bring children with all background and needs together in a safe environment – often children with disabilities are separated from children in mainstream schools and our aim is to remove this divide. This volunteering fortunately led to me becoming employed at the charity and firming me my position as a Youth Worker within the organisation, therefore, boosting my confidence and hugely benefitting the experience I had to offer when reaching St. Lucia. Because I enjoyed my role as a youth worker so much, I decided to sign up with an agency working as a teaching assistant. My role at Parasol was only 2 days a week and due to the flexibility of waitressing, in the daytime I was usually free, giving me the time to work for an agency in local SEN schools within my area. I was gifted the amazing opportunity to work in a school with children with severe autism and learn about how those who have autism function and how to benefit them most.

As well as my own personal benefits, I have also reflected on how the cancellation of my placement may have affected the people of St. Lucia. A pandemic as wide as this one has detrimental effects on the livelihood and economic stability of such a small island. The lack of tourism can destroy generational business, charities and generally the way people make their income. Without buying local goods, spending holidays in the Caribbean Sea – a island like this could see damage like no other. St Lucia is still a developing country and, in the future, we need to ensure we are using volunteering organisations like People and Places who operate sustainably, helping the economy and using the costs of the placement to benefit local people and families who have had work stripped away from them.

In conclusion and reflection, St Lucia will always be a part of me. The culture is still very present in my family– we have kept it strong and the island will never not be a part of my identity. I am heading to the University of Sussex in September to study International Development. Therefore, I may even be a better suited individual for the placement if I have the knowledge I will gain at University. Every cloud has a silver lining and I hope everyone who had a placement cancelled this year can go again in the future. I hope we can all take this time to slow down, reflect on what matters the most to all of us and furthermore – appreciate the life we have. Keep safe.'

[Learn more about this project here](#)

If you feel you could offer remote help to any of these projects while we are unable to travel during the coronavirus pandemic please email [dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

If you would like to learn more about volunteering in Swaziland, The Gambia or Saint Lucia please follow these links:

[https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/309/Swaziland-education-development-\(ED\)](https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/309/Swaziland-education-development-(ED))



[https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/192/building-livelihoods-in-The-Gambia-\(BA\)](https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/192/building-livelihoods-in-The-Gambia-(BA))



[https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/281/benefitting-children-in-Saint-Lucia-through-education-\(CDS\)](https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/281/benefitting-children-in-Saint-Lucia-through-education-(CDS))





### **Covid - 19 advice from The Gambia (updated post advice on social distancing)**

#### **there are loads of new video interviews and stories from volunteers and projects**

If you haven't already spotted our [YouTube channel](#) it's worth a look.

If you have videos of your time volunteering or one of the talks you have done – we know many of you talk to groups on your return from volunteering – please send them to us so we can share them.



**meet the *people and places* team [here](#)**

[Take a look here at slideshare for slide shows from volunteers](#) – if you have a slide show to share please do send it to us, thanks so much to all the volunteers who have contributed to date.

Remember we are on facebook too - [follow us here](#) – in the blog and on facebook are where we tend to post our latest news.

See our blog here <http://blog.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/>

We are committed to treating any information you share with us in confidence and with respect - learn more about our privacy policy and procedures

[http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/privacy.aspx?category=14#.WxP\\_adR95pg](http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/privacy.aspx?category=14#.WxP_adR95pg)