

Friendship with Cambodia Activities Report - 2007

EMPOWERING WOMEN



Da (far left) helps lead this women's self-help savings group. With a grant from Friendship with Cambodia, the women started a micro-credit program so they could make improvements in their lives. The woman third from the left took out a loan to buy piglets to raise to market size. Others bought crab traps and fishing equipment to increase their income. Building a house that keeps her family dry and sending her kids to school are usually the women's highest priorities.

With Our Help Da Transformed Her Life

As in most countries, women in Cambodia are not encouraged to become leaders. Women's leadership training is one of our programs because Cambodia needs the natural talents of women (nurturing and communication, for example) to strengthen Cambodia and help eliminate poverty.

When we first started working in Roluos, a tiny fishing village on the coast in Kampot Province, Da's family was one of the poorest. They lived in a small grass hut. Da has two children, her husband is a carpenter, and Da takes care of a landowner's durian plantation.

Our social workers taught Da how to increase her income and save money. They gave encouragement to Da, who had leadership abilities. Eventually, with help from our small loan fund, she was able to build a better house, a goal she never dreamed she could achieve. When there was a conflict with a business woman who wanted to plant seaweed in the

community fishing zone, Da led the village in resolving the problem.

Six months later, Da was elected village representative for the local health center. She urged people to have their children vaccinated, because only 30% of the children in Cambodia are vaccinated. Her confidence and leadership abilities grew. Next Da was selected by the villagers to work with the school committee to address education-related issues.

We arranged for Da to get training from a human rights organization. She started dealing with domestic violence and youth who were causing problems. Then Da began addressing the issues of illegal fishing in her area. Now we support her in traveling to other communities to assist them with similar problems.

We are Working to Prevent Trafficking

Trafficking of girls is a common problem in Cambodia because of the extreme poverty. One out of ten girls is deceived and sold into prostitution. The most typical scenario is when someone in a rural village tells an impoverished mother that he can get a job for her daughter as a housekeeper in the city and can pay her wages in advance. The girl is then taken to the city and sold to a brothel, abandoned in terror and despair.

Friendship with Cambodia is funding a dance troupe from an orphanage (pictured below) that travels to rural villages where families haven't heard of trafficking. The troupe gives a dance performance and everyone in the village comes to watch. In the middle of the performance the dancers take a break and perform a skit that educates people about the perils of trafficking.



Dancers warn villagers about child traffickers

OUR PERSPECTIVE ON POVERTY AND RELIEF WORK

Why are People Poor?

Eighty-five percent of the people living in Cambodia are rural and most are subsistence farmers who raise just enough rice to feed their families each year. Many do not have savings that allow them to survive when a drought or flood ruins their rice crop. Instead, they are forced to borrow rice at the high rate of 100% interest. The following year they have to pay back double what they borrowed. This puts them in a hopeless cycle of debt that forces them to sell their assets, including their livestock, land, and sometimes their house.

Thirty years of war and genocide in Cambodia (1969 – 1998) left hundreds of thousands of widows who are illiterate and unskilled and have a difficult time earning a living. Due to the wars, tens of thousands of people have stepped on landmines, and there are 2 -3 new victims each day. Medical expenses force people to sell their assets, leaving them without a means to earn a living.

Cambodia has one of the highest rates of AIDS in Asia which has resulted in many widows and orphans. Often the family will sell their assets for medical treatment for the husband as he is dying, leaving his wife and children to live in a slum.

Once people are poor, many become stuck there. The main reason is lack of confidence that they can succeed in improving their lives. This lack of confidence stems from lack of education and no experience in achieving goals. People feel hopeless and resigned to poverty. They don't make an effort to improve their lives because they are afraid they will fail. It's difficult for many of us to understand this mentality, because most of us have a "can do" attitude toward life.



45% of the children in Cambodia are malnourished

What is Effective Aid?

Empowering people through credit or education, with a social worker who provides guidance and encouragement, is a very successful approach to helping people overcome poverty. Other types of aid (providing a house or a bag of rice) may temporarily relieve the symptoms of poverty but within a short period of time, the family is back to being impoverished. We use these criteria for selecting our humanitarian projects:

1. Creates self-sufficiency through credit or education. For credit, we offer small loans to rural women and families with AIDS and we help start village loan funds and rice banks. For education, we sponsor poor children to attend school and provide vocational training programs to landmine and trafficking survivors.

2. Takes a long-term approach. Our social worker works with individuals until they have gained the skills, resources, and self-confidence to succeed. In the case of working with the poorest families, this means: a) forming self-help savings groups to teach people how to save and manage money, b) helping them set and achieve small goals, like starting a business selling noodles so a mother can afford to send her child to school, c) helping them set and achieve bigger goals, like building a house.

3. Local initiative. Our programs are run by Cambodian non-profit organizations. After receiving training about successful approaches, our social workers create projects appropriate for their society and culture. They encourage local leadership and initiatives. We don't tell a village, "You need a school." Instead we ask them, "What is your dream? How do you want to improve your community?"

4. Matching funds. When a village says "We need a school," we say: "We'll provide the roof if you provide the rest of the building materials and the labor." In the end, the villagers feel like it is *their school*; they built it, and they are now invested in the future success of the school. If we just gave them the school they would feel dependent on foreigners to give them things. Instead, they have learned how to organize themselves to make improvements. Next they may build a community well or irrigation system.

5. Fiscal accountability. All of our programs have tight outside fiscal oversight including regular site visits, reports, and a full accounting of how funds are spent. Transparency and accountability are essential when working in an impoverished country where corruption is common.

Your donations are used effectively and help as many people as possible.

WHAT YOUR DONATIONS ACCOMPLISHED IN 2006

75 Students Were Sponsored in School

My family became very poor when my father was sick and my parents sold our cows and farmland for his medical care.

Now I don't have money to buy a bike, books,

clothing, and food. My goal is to become a nurse so that I can help other people. I am determined to study very hard; you will not be disappointed in me. – Titry

See our website for students who still need sponsors.



30 Street Children Received Assistance

Our shelter for street children is located in Siem Reap near Angkor Wat. It provides food, shelter, counseling, and love. We find out why the children left home, and if possible reunite them with their families. If that's not possible, we encourage them to move into a Family House, where a couple cares for ten orphans.

Helped 5 Communities Protect Resources



Fishing at night by pushing a net in the tidal zone. Illegal trawlers have destroyed the habitat.

Illegal fishing and illegal forest clear cuts are destroying the livelihoods of tens of thousands of rural people. We help fund local communities to take action to stop illegal activity. They document it, report it to the authorities, mark community fishing zones, and patrol.

Assisted AIDS and Trafficking Victims

We helped 25 destitute families with AIDS to get food, medicine, employment, and education for their children. Trafficking victims receive counseling and job training.

Matching Grants for Rural Poverty Relief

9 Micro-credit programs

2 Schools

14 Houses

16 Fishing boats

A Pond, Bridge, & Dam

23 Cows – Including this

one for Phoung Hor in

Changhaoan Village,

Kampot Province. Cows

are a valuable asset, like

savings in the bank, and can be sold at a time of crisis or whenever the family needs cash.



20 Landmine and Polio Disabled Received Start-up Grants for their Businesses

After graduating from a training course in mechanics (motorcycle and small engine repair), electronics (radio, TV, VCR, DVD repair), or sewing, 20 disabled people were given grants from Friendship with Cambodia to buy the equipment they needed to start businesses in their home village. All are from Kompong Cham Province.

Mechanics Trainees - Voeun Thea (Prey Tomnop Village), Yat Sarin (Taing Chrey Village), Hun Theara (Boeng Deng Village), Chea Chohoeun (Roveang Khnal Village), Yuth Vuthy (Ta Oek Village), Chhon Phon (Roveang Khnal Village), Vuth Sarin (Third Village), Yin Laka (Kapal Village), Koem Seng (Chuokandal Village), and Sach Kot (Shimorn Cheung Village).

Electronics Trainees - Khiv Channa (Pokil Village), Sok Chantho (Sbek Kheu Village), Doung Chheang Meng (Banlech Svay Village), Mao Nuy (Chomnik Village), Huot Kunthea (Chey Yo Village), Kol Sruoch (Speu K Village), Kry Phalak (Hanchey Village), Chhean Sin (Four Village), Ra Po (Tropaing Prey Village).

Sewing Trainee - Deang Bunneat (Tuolrokar Village)
Congratulations and good luck to the graduates!

Rom stepped on a landmine in 1995 while walking home from school.

Now he is married and has a 2-year-old son. It was difficult for Rom to earn a living and he traveled to Thailand to do unskilled labor. His father-in-law threw him out of the house because he couldn't support his family. Now Rom is in our mechanics training course and is enthusiastic about opening his own business and being reunited with his family.



Friendship with Cambodia

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Cambodia News Briefs

US Policy Controls Cambodia's Garment Industry

US trade policy essentially created Cambodia's garment industry in 1999, following the end of Cambodia's civil war. The United States gave Cambodia preferential access to US markets in exchange for guarantees on labor standards, including international monitoring. This agreement will end in 2008. Now it looks like high tariffs – 16% for Cambodia compared to 3% for China will destroy Cambodia's garment industry.

Garments account for 80% of Cambodia's exports (two-thirds are sold to the US) and support one in five Cambodians, directly or indirectly. One out of ten girls in Cambodia works for the garment industry.

A bipartisan bill (S.652) has been introduced in US Congress that would reduce the tariffs for some of the world's poorest nations. This bill is the only hope for saving Cambodia's garment industry. Let your Congressional senators and representative know your opinion about this legislation.

Gift Cards – A Gift that Helps Others

Make a contribution of **\$20 or more in the name of someone special** and we will send you a gift card. If you give **\$160 to help buy a cow or house** for a poor family, we will send you a special gift card. For **\$360 you can sponsor a student** in school as a gift, and we will send a gift card, plus the student's photo and biography. These are meaningful gifts for the holidays, birthdays, or other special occasions.

Item Donations Needed: PC Laptop Computer with Windows 2003, Digital Camera, Airline Mileage, Time Share to sell. **All donations are tax-deductible.**



Friendship Service Teams

Volunteer for 10 days in Cambodia at our humanitarian projects. Take orphans on field trips, help students practice English, teach computer use, document aid programs, and more. Next trip will be Feb. 2009. The cost of \$2200 - \$2500 (plus airfare) includes a donation. Contact us for details.

Genocide Trial Getting Underway

Nuon Chea, Brother No. 2, was arrested on Sept 19, 2007 and charged with crimes against humanity. He will be brought to trial along with other top Khmer Rouge leaders for the deaths of 1.7 million people resulting from starvation, disease, overwork, and execution between 1975 and 1979. Nuon Chea is 82 years old and denies any wrongdoing. Also detained is Duch, head of Toul Sleng prison. Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan may be the next to be arrested. Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in 1998 and his former military chief Ta Mok died in 2006.

The UN-backed genocide tribunal investigating crimes by the Khmer Rouge was created in 2006 after seven years of negotiations between the UN and Cambodia. Trials are expected to begin this year.

Friendship with Cambodia's Board of Directors -

Vern Arne, Lowell Hill, Terry Kirby, Robin Mauney, Karen Molleson, Donna Napier, Linda Young, Ravy Young.
Executive Director - Bhavia Carol Wagner (author of *Soul Survivors: Stories of Women and Children in Cambodia*).
Our deep gratitude to our volunteers and donors.

