



**Honour Village Cambodia: The Year in Review
2012**



Dear Sponsors and Friends of Honour Village,

We hope the last six months have been as productive for all of you as they have been for us. We are very happy to send you this update of our work here in Cambodia, and will endeavour to keep it short and to the point! We do have a lot to report though so hope you enjoy the read.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN ROOM

We were able to sponsor the construction of a room for 4 year-olds from two neighbouring villages. The children meet in two shifts with a Kindergarten teacher, and mothers will be learning about such things as basic nutrition, medical care, child-care and development during occasional Sunday classes. The people of Norway gave wood for this venture, but by the time we joined the project, the number of children involved had risen steeply, so we gave additional wood and paid the builder and carpenter to make the building and a toilet block. The room is now in regular use and greatly appreciated by the people of both villages.



EDUCATION IN OUR CLASSROOMS

In addition to our resident family, we are now teaching over 300 children from our three surrounding villages, who come four days a week. After Christmas it will be five days, once the custom of "School Cleaning Day" on Thursdays has been abolished. We now employ a dedicated Kindergarten teacher, who teaches a class of 4 and 5 year-olds from 7 until 10am thereby giving them a complete Kindergarten education. We also offer two KG classes of one



hour each in the afternoon. Two of our housemothers teach Khmer to 6 year-olds, and our volunteers teach English and maths. We also employ teachers for Grade 7 maths, physics and chemistry. They provide extra classes, one hour a day for each of these two subjects, to our 7th Graders and the 19 children who graduated to high school from Chonlorn primary this September. Without

these extra classes, the students may fail. These two extra classes, taken at school, cost \$5 each a month which is unthinkable for most rural families. All classes held at HVC are free of charge.

Previously, before we employed two teachers to teach at Honour Village, our high school students left home at 6.20 for a 7am start. They had their maths, physics and chemistry classes until 9am, cycled over 3 kms home again, took a shower, checked their school bags and attended English class from 10 to 11am. Then they ate lunch and left again by bike at 11.30 to begin afternoon classes from 12 to 5 pm. (Once a week, 1 to 5). If they have homework, it must be done after the evening meal; they each have chores to do, as well as personal laundry, and they are required by law to have at least an hour a day to "run freely". And all that is before we have discovered where the older children can fit in meditation or, when the time comes, computer class. High school meets six days a week, as will primary from January.

HOUSE 4

House 4 was erected on site during the spring and is now used by our older boys. The ground floor has been built underneath the traditional wooden Khmer house-on-stilts to provide three classrooms, each big enough for 22 students. The third classroom will also become our computer room. These classrooms were sponsored by Frankie's Team, who volunteered with us during the school holidays, coming from many corners of the globe to provide lots of fun, teaching assistance and the amazing "Colourful Cambodia" project. Prints of the children's artwork, presented as cards, postcards and posters, are currently for sale in Siem Reap, Abu Dhabi and Australia and the UK.



ALL CHANGE!

The Library has now moved to a new building adjoining the big classroom/dining room, and the old library has become an office for Charya, our accountant, Seedeth, our Volunteer Co-ordinator and Va, our Staff Manager. The Teachers' Room and the storeroom were both far out-grown, and each has now been extended to double its original size.



We have been able to rent, at \$40 a month, a piece of our neighbour's land which is approximately 1,500 square metres. Da's wood carving workshop has moved from its old lean-to, where the new library is now, to the new land, and the new, very simple structure gives Da more space and better light. This land has a good-sized pond, and we hope to rear fish as well as grow vegetables.

Craig, a sponsor from Australia, has set up an aquaponics system for us on the old vegetable plot. This is an experiment and may not prove financially robust, but it is a wonderful learning experience for us all. The fish swim happily in their concrete tanks with their water pumped every 15 minutes round the half barrels of seedlings and the mixed vegetables are doing quite well!



STAFF TRAINING

Va and Seedeth are both off to Phnom Penh for the current Social Work course. This means we must manage without them for one week every month for the next six months - but at the end of that time, they will both be qualified as social workers, and will then split their work commitments so that they are free to go into the villages and work with our children's families and with many other families who need support, as well as with our staff and children. As they are both working flat out already, we may need to find extra help to assist them in their present jobs. They are both very well suited to working with people in a sensitive and caring way.

Four of our staff have begun four-year courses at university, and each is being sponsored by a friend or sponsor of Honour Village. Each, therefore, has committed him/herself to working with us for at least the next six years, so that they will be with us for a full two years after they have gained their degrees. This commitment is undertaken by any member of staff attending a training course financed by Honour Village. We wish Chhunly, our Manager, Chaiky, a teacher, Srey Net, our cook and Akara, a housemother all the best for their years of study, which need a high level of commitment as each will do a full day's work before setting off to study in the evening. Assignments will be completed during free days. We are very pleased that all our staff now work for 5 days a week rather than 6, and so have more time to spend with their families and on their own pursuits. We also congratulate Va and Charya, both of whom have just completed their degree courses successfully.



Sela, our Senior Housemother, is going to Phnom Penh for a 4-day course in Parenting Skills and Child Development in December. Every member of staff and long-term volunteer will take a day's first aid course. The trainers, coming to us from Globalteers, will be with us for three days, teaching a group of eight each day. Three of us attended the ConCERT course in Child Protection recently, and other staff will have an opportunity in the near future. Globalteers are also sending us a couple of Teacher Trainers who will train our volunteers and also our Khmer teachers in sessions over the next few months.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

Goodwill Globetrotting, an American not-for-profit group, has initiated art classes on Sundays at a hotel in town. Four or five local residential NGOs (non-governmental organisations) have been selected to take turns to enjoy a creative art class, followed by refreshments and a swim in the hotel's pool. They even fund our bus hire. This is such a happy afternoon, and we have now enjoyed two of them (we go about once a month.) Globalteers have begun regular sports coaching for their linked NGOs, and Charlie and Flo come each Thursday for a couple of hours to teach football skills to boys and girls on alternate weeks. Every child also attends a linked class with Sitha about safety and how to say "No" to such things as alcohol, drugs and gambling.



Those of our children who have opted to learn traditional Khmer dance now take great pleasure in dancing at our celebrations on site. They have learned so much and move so gracefully. They do not have costumes, and will never dance for their own benefit, but only ever for pleasure. The same will be so when we go by invitation to enjoy dinner on two occasions at big hotels in town (the second being on Christmas Day!) and then sing carols and Christmas songs for the guests. If any money is given, we will take it to the Angkor Hospital for Children, where our children go if they need to see a doctor - www.angkorhospital.org.



VOLUNTEERS AND VISITING TEAMS

Our volunteers have been wonderful during recent months, coping with building works and the "not knowing" that is part of everyday life in Cambodia. They come to us now from Project Trust UK (Lucy and Trish, who are with us for the whole of their gap year), Globalteers, Projects Abroad, Merrin House, Australia and Interweave as well as through our website. We could not do a lot of what we do each day without our willing volunteers, who arrive on site with open minds and ready to have a go. For those who don't want to teach, or assist in the classroom, there are always plenty of other jobs to do, from helping with the laundry at the well, to preparing vegetables, to initiating play with children who are waiting for class to begin. The village children arrive extra early so that they can enjoy playing with our equipment and toys, and looking at books.



Frankie's Team came to us, as mentioned earlier, and did stalwart work, and the Kidsmatter Team came again from Singapore with lots of beautifully prepared activities for all age groups, which kept everyone fully engaged for the afternoon. They followed this with a BBQ Singapore style, and then returned the next day for more fun and singing. They invited Sue to stay with members of the team when she recently visited to have a brief holiday in order to shop for die-cast toy cars, requested by our little boys, and to bring back donated used laptops for our computer room. Sue met members of the Kidsmatter Team's churches, and spoke at a fundraiser they were busy organising.

The Christmas gifts have come to us in money this year, rather than shoe boxes, to save the colossal hassle and expense of importing toys from Australia. The parents and children of St Michael's Primary School in Perth, Western Australia, have collected an extraordinary \$1,600 which is all to be spent on carefully chosen gifts both for our children and for the many, many village children we expect to arrive for our Christmas parties. Students from St. Brigid's

College, Perth hills suburb, Australia, aged 15 to 17 years, returned to visit us for two days again this year, and brought with them many gifts, including a beautiful alto xylophone, which we shall be using in our Christmas concert. They came and shared our "Everyone's Birthday Party" and brought lots of fun and games and party hats, shooter-hooters, glitter and balloons. Huge fun was had by all, despite the rain. St. Brigid's Home Economics teachers collected over \$1,000 by selling hot drinks to the school staff. This wonderful donation provided a 50 kg. sack of rice for every family classified as "Poor 1" in our three surrounding villages. "Poor 1" is the most extreme level of poverty, and means that the family have absolutely no conveniences of any kind, and have to struggle from one meal to the next. A visiting teacher also left money for two bicycles for two families who were without (imagine wheeling a 50 kg. sack of rice on the back of an old bicycle along several kilometres of muddy, wet track). Chhunly bought the bikes the same day, and their new owners turned up very quickly indeed! We also enjoyed a visit from 57 children who live in a residential home in Battambang, together with their care-givers and Japanese volunteers. 14 of them stayed overnight with us, while the remainder brought well-ordered sparkle to the monks in a pagoda in town.



VISION FOR THE FUTURE...THE NEXT STEP

Because of the number of "orphanages" in town which are sadly misnamed for family businesses, many reputable children's projects have now tightened up considerably on the children they receive into residential care. However, if we take this stance, then we must put an alternative in place for desperate mothers/carers. Sometimes it is

possible to help a family sufficiently for them to keep their children at home, and this is always preferable to bringing them into care, away from their families. Recently, however, the Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre has asked us to consider several small children, whose mothers have fled with them from violence in their home villages. They live at the Crisis Centre for 6 to 8 months and learn a skill. At the end of that time, they are still traumatised and fear setting up on their own in town, where they know nobody. It is usually at this point that the Centre seeks NGO care for the children, while the mothers return to the violence they know will be waiting for them back in the village, but where they refuse to have their children with them. We have heard some truly dreadful stories, and understand the awful predicament facing these mothers. The other women also needing help are the young women who have been victims of rape. We are at present waiting to hear the result of discussions at

the Crisis Centre as to whether they would find it helpful for us to provide and fund a safe house in town where abused women could live with 24 hour security, go to work and have their children attend school, with the little ones looked after by one or two of the mothers, who would be paid by those who go out to work. Month by month, the residents' responsibility for paying the bills would grow, until we would only be funding the security and possibly a small amount of rent, and then we would open a second house. The Crisis Centre staff would provide the over-sight, counselling and ongoing emotional support, while we fund the project.

We are also constantly thinking about and resourcing possibilities for vocational training for our children as they complete Grade 9. Most of our older boys and girls will be at least 19 by the time they achieve this because of missed/disrupted/poor education before they came to live at Honour Village. At this point, (several years from now) they will need rented rooms to share where they will learn, with plenty of support, how to live independently, ready for the day when they move out into adult living either in town or back in their villages.

We want to open a weekly Youth Club for all local young people of 14 years and above. It would be held at Honour Village on Sundays from 9am until 11am (the only possible slot in the whole week!)

We would also like to raise our basic level of non-admin staff salary from \$75 to \$100 in recognition of the committed and increasingly skilful work our team provides. This would bring us a step closer to the salary levels achieved by longer established organisations. Our resident staff who live with the children are never off duty while they are on site. Such a large increment would not only honour our staff's dedication but also continue to offer our children further stability, as the temptation to apply for higher paid vacancies with other NGO's is lessened. We know all our staff are happy with us, but we do not want to rely on this and neglect our duty to reward excellent work at an appropriate level.

Following the rice distribution provided by our Australian supporters to the 54 government registered 'Poor 1' families, we are seeking sponsors to consider providing basic supplies to these families, each of whom would be assessed by one of our social workers on a regular basis. A good, used Japanese bicycle costs \$45 and a full basic supply pack including 50kg of rice would be about \$40 (according to family size). We would be happy to send details to anyone interested and we will begin to take a photo of each family and provide general background as we do for our sponsorship scheme at HVC.

2012 has been a fantastic year for HVC both locally and globally and we hope to continue in this vein throughout 2013. The possibilities for extending our work into the villages roundabout as funding increases are endless. Very little money, used creatively, can change lives in Cambodia.

We would all like to wish our supporters and followers a fabulous Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

With love from Sue and all at HVC.