



KAMPUCHEA HOUSE

(AUSTRALIA) INCORPORATED

Member newsletter — July, 2009

Volume 3, Issue 7

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The price of living in Cambodia by Les Stott

In recent weeks, I have lashed out and purchased a barbequed chicken from the Lucky Supermarket in Siem Reap. What is so special about that you may ask?

Normal chickens here in Cambodia are scrawny poultry specimens with little meat and certainly no breast meat. The Lucky chickens were sumptuous, providing a feast for four or five people.

And the cost...only US\$4.50 each. Nothing special about that it would seem.

But as I ate the delicious meal with lettuce and tomato, chips and rice, the cost of the meal made an impression upon me. You see, this chicken was about two days wages for the average Cambodian worker, if that person is working at all given the current economic woes of the country. Two days wages! In Australia, this chicken would equate to around the \$200 mark, given the minimum daily wage.

So I headed back to the Lucky Supermarket to find out the costs of other everyday items.

Lucky is the equivalent of Coles or Woolworths in Australia, except it has a virtual monopoly. The stores have the same bright lights, large open freezers, fresh fruit and produce from around the globe and, of course, checkouts. But the range of items is less with many bottles of the same commodity taking up vast spaces on the shelves.

Some of the items that I regularly purchase and their prices in US dollars are listed.

Nivea Roll On Deodorant — \$2.25

Washing Powder — \$5.10 (3 kgs)

1 kg of apples (red Fuji) — \$2.70

Berri Orange Juice (UHT) — \$3.50

To add some perspective, let's look at some examples of typical wages here in Cambodia.

An oil, body massage, essential given the amount of training I do on the bicycle, costs US\$7 for an hour. The lady applying the massage gets US\$90 per month with one day a fortnight off and works from 9AM to 12 NOON and then from 2PM to MIDNIGHT. At thirteen hours a day,



for 29 days, that is 23.9 cents per hour. Without tips, she struggles to survive.

A waitress in a café earns US\$80 a month with one day per week off, with hours from 7AM to 5PM. That is 29.6 cents per hour. As above, tips are essential for survival.

Neither of the two jobs described above offer benefits such as sick leave and annual leave.

The house mothers at Kampuchea House receive US\$110 per month with one day per week off duty. They work all day, from before the children wake up to when they are bedded down for the night, normally from 5.30AM to 9PM. That equates to 26.2 cents per hour. The saving grace for the house mothers is the list of benefits; free accommodation, clothing and food, health insurance, and annual leave.

I love my barbequed chicken as well as a massage after a few day's of training on the bicycle but these are luxuries that the average Khmer will never experience.



Upcoming Events:



September 20–25

Donations welcome



KAMPUCHEA HOUSE

(AUSTRALIA) INCORPORATED

From the CEO

The wet season is well and truly here now with the tropical rains falling on an almost daily basis. The rice fields are filling with water and the new rice crop is growing fast.

The past month has been quite demanding on Sokhoeun and myself as we have worked largely without our assistant Leng. Unfortunately after her marriage and honeymoon, Leng, our assistant, burst her appendix and spent some time convalescing at home. The good side to this was that her hospital expenses were covered by our insurer, Asia Insurance. This was our first claim and has proven to the staff that insurance is a considerable benefit when working for Kampuchea House.

Unfortunately, Duong failed her tests at Paul Dubrule and her future there is shaky. She will re-sit the English test at the end of August, this being her last chance to join the main course in hospitality.

In the meantime, a friend of mine, Mr. Thilo Krueger of Tell Restaurant and Picasso Tapas Bar, has employed Duong in the kitchen of Tell where she is putting into practice the few skills that she learnt over

the past ten months at Paul Dubrule and at Angelina's Café and is being taught new skills by the kitchen staff. She is happy and enjoying her work, even if the hours are long. She works from 2PM to 10PM or when the last customer goes home.

As of August 1, Sophary will take up residence at the Siem Reap House and be cared for by House Mother Samy. She will sit the entrance test for admission to Paul Dubrule in late August. Extra lessons in English will be provided for her in an attempt to ensure her successful completion of the test.

A number of the children have had Chicken Pox this month. There were no serious side effects and all children have recovered but they have their scars to show.

With the long wet season school vacation upon us, we have put together a small Holiday Program for the children. Three of the boys - Sor, his brother Sak together with Mean - will travel to Phnom Penh with Sokhoeun and I when we go there on a business trip this week. Sokhoeun will stay in Phnom Penh to attend his graduation ceremony for the degree he gained over

two years ago and take some well earned annual leave. He is married to both his wife Mae and to KH, so much so that this is the first leave he has taken in two years.

In turn, each of the other children will come into Siem Reap in house groups with their House Mother for a day out and will stay overnight at the Siem Reap house with their older sisters.

One of our newest children, Yet, has passed her Grade Nine exams in secondary school and will move to Grade Ten in high school after the vacation. We are all very proud of her achievements and she was given a small party plus a new pair of jeans and a top to celebrate.

With the exception of Lanh Thai who is too young, all of the other children attending school have been promoted to the next grade level. Rea, who is three years old, does not attend school as yet.

Education is an important aspect of the KH program and I ecstatic with the efforts of both the children and our teacher Socheat.

Les Stott

Siem Reap, Cambodia

SITE UPDATE

The Sala Kor Koh complex is slowly taking on a new look. Kheng has, together with the staff and children, excavated and laid the stone road which now runs from the street to the water filtration tanks. It has made a big difference to the aesthetics of SKK as well as lessening the impact of the mud and dust that occurs all the time.

As well, garden areas have been completed along the length of the road, with walkways being placed at regular intervals from the road to the houses, Community Centre and toilets.

Tree planting will take place over the coming months with ornamental trees, as well as mango trees, being planted along the road and around the property.

Curtains have been hung in each of the three houses to separate the boys' sleeping area from that of the girls.

The sugar palm trees along the boundary of the neighbouring property are no longer. We were worried about the damage the



falling fruit and branches could cause to the Community Centre and the danger to the children and staff.

After protracted negotiations, a price was agreed upon with the neighbours who own the trees and the cutters came in.

The stumps are still in the ground but these will rot away over the next few years, unless we pay for an excavator to remove them. Should we raise the money for the side fences, an excavator would be needed.

The only negative now is that the wind and rain blow into the Community Centre but that is a small price to pay for peace of mind.





NEWS



Death of Peach's Grandfather

We were all saddened by the death this month of Peach's grandfather. He had been ill for the past twelve months and, when she was at SKK on weekends, Peach

would go to his house and bathe him. She was very upset as you would imagine.

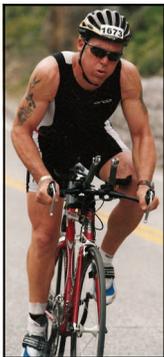
When Sokhoeun and I took her home and then visited next day

for the cremation, I was overwhelmed by the comments of the elderly ladies present. They told of how Peach had had a hard life, with her mother dying from AIDS while her father was shot dead in a domestic dispute by his brother. Now her last close relative was dead. They commented on how she was lucky that she now had a new father, being me, and how well I looked after her. On both days we were at the house, Peach was heavily dependent on me for emotional support. Nobody else seemed to want, or know how, to console her in her grief. Peach stayed with her family for a few days and then returned to her Siem Reap home and her studies.

Apparently, Peach's grandfather has left a small package of land for her in his estate and this will be administered by Kampuchea House here in Cambodia once the necessary documents have been completed.

Les Stott

A cycling partner for Les



Norm Clark, an experienced multisport competitor, will join CEO Les on this year's Big Cambodian Bike Ride. Les continues to train intensively, passing the 300 kilometres a week mark with his training. With each year, the aches and pains increase but he has been inspired by the riders in the Tour de

France, the progress of which Les has watched religiously, and live, each evening.

Special tops and nicks are being donated to the two riders by Total Rush Specialized Bike Shop in Melbourne.

Sor, Sak and Mean in Phnom Penh

As is the custom, when Sokhoeun and Les

travel to Phnom Penh, they take some of the children with them on a family outing. This time it was Sor, Sak and Mean's turn to spend three days in the capital seeing the sights.

The boys constantly recognized places that they had read about in their school books—Wat Phnom, the Royal Palace and the Independence Monument to name but a few of the locations.

The photographs taken will be printed and given to the children to place in their personal photo albums.

Sewing machine for orphanage

Thanks to a generous donation from Ruth Stott, a secondhand industrial sewing machine has been purchased for the Sala Kor Koh complex. With twenty-one children on site, the house mothers had a great deal of mending to do. They expressed the desire to have a sewing machine to handle the job of repairing clothes and to make new clothes.

As a result of the purchase, House Mother Kong will be the first of the mothers to attend sewing lessons in Dom Dek. She has expressed the desire to learn how to make clothes so that more clothes can be provided for the children at a reduced cost.

Currently, the machine is in the library but will move when the next house is constructed.

Leng's wedding

Since the last newsletter, our Director's Assistant Leng tied the knot with her fiancé Lyn Ratanak (bottom top). Duong, Sophary and Peach attended the wedding as well as Siem Reap House Mother Samy (lower bottom) and Khmer teacher Socheat. The reception was attended by many hundreds of guests who were only too glad to celebrate the happy event. The older girls from Kampuchea House enjoyed themselves, eating and drinking soft drinks.



Kampuchea House

- a home for Cambodian orphans and deserted children -



Big Cambodian Bike Ride 2009

The route for this year's ride is:

- Day 1 - Sunday, September 20**
Siem Reap to Battambang - 185 kms
- Day 2 - Monday, September 21**
Battambang to Pursat - 105 kms
- Day 3 - Tuesday, September 22**
Pursat to Kampong Chhnang - 89 kms
- Day 4 - Wednesday, September 23**
Kampong Chhnang to Phnom Penh
- 91 kms
- Day 5 - Thursday, September 24**
Phnom Penh to Kampot - 139 kms
- Day 6 - Friday, September 25**
Kampot to Sihanoukville - 105 kms



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At this stage of our development, monies donated to Kampuchea House (Australia) Inc. are not tax deductible.

The money raised assists with the provision of food and clothing, together with the schooling and medical expenses of the children at Kampuchea House.

Please support Norm

Name:

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Mastercard Visa AMEX

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Name on Credit Card: _____ Expiry Date: _____ CSV No: _____

Pledge/Donation Amount: