

VISION

for Cambodia • Number 125 : Spring Issue 2004

In this issue:-

Miracles in a prison
Ratanakiri Realities
Sir Cliff visits Cambodia



Jez and Jacqui from Ratanakiri
(see page 8)



Cliff and Sarah
(see page 3)

SAO Cambodia

Registered Name: Southeast Asian Outreach
UK Charity Number: 293382

UK HEADQUARTERS

SAO Cambodia, Bawtry Hall, Bawtry,
Doncaster, DN10 6JH, UK

Executive Director: Geoff Collett
e-mail: exdir@sao-cambodia.org

Telephone: 01302-714004
Fax: 01302-710027
e-mail: admin@sao-cambodia.org
Web address: www.sao-cambodia.org
Operations Director: Ivor Greer

SAO Cambodia, c/o ICC, PO Box 612,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Tel: +855 23 215200
email: hosea.pm@icc.org.kh
SAO Field Facilitator: Sarah Chinn

TRUSTEES

David Adams, Andrew Au, Rev Andrew Bridgen, Dr Peter Brierley,
Keith Bushell, Peter Redman, Sue Stevens, Rev John Wallis.

GENERAL INFORMATION

SAO Cambodia is an evangelical inter-denominational mission and development agency, founded in 1973 by Major Taing Chhirc of the Cambodian Evangelical Church. The Object is to promote the Christian faith and relieve poverty and distress among the peoples of Southeast Asia. Work is now solely amongst Cambodians.

SAO Cambodia is a member of International Co-operation Cambodia (ICC), Global Connections, the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia (EFC) and British NGO's for Development (BOND).

VISION for Cambodia: Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn. News for Praise and Prayer is issued with VISION magazine

DONATIONS

We rely on God to meet our needs through gifts from Churches, individual supporters and funding agencies and events. All donations are acknowledged unless otherwise requested. General gifts may be allocated to the greatest need, although donors can indicate a preference. Funds given for a specific appeal will be used for that purpose.

We invite individual donors who pay UK tax to complete a Gift Aid Declaration Form (obtainable from the Bawtry Office). This will enable us to claim back from the Inland Revenue tax already paid (currently 28% of the gift). Cheques should be made payable to "SAO Cambodia" and sent to the Bawtry Office.

BANKERS

National Westminster Bank Plc, 23, Market Street,
Bawtry, Doncaster, DN10 6JL, UK.
Current A/c: 69404054; Sort Code: 60-02-50
A/c name: SAO Cambodia

AUDITORS

Mazars, Mazars House, Gildersome, Leeds, LS27 7JN

SAO Cambodia, Bawtry Hall,
Bawtry, Doncaster, DN10 6JH
Tel: 01302-714004; Email: admin@sao-cambodia.org
Web site: www.sao-cambodia.org



SAO Cambodia is working in partnership in Cambodia
with four other missions as part of
International Co-operation Cambodia (ICC)

Editorial:

Much has happened since I took up the reins of SAO Cambodia in September. We have a lot to thank God for. I trust you will be able to join us at our conference in March to hear about some of the things He has been doing through us.

I have no doubt that there will be changes as I take over the editorship of Vision magazine which has been in John Heard's faithful care for many years. I have inherited a respected publication and I trust those of you who have been with us for a time will appreciate the innovations as they are rolled out over the next few issues.

Geoff Collett

SAO Cambodia Mission Ahead

30th Anniversary Conference

There is still time to join us for this special conference, either for the whole weekend or just for a day. Please contact the office to book your place. Tel: 01302 714004

Friday 19th (evening meal)

to Sunday 21st March 2004 (lunch)

Wycliffe Centre, High Wycombe, Bucks

Bible Teaching: Rev Peter Lewis (Cornerstone, Notts)

Speakers will include **Heasmans** (Ratanakiri) and **Heryantos** (SPPA) and a special personal message from **Cliff Richard** on his Cambodian visit.

Residential	With W/B	en suite
Shared Room	£80.00	£90.00
Single Room	£94.00	£104.00

Day Visitors Cost includes full facilities & meals as appropriate.

	Friday evening From 5.30pm	Saturday From 9.00am	Sunday From 9.30am
Adults	£9.00	£22.50	£13.50
Students & unemployed (£18.50 for Saturday & pro rata)			

Touring Angkor Wat

the Hard Way



Decency prevents us from showing the post event photo! (Ed)

Congratulations to Ivor Greer and Nigel Goddard (pictured here before the start) who sweated their way round the temples in the annual half marathon. Over £3,300 pounds was raised for the work of SAO Cambodia. Thanks to all who supported this effort. ♥

Front Cover Main Photo: courtesy Nigel Goddard

A Day in the life of... Cliff (and Sarah)

We had known Sir Cliff Richard was coming to Cambodia of course. There had been great speculation amongst the expatriate community as to whether we should all pretend to be tourists during his inevitable visit to the Genocide museum. However, I felt privileged to be added to the entourage at the last moment and asked to be an interpreter for the day.

Cliff, as president of TEAR Fund, was here to do some filming for a video to be circulated to supporters later in the year. They were focusing on another partner in Cambodia, **Servants to Asia's Urban Poor**, and their AIDS project. Some filming took place on the top of Wat Phnom, a hillock in the north of the city, a popular tourist spot, but also a working Buddhist temple. My first job was to discover the origin of a loud radio and ask the owner to turn it down. Cambodians, of course, don't know who Cliff Richard is, but the recording and filming equipment was immediately recognised and quickly drew a small and interested crowd. Among them were some wary Tourist Police, who, after hearing my explanation of what we were doing and who Sir Cliff is,

soon spread the word - that there was a foreign girl up on the hill who can speak Khmer!

Filming took a while, and tourists began to realise that the man in front of the camera really was who they thought he was. One enthusiastic lady handed Cliff a bunch of bananas to give to Mr Sambo, the elderly elephant who gives rides around the outside of the temple. To my surprise he accepted the offer and gingerly tried to tempt Mr Sambo, who took them in his trunk and swung them around a bit before dropping them. Obviously no respect for fame either!

After a making a video recording for the March Conference, we headed for the Russian Market. This is particularly noted for its proliferation of stalls aimed at tourists. It was fun helping Cliff buy clothes and presents. It's not often you get to advise a star on what size they might need to buy, which material is better quality and then bargain for a cheaper, more reasonable, price. Shopping with Cliff Richard - many tourists in the market evidently didn't believe it either! I lost count of the heads turning in a double take!



Cliff and Sarah

It was certainly not a normal day for a Christian Worker Overseas! But accompanying the excitement, the amazement at having been asked to interpret in the first place, is curiosity. Was it a normal day for Cliff? Was he excited to be here? What will he remember most about his time in Cambodia? ❤️

SERVANTS

Servants to Asia's Urban Poor is an international network of Christian teams living and working in the slums of Asia's mega-cities, participating with the poor to bring hope and justice through Jesus Christ. They have teams in the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia and India.

SAO Cambodia Field Team Retreat



The SAO Cambodia Team

Last November Geoff and Ivor from the UK office and Keith Bushell, a council member joined the SAO team for the annual retreat. It was held just outside of Phnom Penh, at a small French run

centre, with a swimming pool and conference room for our use.

Together we had an excellent time of renewal and refreshment.. A car break down in the dark, en route to the retreat, made for an unpromising start but useful orientation to Cambodia life for our visiting speakers, Simon and Rinda Tan from Singapore. As did an unwelcome visitor in the form of a toad which appeared in various people's toilet bowls!

Simon and Rinda led sessions entitled 'Come to the Table' inviting us to feed on the Holy

Spirit. They took us on an Emmaus walk to help us discipline ourselves to put aside time for Jesus. We all need to build our relationship with Him and refresh our spirits. Thanks Simon and Rinda. ❤️



Simon and Rinda Tan

Serving God and Se

The next two articles are by two of our longest serving staff.

Ming Sinou, is one of several Cambodians who have served SAO Cambodia faithfully as domestic staff. They clean and cook and generally look after the other staff and offices, and they often go unmentioned. However, their dedicated service has contributed much to the work over the years. Sinou has been with us right from the earliest days in Phnom Penh and consequently has been our longest serving staff member.

Milet Goddard is known to many of you through personal contact and her roles leading SCALE and then the FAITH project.

Both are moving on from their work with SAO Cambodia, Sinou into retirement and Milet into a new role with the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia (EFC). Here are their reflections on their times serving God through the Mission.

Does God pour out money from heaven??

Ming Sinou



Sinou, Milet and Jasmine

I lost my husband in 1975 during the Khmer Rouge times. Left with three children, I had the sole burden of raising them during this time of hardship. With no food to eat and no place to live, we survived by foraging food from the wild. In 1979, when the Khmer Rouge fell, I started to look for my family. Before the war, I had five brothers and both my parents. The war left me with two brothers and a mother whom I found in Battambang the town where I was born. However, their hardship and poor health meant they all died of diseases shortly after the war. Being the only daughter, I felt so lonely. Determined not to raise my three children as a widow, I decided to get married and had

two children with my second husband. After nearly six years of being married, my husband left me for another woman. My life was miserable and hopeless.

Then we decided to go to Phnom Penh where we had to survive by picking wild fruits and selling them in the market. We were very poor. I felt so sad and afraid of seeing my children become beggars. Seeing our destitution my heart ached every time I washed my only clothes.

*I know
Jesus is
with me*

I moved to a village and met a Christian Pastor who shared the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. I believed, but in my young faith I wondered "How can this God help me? Does this God pour out money from heaven; can He shower us with food?" I waited to see this happen but it didn't. The Pastor told me to continue to trust in God because He cares for us.

One day, through the Church, my Pastor told me that there was a foreigner looking for a Christian cook. So I soon met the first SAO Cambodia team member in Cambodia, Mr. Myers. He could not speak Khmer and I could not speak English, we were just like someone deaf and dumb.

However, after some time, Mr. Myers learned the language and we were able to communicate. Later on more team members came.

The team hired me as a cook. Praise God that He gave me a job to earn a living. Every day I would cook for them. At night, whenever surplus food was left I was told I could take home to feed my



Sinou receives her retirement present

Surviving Others

children. SAO Cambodia also helped me to buy a motorbike. The team visited my four-meter square wooden house on stilts and asked me where I put my motorbike. I said that my motorbike is always put up there in one corner; I slept on this side and my five children on that side. We have everything here including our kitchen. Whenever there was a

strong wind, we were all scared that the house would collapse. Thank God that SAO Cambodia members helped me out to advance my salary to slowly rebuild my house. Through SAO, I was also able to send my children to school. They have been my constant encouragement and they helped me to understand who God is. That God does not pour out

money and food from heaven, but He uses people to feed and care for His children. That God loves my family and me and that God is always there. Although a widow, I do not feel alone as Jesus is there with me, especially in times of sorrow and joy.

After thirteen years of working with the Mission, my life has changed. I know God better, my faith is strengthened and our needs met. My big praise and thanks to God for letting me know who He is through SAO Cambodia. ❤️

Ten Years Metamorphosing in Cambodia?

Milet Goddard

As I reflect on more than ten years of working in Cambodia, I picture my life as being like a pupa in a cocoon metamorphosing into a butterfly.

Before coming to Cambodia, I lived in Thailand as a student for seven years and it was there that my vision and passion for Cambodia was born. I first visited Cambodia in 1990 as part of the survey team for the SAO Cambodia's SCALE Project. I returned, on February 5th 1993, landing in Phnom Penh with huge expectations and enthusiasm for helping the Cambodian people. I had a vision for Cambodian Christians to reach out to their own people with my professional skills being used as a catalyst for this.

Subsequently, I learned that nearly five years of involvement with SCALE was just preparation for me: struggling to get to know God and

myself better; to get to know the Cambodian culture; their system of governance; how God works in people's lives, and many other things. I was being developed like the pupa in its cocoon.

Next I established the FAITH Project, through which I saw the fulfillment of my vision for Cambodian Christians. God gave me fourteen Cambodian staff, through whom I was able to minister to Cambodian Christian, enabling them to reach out to their own communities, for God's kingdom.

I developed a passion for Cambodia

Last November I moved on again. I have developed a wider vision of helping the EFC to grow as an organization. Like the butterfly emerging fully formed from the cocoon, I feel myself now equipped to serve Cambodian Christians leaders in churches and organisations as they develop their structures and build the capacity of their staff. ❤️



Milet with fish fry 1992

Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia (EFC)

- is a national umbrella of Cambodian Christian Churches
- was formed in 1994 and officially recognised by Government in Sept 1995
- holds its General Assembly of members annually (first meeting January 1996)
- membership of 300 churches in 1996 grew to 2,000 churches in 2004
- represents about 85% of registered Churches in Cambodia
- has fellowship links with several denominational Church Councils
- works through several "Commissions" - Youth; Women; Children; Sports
- has several strategic partnerships - including with FAITH
- is governed by a Board of Directors (which meets quarterly) elected every two years
- President is Rev Kong Phan Chhon (Khmer American) and Vice President Pastor Barnabas Mam
- General Secretary is Rev Heng Cheng

Please pray

- that my limited time with EFC will bring good fruit and that I would be able to raise a Cambodian Management Team to support EFC effectively.
- for unity among the Cambodian national leaders and for my 8 Cambodian staff.
- for resources (human and financial) needed to build up EFC capacity.
- for God's wisdom and blessing on this new vision to become a reality.

Two Ladies, one moto

Nicola Day (UK) and Lisa Cescon (NZ)

Quite a sight...two tall ladies, a guitar, boxes of fruit, noodles, soap, music and Khmer kramas, buzzing along on a bike designed for short people! They are used to us now and just wave us past at the main office of the hospital, laughing. This is as much a miracle as the story that brought us here.

Induction....

Two years ago, we felt strongly that God wanted the two of us to step out in faith, come to Cambodia and wait for Him to reveal His will. With our London church's blessing, we arrived with John Heard and an SAO Cambodia Mission Awareness team for a ten-day visit. Awareness for them, but induction for us.

Our first impressions were ones of shock! We were both familiar with Asia, having spent time in various Asian countries. However, we were not prepared for the extreme poverty and emotional suffering of Cambodia. John and his team left us behind and we knew we had chosen a tough path.

We began language training, but wanted to 'do something' in the face of such need. So we prayed, asking God to give us work which no one else was doing, but would still enable us to study. As we



Nicola, Lisa and Linda buying food



Nicola and Lisa on their moto

finished praying, the phone rang. It was an Ausie friend Linda, asking if we had an hour a week to help establish the Prison Fellowship of Cambodia (PFC).

The Ministry begins....

When prisoners suffer from AIDs, TB or hepatitis, they are dispatched to a hospital in Phnom Penh to die. In some cases, they are too sick and emaciated even to move. They are hungry and in pain, watching those around them die and waiting their turn.

prisoners had no access to toilets

The sight of five skeletal figures lying in a filthy, derelict room with an overpowering smell greeted us. Their toilet and wash area was bricked off and unusable, giving them no access to toilets.

At the beginning, we were allowed to visit for only 10 minutes a week. The programme built up very carefully until now we are able to provide a carer six days a week. We can bring food, soap, vitamins and other basic materials such as mosquito nets, etc and once a week we all get together for a worship session

One of our great joys has been seeing the derelict rooms transformed into liveable conditions. We knew it would be difficult to get the initial meeting with officials for permission to renovate the rooms because four different organisations had tried to

Case study one

Sampang¹ was a youth in the wrong place at the wrong time. Rounded up with some friends who had misbehaved he shared a cell with 25 others. Within a short time of entering prison he contracted TB and was finally brought to Monivong hospital, barely able to walk and racked with pain. His visiting mother wept in our arms in misery. She used to carry him outside when he was allowed by the guards to lie in the air. He sat on a broken, rotted, wooden frame, gasping for air. He finally died.... at seventeen.

In hospital in Cambodia, you are dependent on family to provide nursing, food and care and to buy medicine. Most of the prisoner's families cannot afford even to visit. Therefore, they face death alone.



do this in the past! So we asked for prayer support.

One year of painfully slow negotiations had demoralised us but we were hopeful we might get agreement within a few months. We finally commissioned a builder to give us an estimate. Moved by what he saw, he did not want to wait for us to raise the money. He would start on Saturday and wait for payment!

Case study two

Puu¹ shook from head to toe when PFC first met him that was killing him. He asked us to pray for him each time speaking with him and praying, but it was not enough. After that, we sang each visit and so the weekly visits he was not afraid and his final words to us were 'I'm going to be as fat as you'. (This is a Cambodian

to and the Prison



the toilets ...before

We were excited. But what about permission? We thought this might come by Christmas. But by Saturday seemed impossible! We are called to be people of faith, so we told the builder to start work on Saturday and prayed for both funding and permission. All held their breath.

What happened? A miracle and the re-building began on time. By the grace of God, on Friday, we



the ward... after

et him. He was terrified of death and the illness m, as he had heard of our God. We spent some when we sang that he finally stopped shaking. worship session began. Puu finally died. However, re ...'I am going to heaven and when I'm there n compliment as being fat indicates affluence...Editor)

Case study three

Pastor Vutha saw a man standing outside the gate of the prison carrying nothing and wearing only a pair of shorts, even his feet were bare. He looked thin and lost. Vutha felt compelled to stop and speak with him. The man explained he had just been released from prison. Vutha gave the man a lift into town and cared for his basic needs, finally seeing him onto the bus with the fare to go to see the family he had not seen in years. This story is common throughout Cambodia, but not every prison has a Vutha and even that prison does not have Vutha every day!

had the permission and by the Tuesday, the funds needed. The unit was repainted with new ventilation windows, drains and separate facilities for the men and women. The sewage and waste outside was cleared and replaced with a levelled, gravelled area and a new water tank. The builder even donated concrete benches for sitting outside.

The future....

There is still much to do, particularly to get proper medical care, training for the carer and new beds....so please pray we find the extra funds, medical support and a nurse to take over managing this project.

The next big challenge... a programme for released prisoners.

Conditions in prison in Cambodia are poor with insufficient access to food, clean water and medical facilities. Due to the high cost and complexity of visits, many have lost touch with their families. There is no probation or other service to assist them on release.

The aim is to provide a "Vutha" for the prisons near the city of Phnom Penh and for the released prisoners who come to the Capital hoping to find a new life. PFC will open a Day Centre in Phnom Penh, which will provide reintegration advice,



Lisa with patient

Permission by Saturday was impossible

basic needs relief, medical assistance, and, in the longer term, rehabilitation programmes.

Reflection....

We would not recommend the way we came, as it was a tough path. However, we can see God's plan, as we would otherwise not have done Prison work.

In addition we have been available for other work here in Cambodia; training in a centre for disadvantaged youth; assisting income generation programmes including a centre for AIDS orphans and strategic planning and marketing projects for NGOs.

We are so grateful for the help and induction from John Heard and SAO Cambodia. Thank you. ❤️

Pray for the ongoing work of PFC in Cambodian prisons.

¹ Names changed to protect identity

The Expectations and Reality of P

Jez and Jacqui Heasman

We have just passed the second anniversary of our arrival in Cambodia. Sometimes it seems like we have only just arrived, at other times as if we have been here most of our lives. By the time you read this we will have spent a whole year living and working in Ratanakiri province, one of the

most remote areas of Cambodia.

Last week we had a visit from the new ICC pastoral couple and they had many questions about what we spent our time and energy doing! They wanted to know how they could help us in our lives here. This got us thinking a bit about our life.



Jez and Jacqui

So, before we arrived in Cambodia, how did we think we would be spending our time? Well we thought that we would:

- live a slower and more relaxed life.
- spend weekends paddling up and down the Mekong in our kayaks or riding our dirt bikes through the countryside.
- spend lots of time with local people, getting to know them and their families, their lifestyles and their problems.
- be in a position to help these new friends to solve their problems and be able to live more comfortable and safe lives.
- have more time together.
- never be able to communicate well in Khmer.
- miss friends, family and church.

So what has been the reality? Hope you are ready for a few surprises! So now:

- life is busier and faster than it ever has been.
- we have little time for people, our kayaks or our bikes, because we are so absorbed in project work.
- we have found that it is difficult to help people to see that there are other ways to live and that many people, with help, can solve their own problems.
- we do get to spend more time together but we usually talk 'shop'.
- we have studied the language hard and can communicate fairly well with staff and other local people.
- we have missed family, friends and church like mad.

Jacqui at Wycliffe

For over ten weeks up to 12th December 2003, I attended the Wycliffe Centre, in the UK, to learn something about literacy. It was a difficult time because I was away from Jez, Cambodia and project staff. I was privileged to meet some old timers with many years of field experience in a wide variety of countries. I was given much to think about. How to: involve communities in education classes; interest people in mother tongue literacy; produce good reading materials; and train teachers well. There are no prescribed answers though; each situation is different, as I knew from having had just a few months of experience in Ratanakiri. The challenge is going to be putting some of these good ideas into practice in the field.

Sound a bit negative? It does to me. So why do we keep going?

Well, because God wants us to be here for us to grow more spiritual fruit in this country, with staff which we love and respect. We have seen so many changes in attitudes since we came. We feel that we are slowly building those anticipated relationships.

At present, we are part of a large development project, working with ethnic minority people in North

East Cambodia. We often feel out of our depth. We are currently implementing improvements in project effectiveness and staff development. So, please pray that we might have wisdom & strength for the task, and for skilled people to help us train the staff.

Please pray too that amidst the busyness we would find time for relaxation, togetherness refreshment from God and for building deeper relationships.



Rural tribal lady

Project Life

THANK YOU!

So the first bit was pretty heavy and depressing. However, that's life sometimes - and it gives you some material for prayer. Now we would like to share some positive things that have happened since our move to Ratanakiri. So thank God that:

- The move to Ratanakiri was safe and easy.
- We have settled well and, although we miss friends we made in Phnom Penh, we are happy in our new surroundings. We have a great view of the lake from our house and enjoy our hammocks at the end of the day.
- We have had other new expatriate staff member join the project.
- We had a great retreat with all the staff in Siem Reap.
- Before the national elections, our project staff translated some information encouraging people to vote. This was recorded and broadcast across the country - possibly the first time the ethnic minority languages have been used in this way.
- We had a month of regular English lessons for the staff, given by an American teacher during his summer break. The staff really enjoyed themselves (had a bit of trouble with his accent!) and we felt a surge of confidence go through the office.
- Our minority staff were taught to read and write their own languages - something that had been overlooked in a formal way before.



The Heasmans's Home

- We had a 3-day training on teamwork, communication and problem solving.
- We have seen a marked increase in confidence and ability of the staff member responsible for village land security issues.
- We finally got the government approval for the writing systems of the 5 minority languages on which ICC has been working.

So we have plenty of encouragement that we are in the right place at the right time and the verse that we quote so often - Jeremiah 29 v11 - is true. God has His plan for us, we just have to rest in Him, and we will have hope and a good future.



Training in team work

Our House

On a lighter note, we are currently 'squatting' in a different house to the one with the great view of the lake and endless peace and quiet. This one is dusty, noisy and hotter than our own. So why are we here?

A few months ago we had several conversations with our landlord about our house and how he thought it wasn't big enough for us as we have so much stuff! So he would build another house for us - on the same plot and high enough to still have the same view. So after much drawing up of plans we came to an agreement on design and the first timbers arrived for the building. Then it was taken away again. The landlord had waited long enough for the wood supplier and decided not to wait any more.

Anyway, Christmas came and we talked again. We are now having the underneath of our old house concreted and walled in to make extra rooms. Also some walls upstairs are being replaced (termites have been busy already) and the roof redone too. So, hopefully before we come to the UK in March, we will have moved our mountain of stuff back into our smart new house.

Blessings from Cambodia and for those of you that have invited us to your churches, we look forward to seeing you soon. ❤️

Reflections

David Lucas

In the early 70s David worked for the BBC overseas services, and spent many nights taking in reports from correspondents in South east Asia. He had a grandstand view of the unfolding tragedy in Cambodia. A visit to neighbouring Thailand last November offered him an ideal opportunity to visit Cambodia for a few days to see for the work of SAO Cambodia.

I began in Siem Reap, with an intensive day's sightseeing at some of the ancient temples, unforgettable images of gnarled roots tearing apart buildings and Angkor Wat at sunset, accompanied by the ringing sound of cicadas. One day was not enough.

There was an air of extraordinary vitality in the town. Education is highly valued. Schools are often open for two shifts - one in the morning another in the afternoon. English is now part of the syllabus as people try to access the world economy. I found that many young people work in hotels and tourism saving every dollar they can to spend on education.

I spent a fascinating morning with Marie Hill who founded the Rajana Craft project. We were visiting a group of Bhuddist monks! Local Christians have been actively looking for ways in which they can bring the gospel to influential



David at a Village School

people in their area. Marie came up with the great idea of asking the Monks to use their tradition of writing Buddhist texts and scriptures by hand onto palm leaves, but this time writing scriptures from the Bible. We pray that something of what they write will sink in.

... an air of vitality in town

I also visited the Farmers' Livelihood Development (SCALE) Programme, involving chickens, fish, market gardening and livestock as well as a Dental faculty in Phnom Penh - as one of its students put it, "It's definitely the finest in Cambodia because it's the only one!"

And what have I learnt?

A very small donation to SAO really can make a very big difference.

The Farmer's Livelihood project has a credit scheme. A loan of £5 had transformed the life of an entire village family, allowing them to start a much needed village store.

How important it is that Cambodians are actively involved, rather than outsiders doing it all.

Helping educate and develop the skills of Cambodians - particularly the young, seems to be an integral part of the expatriate Christian activity, and that must be right.

A thought about survivors of

the Pol Pot era many must have such deep and bitter regrets, for others there's granite hardness of self-justification for terrible deeds. There is a constant need to live-out forgiveness from day-to-day from those who have suffered much. And what about the thirty and forty year olds who were children under Pol Pot? They had indoctrination, not an education, I feel they are almost written off, a second lost generation, living ghosts.

The mission opportunities for Christians world wide.

The political changes with the collapse of communism, easy, inexpensive travel, the explosive growth of the internet and mobile phones all these mean we can build much closer relationships with

Christians and Churches in other parts of the world in ways that can really make a difference.

... developing the skills of young Cambodians

A final thought. We've all read newspaper stories of outrage because calls to service centres are handled in India. Who knows, in ten years we may be doing our telephone banking through Cambodia. If that happens, let's be pleased about it. It will be a far better way for the rich nations to share their immense wealth than by brushing crumbs of meagre Aid from our laden tables. 🌱



David visits Rajana at morning devotions

Cambodia, Still between a Rock and a Hard Place?

Brian Maher

Cambodia, a country used as a pawn and a battleground for many years by major global players, is still struggling to recover some semblance of stability. Politically a democracy with a constitutional monarchy, the Kingdom of Cambodia, has yet to form a new government almost eight months after the elections. King Sihanouk is mediating negotiations between the squabbling factions. His recent letters from his health centre in China, to the press, express his frustration.

In a recent spate of assassinations, Chea Vichea, a party member and the President of the Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia, was gunned down, while reading a newspaper at local newsstand. Tensions are high as the government and coalition opposition parties blame each other. The international community are now expressing dismay at the deterioration of respect for human rights and Cambodia's lack of progress toward democracy.

Cambodia's tourist industry, sagging from 9/11, picked up only to be hit with the SARS scare. Tourism is again recovering but tales of assassinations, crime, rape, child trafficking and traffic accidents are on the rise and jeopardise the progress. The average Cambodian is fearful, frustrated and angry having seen the hope of stability come so close, only to be pulled away at the last minute.

I asked a friend, who is a Cambodian pastor, "How do you really feel inside?" Pointing outside, he told me, "I feel hopeless about the future of Cambodia and for the future of my children. Look out there and you'll know why."

I have many other Cambodian pastor friends who feel the same



A Village Church

way. While they see little hope for their country, they have the hope of the Gospel as it continues to change their lives, and touch the lives of others. They may be wringing their hands over the problems, but they are on their

yet to form a new government after the July 2003 elections

knees praying for the nation's leaders, for the peace and health of the Cambodian people, and for political stability.

Whilst Cambodian society continues to struggle with division and mistrust, the church has made great strides in terms of unity. The six councils that represent evangelical Christianity to the government meet regularly for fellowship. There are many forums, workshops and seminars, often set up by Christian NGOs, which help Cambodian Christians from different traditions to get to know one another and work together.

The Church has also made strides in responding to the needs of the poor and marginalised. Many churches have been encouraged by Christian NGOs to reach out to the poor. To Cambodians, it just seems natural that Christians are to help the poor. Churches have begun to visit HIV/AIDS patients in their homes, bringing them food, some offer literacy classes for children

the Church has made great strides in unity

who can't afford to go to school, and one church began giving 3% of their tithe to the Village Development Committee for repairs to the village infrastructure. That particular church and others as well, are learning that when they help meet the physical needs of the poor or their community, they make a transition from being seen as people who follow a foreign religion, to a people who are relevant to the life of the society. Cambodian Christians have found that when they are relevant, they are given a voice. ♥

Continue to pray for:

- The Evangelical Fellowship as a catalyst for unity in the church.
- For the EFC's Youth Commission's 9th Annual Youth Conference.
- Formation of a new government without violence.
- Overall political stability.
- The Maturity of the church.
- Ministry among the Tribal Groups, Cambodia's unreached people.

Cambodia News

Compiled by John Heard from various sources

Paedophiles

Cambodia is campaigning against suspected paedophiles, increasingly deporting them for trial in their home countries. In the United States, a new law allows Americans charged with sexually molesting children overseas to be tried in federal court. The Minister of Tourism, Veng Sereyvuth, declared, "the paedophile is Cambodia's most unwanted visitor." Many teenagers and young children desperately want freedom from the chains that have been imposed on them. Many tragically poor families unwittingly "sell" their children to brothels not realising the awful plight they face.

Bird Flu

Surrounding nations have been banning the import of live chickens and poultry meat from Cambodia. As well as being a small export earner, chickens are amongst the cheapest, most prolific and easiest source of protein in poor rural villages throughout the country.

Missiles destroyed

Following international pressure, Cambodia's prime minister has ordered the destruction of the country's surface-to-air missiles to prevent them from falling into terrorist hands. But small arms and other weapons left over from 30 years of civil war are widely available on the black market.



Trade Union Leader murdered

Thousands of mourners turned out in January for the funeral of Chea Vichea, Cambodia's most important trade union leader. Vichea, who was shot, was leader of the largest independent garment industry union, the Free Trade Union of the Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia and a leading member of the opposition Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) party. Political tensions have sharply increased. King Sihanouk judged the killing as "unquestionably political".

Political Referendum?

King Sihanouk has proposed a referendum on amending the Constitution to let a simple majority of lawmakers choose the prime minister and legislative officers. Prime Minister Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party won the July 2003 election, but failed to get the two-thirds majority required to govern alone under the present Constitution. The King said Mr Hun Sen's government, elected in 1998 and left in place by the impasse, is illegal and unconstitutional.

Khmer Rouge Trials

Twenty five years after the fall of the notorious Khmer Rouge regime at the hands of the Vietnamese, and after 6 years of negotiation, so called "concrete" steps were taken in December towards establishing a court for Khmer Rouge trials during 2004.

These include a concept of operations, an outline of an implementation plan with timelines, a staffing table for the court's judicial and administrative component and the site where the trials would be held. It is likely that around 5 to 10 people will be indicted. About two million Cambodians perished in the "Killing Fields" genocide of 1975-79. The regime's leader, "Brother Number One", Pol Pot died in 1998.

Artefact Looting

For years many artefacts have been pillaged from ancient Khmer temples ending up in Western markets. The cultural heritage has been undermined and Cambodia is working to enforce agreements to stop this illicit trade.

Japanese "Waste"

Goods intended for recycling or dumping in Japan are being sold in Cambodia despite environmental hazards in items such as refrigerators and air conditioners. Desirable items such as bicycles, motorbikes, televisions, tape recorders and computers become affordable despite their age. But the Government fears corruptive practices may exploit the unsuspecting buyer. ❤️