

Free education and opportunities for children in rural Cambodia

SAVONG SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Savong School Newsletter: Number 14: October 2012



Cambodian Rural Schools Trust
A registered charity for the support of
Savong's School

Latest university scholarship winners announced

This month Savong celebrated a real achievement at his school with the announcement of the latest scholarship winners and their subsequent enrolment at Angkor University. This brings us to a total of 15 students who have excelled at Savong's School and, via the scholarship have advanced to University.

The scholarships include university fees, transport into Siem Reap, a laptop for each student as well as living expenses of \$50 per month over the 4 years it takes to get a degree.

For their part, Angkor University, which is the leading university in Siem Reap, is also helping support these students—helping us meet the enrolment fees. Sieng Nam, Excellency—who heads the University has shown support by offering to match the enrolment fees one for one: a generous gesture reflecting his commitment to rural students in the region.

Right. Our latest 11 university students, a real achievement for the students, their families and their rural communities.



School begins another year

Pchum Ben festival is over in Cambodia, and students everywhere have enjoyed the break. Pchum Ben is a period of commemoration of ancestors, and this year was given additional national significance with the death of the beloved ex-King Sihanouk. So it was a time for national reflection.

At Savong's School the students were granted a two week holiday and so, in the last week of October, enrolments and promotions begin again for the new school year.

The teachers have already been back preparing, and in staff meetings developed their needs list for textbooks and workbooks and equipment required for the year ahead.

The planning system implemented by Vinh (the General Manager) as well as head teachers Sovannarith and Kimhey is working well: a much more pro-active planning system that can only be encouraged.

The computer teacher has also prepared course material for computer-studies students, and this addition to the curriculum has proved valuable to local students. There is an immense thirst to learn computer skills.

An unexpected theft occurred in the last two weeks with a local 'bad boy' stealing the school's water pump which has not been recovered. This requires a \$120 replacement.

Letter from Duncan



My own mother and father are both in their 80s and continue to inspire me. Last year my brothers and I accompanied Dad on a journey to his home town located in the foothills of a majestic mountain which these days is a destination for snowboarders and hikers. In the 1930s however, the New Zealand township of Ohakune was a fairly poor farming community that struggled to make a living in what, even to this day, is a demanding environment.

Our family mission last year was to tidy-up the gravestones of Dad's parents, and in the course of the strangely pleasurable weekend he shared stories about growing up in this town where everybody knew everybody else.

Some tales were stark and sad. One was about how the arrival mechanised tractors displaced my grandfather whose expertise, using dynamite skills, was in removing big tree stumps and clearing the land for farming. He wept when he saw the Caterpillar tractor yanking a huge stump from the ground in a few minutes. His skills were no longer needed. These stories made me reflect on village life in Cambodia, and how the rate of change must be quite devastating to communities. The ebb and flow of daily country life is jarred terribly by the new economy.

Another story, a legend really, that my father tells, is how in his small country high school he was lucky to be a member of a particularly smart cohort of students. In rural New Zealand in the 1930 many students left school before age 15, but his group all advanced to university entrance and many went on—as my father did—to earn degrees and to ultimately travel the world and succeed in their endeavours. The teachers at that school had never seen a 'year' of students quite like it. It was a freak wave: a tsunami of attainment.

Rural communities feel these things keenly. Just as mechanisation, which is noticeable as a trend around Siem Reap, totally changes the social order (those with capital can suddenly get even wealthier—those without can suddenly lose their livelihoods,) so too does the advent of advanced education.

So imagine the impact on the Bakong community, which is the community around Savong's School where the total number of university students - numbered, I'm guessing, fewer than 10 and where the number has now increased by 15, and—at this rate—will grow by around 5 or 6 each year.

In my father's town, the year that his class collectively passed a record number of University Entrance exams, the achievement was widely remarked on. Because everybody knew everybody, everyone could take some collective credit for the achievement. Every community aspires to see their young people succeed.

In Bakong the same thing is happening. We now have 15 additional role models carving out a path for their younger siblings to follow. These are 15 young people who are now a big step closer



Enrolment day—2012. For these students university was once an unobtainable dream.

to winning what are, by local standards, jobs with comparatively stellar salaries and the potential to help their families significantly - perhaps with capital, or perhaps simply by lifting these families away from the very real poverty line where sickness must go untreated and where hunger must go unsatiated.

I hope in turn that these students will be able to laugh and tell their kids how in 2012 not one, not two but fifteen from Bakong's villages travelled together each day to university, and together took on the world.

This is a particularly exciting aspect of our work in providing free education, and real opportunities for these young students.

A reflective aspect of life at the SOC



We're reminded of the hard backgrounds of the children in

our care at the Savong Orphan Center. As we regularly point out, the children at the SOC —with one exception—are not strictly orphans, but they do come from backgrounds where through poverty or others hardships (marriage breakdowns, alcohol and other related issues are not uncommon,) the best available option is to put these children in our care. However we never forget that these children have families, and Savong often facilitates family meetings—either by taking the children to see their parents, or vice versa, welcoming parents to see their children.

During Pchum Ben festival the father of Shun, Bron, and Kruoch came to visit, and they spent time having some serious talks—about their family, about the hardships they had faced and about his continued love for his children. These days, the father—who is estranged from their mother—is a monk, and he's sorting out and resolving a number of issues of his own, and it was valuable, both for him and for Shun, Bron and Kruoch to re-connect.

Savong had a talk with the children also, and emphasised the need to keep respecting our parents—regardless of hardships or of past arguments or problems. We usually focus on the education and prospects of these children, but must remember that all of them spend time reflecting on and dealing with the circumstances of their lives. That can't always be very easy for them.

Meet the latest Scholarship Winners

Eleven winners join the four current Scholarship Students. Here are their backgrounds.

Suth Maneth, age 20.
18/03/1992.
Father has passed away, his mother is a seller at the market. They live in Bakong Commune, near the school.

Uon Seda. Age 22
30/6/1990
Father is a farmers in Lolei Village— his mother runs a market stall. Seda is the second son of four brothers. He has two sisters.

Chem Huor. Age 24
9/1/1988
Parents are farmers in Rolous, near Savong's School. He has 4 siblings.

Uch Oul is 20.
10/03/1992. His parents are farmers. He has 4 brothers and is second oldest

Lonn Sorath. Age 20.
31/07/1992
Father is a farmer, his mother has passed away. Sorath lives with his dad and his younger sisters.

Chorm Thea. Age 22
7/04/1990
Parents are farmers. Thea has 6 siblings and lives at home.



Vann Va. Age 19.
18/12/1993
Parents are farmers in Rolous. Va is the 2nd of three children.

Sor Dara is 21.
5/04/1991 his dad is a fisherman while his mother works at home. He has 8 siblings and is the fifth son.

Oun Vanny. Age 20
3/03/1992
Parents are farmers in Kompongthkov Village. Vanny is the fifth son of 6 boys in his family.

Dom Sai. Age 19.
27/07/1993
Father is no longer alive (passed away at age 62) his mother is a farmer. Sai is the youngest of 5 children.

Lonn Leab. Age 20.
1/08/1992
Parents are farmers in Chombok Village, Rolous Commune. The only female in the group and the oldest daughter in her family.



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Bookmark these sister websites and spread the word!

SAVONG SCHOOL - www.savong.com This one has a focus on the school, but includes news, links to visitors and is one of the fund raising channels with a PayPal button.

SAVONG FOUNDATION- www.savongfoundation.org This website is beautifully designed and provides supporters with news. The foundation works hand in hand with the Cambodian Rural Schools Trust.

SAVONG ORPHANAGE— www.savongorphanage.com This one is managed by Savong and he posts news and events in the life of SOC.

School launches appeal for books furniture ...and scholarships



To Appeal for

My name is Svay Savong and I am a director of the school in Doteav Village, Reasou Commune, Prasat Bakong District, Siem Reap Province Cambodia called (Savong School) would like to appeal to you, please participate for helping our school to purchase books for teaching students next month and other things such as:

N.	Name of goods	quantity	Unit Price	Amount
1.	New Headway Beginner (student Book)	1	145	145
2.	New Headway Beginner (student work book)	1	125	125
3.	New Headway Beginner (teacher Book)	1	265	265
4.	New Headway Elementary (student Book)	1	145	145
5.	New Headway Elementary (student workbook)	1	145	145
6.	New Headway Elementary (teacher Book)	1	265	265
7.	New Headway Pre-Intermediate (student Book)	1	145	145
8.	New Headway Pre-Intermediate (student work book)	1	125	125
9.	New Headway Pre-Intermediate (Teacher work Book)	1	265	265
10.	New Headway Intermediate (student Book)	1	145	145
11.	New Headway Intermediate (student work book)	1	125	125
12.	New Headway Intermediate (Teacher Book)	1	265	265
13.	New Headway Upper-Intermediate (student Book)	1	145	145
14.	New Headway Upper-Intermediate (student work Book)	1	125	125
15.	New Headway Upper-Intermediate (teacher Book)	1	265	265
16.	New Headway Advance (student Book)	1	145	145
17.	New Headway Advance (student work book)	1	125	125
18.	New Headway Advance (Teacher Book)	1	265	265
19.	Desk for staff office	2	1405	2805
20.	Chair for staff office	2	385	765
21.	Stone Chair	2	355	705
22.	Clock for classrooms, staff office and library	9	125	1085
23.	CD player for teaching students	4	855	3405
24.	Water Pump machine for school	1	1205	1205
25.	Fan for each classes	4	295	1165
Grand total:				31.422

As appealed above, if you are interested or wish to support this project with small donation or big, please contact to us and if you can't help us these, please inform this to your family and friends.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Siem Reap, 14/10/2012

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Is there a school anywhere in the world that has enough books or equipment? We didn't think so. For this fresh academic year the teacher's at Savong's School have itemised a list of things and equipment and furniture needed for the school.

The books are the priority. The school needs \$314 worth of text books— for beginner, elementary and more advanced classes - and these include the teacher guides.

Second priority is the water pump for the school (thieves stole the existing water-pump.) The third priority is the furniture and equipment.

Keen observers will note that we need new fans: again. The ceiling fans are not expensive at \$29 each, but the widely available Vietnamese-made fans are not high quality and are prone to burnout. However, if you've taught in the classrooms in the heat of the afternoon you'll know what a difference these fans can make.

If you are visiting the school in the near future, then this list solves your gift-giving crisis! Any contributions are welcome.

Meanwhile because of the further cash-flow bump of funding 11 new laptops for the scholarship students, the Cambodian Rural Schools Trust has launched its first ever appeal in 8 years.

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For more information: Duncan@kudos-dynamics.com

News Briefs

Volunteers for the school and SOC. We have attracted a good number of volunteers already for the December/January period. Recently Savong has been discussing his desire to attract longer-term volunteers: those who stay a number of weeks, and this is likely to change the way we communicate to would-be volunteers via the website.

The biggest story in Cambodia this last month has been the passing of King Sihanouk—an interesting figure, much loved by Cambodians despite his controversial alliances since the 1950s with, among others, China and the Khmer Rouge. But his signature theme—of seeking independence for Cambodia which he achieved in 1953 — earned the undying respect of Cambodians. For more, the Voice of America website has a thoughtful summary of the King's life.

http://www.voanews.com/content/cambodia_former_king_leaves_mixed_legacy/1526947.html

New bikes. Three boys. Three new bikes. Savong recently took three of the newer children in the care of SOC shopping in preparation for their school year—buying books, new bikes and new clothes too. Little moments like this are among the most gratifying for the director.



Some fiction reading if you are interested in Cambodia. Geoff Ryman eschews his usual genre of Science Fiction to tell an action story that unfolds as a parallel tale between ancient Angkor and the Cambodia of the last 5 years. The book isn't totally successful—for me the voices didn't ring entirely convincing— but Ryman has also done his homework and gives us more perspectives on this complex culture. ★★

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Every two or three months - sent to our fairly exclusive mailing list of around 200 people!

- Email us at duncan@kudos-dynamics.com
- And follow us on Twitter: Savong_School
- Telephone +64 9 366 0620 or Telephone Savong (Skype: Savong6) or +855 12 531 037
- To remove your name from our mailing list, please let us know.
- And if you have spare money looking for a good home, you can always link to Secure PayPal site via the www.savong.com website. On the left down the bottom of each page is a button: PLEASE DONATE. Email us if you'd like more details.