

Savong School Newsletter : Number 1

Record number of volunteers this season

This season has been a really busy one at Savong School and over recent weeks despite the tourist downturn which has hurt Siem Reap tourism by around 20% compared to last year, the school has enjoyed—really enjoyed—a record number of visitors thanks to word-of-mouth, and to the website which we largely revamped last December/January. So the school has been bucking the trends.

[More Details](#)

Orphanage Registration just about complete

Cambodian Bureaucracy can be pretty impressive! If you've been through any Cambodian airport you'll know what we mean—a lot of officials, big hats and much stamping of documents. Well, that's what Savong and assistant Director Sopheap have been going through in the process of registering the Orphanage or "Savong Orphan Centre" (SOC) which it is now the official name. All the paperwork has now been filed, along with the registration fee, so we await a rubber stamp soon!

September 2009

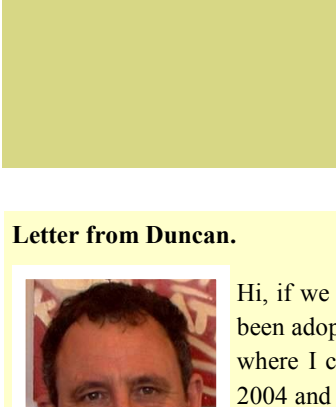


Cambodian economy has driven many children into the work force. See articles Phnom Penh Post.

The newsletter

We don't want to bombard people with information, but it is time to lift our communications a notch to let you know about the progress at the school and orphanage.

Excellent support for orphans—from Singapore and Australia



Chom Rong is like the big brother figure to the other orphan children, and this month a supporter presented him with the unbelievable: his own motorbike so he can pursue studies in Siem Reap.

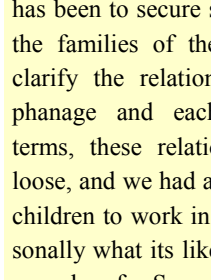
Over the last couple of months we've received excellent financial support from Singapore to finish the kitchen project at the orphanage (in time for rainy season) and to provide sponsorship which will assist the ongoing care and education of the children: 12 boys and two girls (young Sari and Sreyam.)

A feature of future newsletters will be the progress reports and news for each child.

In the meantime do let me know if you need updates. We appreciate that our communication has not always been perfect.

Name of child	Age
UTDAM	11
BUNTHEOURN	17
KADEB	17
SEYHA	17
SORM	10
MANH	11
SET	8
SREYAM	7
CHOM RONG	22
HAT	14
SOEU	13
HEAK	13
SINUON	4
SARI	9

Letter from Duncan.



Hi, if we haven't met or emailed each other, my name is Duncan Stuart and I've been adopted by the school as a kind of secretary, handling enquires and assisting where I can to help Volunteers reach the school. I first met Savong in October 2004 and we struck up a friendship then which has led to an adventure in life that I never for a minute expected. The school project was just a dream back in 2004, but this month on the 28th the three classroom school celebrates its 4th birthday, and since it opened it has continued to serve local children with an increasingly enhanced level of facility including the library and office and meeting room, and soon—a new computer classroom. I describe the project to friends as a kind of coral-reef which has started aggregating all kinds of life! On the visitor side is the spreading word of mouth, and the really generous contributions of individuals who are helping build the reef even stronger. On the local side, the school continues to attract a good number of children, and these have included students whose families can no longer provide support - not orphans exactly, but children who cannot receive care at home.

Because of this, Savong purchased land and through support has built an orphanage 800 metres from the school, and home to 14 children.

If a lot of the effort in the school last year was to introduce examinations recognised by the Ministry of Education, and to strengthen the learning facilities, Savong's main effort this year has been in securing support for the orphans, and to register the Orphanage (Savong Orphan Centre) with the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Another part of orphanage work recently has been to secure signed agreements with the families of the children in order to clarify the relationship between the orphanage and each child. By Western terms, these relationships are somewhat

loose, and we had a couple of extended families insist on taking their children out in order to put these children to work in their family businesses in town. It was quite upsetting for Savong who knows personally what it's like to have to work as a young child. The children did not want to go, but the lesson was clear for Savong: to contractualise the relationship so that the school can offer continuity and education to these children both at the local state schools and at Savong's free language school.

I've noticed this year that the amount of communication (or should I say the size of the Savong School community) has grown significantly. Part of this is due to word of mouth: friends telling friends, but part of this is also due to the internet presence we've been building: one precious link at a time. I'd been thinking about doing a newsletter, but real action was prompted three weeks back by Nick, a supporter living in Singapore: a good idea.

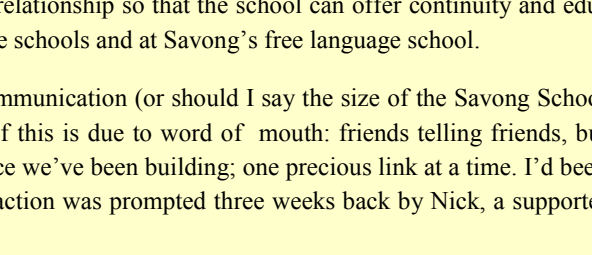
We've always tried to keep our communications non-pushy (those desperate appeals for cash, etcetera) but for supporters it is good to know what's happening, and to stay in touch with the project. I'm in daily contact with Savong (he's on Skype: Savong6 is his number) but even so, when I last visited in April I was amazed and surprised by how the school had developed—landscaping instigated by an Australian, Ray: the place really did feel like a school campus.

I'm trusting you are each keeping well and healthily busy in life. One thing I've noticed about the people we meet via Savong's School: just what an energetic, interesting, well-travelled and busy group of people you all are.

This week in Cambodia it is Pchom Ben festival which comes at the end of rice harvest. Families make a point of going back to their homelands, offerings are made at pagodas and temples - it is the Cambodian equivalent of Thanksgiving. That seems a good moment to stop, to thank each of you for your own visits, volunteering and contributions to the school and to the orphans.

Kindest regards

Duncan



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