



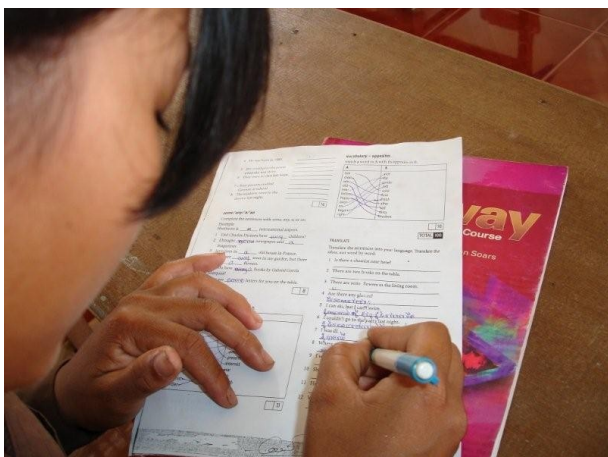
Free education for children in rural Cambodia



SAVONG SCHOOL AND SAVONG ORPHAN CENTRE

## Savong School Newsletter : Number 4 : Feb 2010

### University Scholarship programme launched for 2010.



On the last Friday of January senior students at Savong School sat examinations which will help select a small number of students as eligible for Savong School University Scholarships.

The result: some 101 students (71 boys, 30 girls) scored high marks, and from these we will find the candidates depending on our success with fundraising this year.

The scholarships will provide assistance to help poor rural students with good aptitude to afford a university education that would otherwise be out of reach.

In Cambodia, according to UN figures, fewer than 2% of adults have a tertiary degree, and while new universities have sprung up in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, access for poor rural families is prohibitive—not only the fees, which can be as low as \$350 per annum for undergraduates, but for costs such as textbooks and transport from the countryside into town each day. The scholarship programme is being designed to surmount these obstacles.

The annual amount will be around \$1000—or \$20 per week—while we intend to supply a laptop to each scholar as well: a one off cost of around \$400.

A big facet of the program is to match the ongoing commitment of sponsors with an equally reliable commitment from the students' families: to ensure that promising students aren't pulled out of the program simply because of short term needs.

For this reason, once the most promising candidates have been identified, Savong and teachers will interview the students and their families, to discuss the commitment required and clearly frame the discussion around the fact that the university education is a real investment into the future of their family. (Not all rural folk see it that way.)

Another part of the programme's design will be the monthly obligation of the students to do some hours of teaching at the school: a means of passing on student experience and raising the profile of tertiary education in a district where, for now,

(according to 2005 Government figures) fewer than 12 per cent of eligible young people are even enrolled in Grade 10-12 of secondary school. As much as anything, the teaching obligation will also enable the school—as co-ordinator of the scholarships—to keep tabs with the university students, and make sure they are coping okay with university. Scholarships will be withdrawn from those who actively drop out of the system.

The programme represents a significant step by the school to deliver on its mission to provide life opportunities to poorer rural students. Not all will get degrees, for sure, but the aim is to give the best and most committed students from Bakong district the very best chance of succeeding.

Please contact us if you are interested in supporting a scholarship student on a monthly basis—helping an individual attain an other impossible dream.

### PROGRESS AT THE ORPHANAGE

Well for those of you who can read Khmer—here's the certificate for the Savong Orphan Centre.



### The newsletter

If you know any friend who ought to be on our newsletter mailing list email us at [duncan@kudos-dynamics.com](mailto:duncan@kudos-dynamics.com) You can also find Savong School group on Facebook. And now Twitter (Savong\_School) And we constantly update the website too: [www.savong.com](http://www.savong.com)

## Letter from Duncan



January was a really tough month for Savong. Some of you will have met his older brother Savet who, for the past 12 months had been working at the orphanage. Savet, 34, had in some ways come home to his family after many years in Poipet. His life was particularly tough. Born just months after Pol pot came to power, he had the misfortune to arrive on this planet at the worst possible place and time. By age 7, the family was so poor that Savet chose to leave home, and he made his own way—eking survival from what he could find and from begging. As a caretaker, cook and general father figure at the orphanage, Savet could identify very closely with the situation of the children: most from



*Savet had come to family this last year.*

families facing poverty, and in his quiet way he showed a lot of care. That's him, crouching, in the photo on left—photo by Dr Colm Power, a great supporter from Ireland.

By early December Savet's health deteriorated. He had cancer, and after check-ups in Siem Reap he was taken to Phnom Penh hospital for further diagnosis. By this stage, doctors said, they were no longer able to offer any effective treatment, and so Savet returned home to the family in Siem Reap.

It was good that he could be with family, not just now but over the past 12 months, yet despite a prognosis that gave him maybe three months to live, Savet survived for only another fortnight. He was in some pain but Savong says he died in peace and at ease.

That day Savong was hosting a big party at the orphanage, the commitment to this had already been made—though the timing proved unfortunate, and, soon after he received the phone call, Savong slipped away to head to his father's distraught household. I spoke with him next day, though actually our phone call

was mostly a shared silence: in the background I could hear the Buddhist chanting.

I don't think it is over-dramatising things to say that Savet was yet another victim of the Pol Pot legacy: his life scarred by the tough graft of his early years. I can scarcely imagine what regrets and what anguish his parents felt when they lost their son for a second time. Cambodia has depths of grief that will take generations to heal.

## New enrolments at Savong Orphan Centre



*Five of the SOC crew Manh, Leak, Lit, Bros and Sehn.*

There have been a few comings and goings at the Savong Orphan Centre this last few weeks with 28 children now living here. Sometimes a family who gratefully gives up their child for care here will change their mind—for example if members of the family are moving to homelands elsewhere in Cambodia. However, overall, more children have joined the family and there are now more girls in the group. All but the very youngest are receiving a full education with school and after-school coaching—and should you visit, you'll find a number have really remarkable English fluency.

In the last few weeks the Palti family from Australia revisited the school and orphanage and shouted all the children to the market for a massive shopping expedition—they all chose for themselves new clothes—and later to a restaurant where the children ate like kings. This Melbourne based family is taking an active role in helping Savong manage the orphanage, and have generously committed to sponsoring a number of the children while also acting as a contact point—sharing their story—with other potential sponsors.

*Also a new note to visitors—before you visit you need to bring a photocopy of your passport. Child safety policy.*

FAMILY	GIVEN NAME	AGE	SEX	BACKGROUND
CHAY	BRON	10	F	I lived in Human Rights organization for a while but it couldn't support me, brother and my sister then this organization gave me to Savong to care.
CHAY	KRUOCH	14	F	I live in S.O.C because my parents separated each other and I and my sister and brother could not study and no food to eat.
CHAY	SHUN	6	F	I'm so happy to be able living with Savong and have enough food and can study Khmer and English.
CHEO	SENH	16	M	My parents are farmers and they always work very hard and get very small income to support the family and they can't afford me to school.
DI	SO THEA	12	M	Joined in November 2009. I don't have a dad and my dad just died around one year ago. My mum is a farmer. I like S.O.C very much and it can help me a lot .
DOM	KADEB	17	M	I don't have a dad, I only have a mum, my mum is a drinker she never spent time to look after me enough. I'm lucky to live in S.O.C.
DORN	SET	8	M	I live in Poipet near Thailand border. I'm happy very much to be living with Savong.
KAM	KIM SAN	16	F	I live Poipet nearby Thailand and no have a dad and my mum lives very far from me. I'm happy very much to live here.
KAY	RATANA	4	M	I like Savong and he is very better than my dad and looks after me. I am very happy to be here.
KEN	MANH	11	M	I also live in Poipet near Thailand. I live in S.O.C because my family can not afford me to school and feed me .
KROL	KLOEURN	6	M	My parents had violence each other and have split. I and brother can live with my mum in S.O.C and my mum is a cook.
KROL	SREY NEANG	10	F	My parents had violence each other and have split. I and brother can live with my mum in S.O.C and my mum is a cook.
MAO	HEAK	13	M	My parents are farmers and very poor they can't feed me and afford me to school because they have many children.
MONG	LEAK	14	M	Why I live with Savong because my parents are farmers and they can't afford me to school .
NHUK	BON THOEURN	14	M	S.O.C is very important for myself and my life because I can go to school and have enough food every day. I'm too luckier than my friends. (Note Bun Thoeurn has had a name change.)
ROEURN	SEYHA	17	M	when I lived with parents and came back home my dad hit me and my mum as well and I never be happy and always be sad inside.
SO	KEY	4	F	I can live here because Savong and like here very much and can study English and play with some friends.
SO	KIM	10	M	I like S.O.C than my home and my dad had violence with my mum and made me very hard in living .
SUNN	CHEAB	15	M	I can go to school and have enough food because Savong allowed me living here and can study English in the morning as well.
TE	UTDORM	11	M	I live in Chorm Bork Village, Roluos Commune. My mum gave me to Savong to look after because she can't afford me to school and eat not enough.
THAY	THEOURN	17	M	I have a mum but no have a dad, when I lived with mum, my uncle liked taking me to work in Siem Reap and I never study enough because the family's poor.
TUCH	SOEU	13	M	I have a mum and my dad died many years ago. My mum is a nun and brothers and sister feed her. Thanks Savong allow me live here.
TUN	BROS	15	M	Joined in November 2009. When I lived with my parents I liked collecting cow dung to sell and put around my vegetables at my home.
VOEURN	CHOM RONG	22	M	When I was born I never seen my mum but my grand-mum told me she is still alive. My dad has a step wife and has four children.
VOEURN	SI NUON	4	M	I'm so happy to live with Savong and have enough food .
VOEURN	SORM	10	M	I live in Poipet near Thailand border and I don't have a dad I only have one sister and two brothers.
VOEURN	SREY AM	7	F	I'm lucky very much who can live with Savong and have enough food and can go to school. Thanks Savong.
VOEURN	VEV	13	M	My parents abandoned me when I was a baby and Savong and his family look after me until now and now I can live with Savong in S.O.C.

Gold denotes New member of the SOC family.



# Short takes

- While marking the university scholarship examinations, the school has found a few really top level students who, alas, are still ineligible for university education because they have not completed High School. The reason is simple: poverty—and so Savong has started an initiative of sponsoring these particularly bright students through their final years at High School so they can then have another chance at winning a University Scholarship.



- We've entered the Twitter universe. Not everybody's cup of tea, for sure, but by posting messages about the school we will be able to tap in to visitors and volunteers to Cambodia who can't reach a computer—and be able to post messages about the school. The presence also aids us with the search engines. Follow the school on Twitter: by looking up: Savong\_School



- While we're on the web, there are three new YouTube videos concerning Savong's School. Two are from XinMin Secondary School of Singapore from where a group of students came to visit late last year. Their videos are worth checking out. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRWosFfuzLk&feature=auto> is a direct appeal for sponsors, directing them to our website. Their longer clip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELtMh0BQWS8> is a journal of their involvement at the Orphanage. Meanwhile we've posted a short backgrounder to the Savong School Scholarships—also on YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MV-oJXktNRE&feature=related>
- Hong Kong based Butterfly Dreams who retail over the internet extremely luxurious bedlinens are very kind supporters who show their support for Savong's School—check them out, and check out their fabulous product. Tim and Edith—thank you! <http://www.butterflydreams.com.hk/>



## FACT FILE: SIEM REAP PROVINCE



Savong School is located in Bakong District, part of Siem Reap province. Visitors to Siem Reap town may be forgiven for thinking that the global economy has worked wonders for local wealth. With land prices skyrocketing and the business sector growing; clearly some people are doing nicely.

But step out of town, by even a few kilometers and the story is absolutely different.

Last year I spoke with a woman at the main vegetable market on Number 6 Highway—a bustling morning market where vendors stake out their spot as early as 4:00am in the morning having cycled in from the countryside. The woman was quite typical of the vendors—she had vegetables for sale—and she was both at the mercy of the weather, but also of the spot prices and demand from the townsfolk, who in turn are reliant on the highly erratic tourist sector. Some weeks this woman could earn \$30—but on other weeks her turnover might be as low as 20,000 Riel—or just \$5. The situation for her family is typical of the mostly rural population in the district.

According to 2004 Government figures, some:

- 9% of households have toilet facilities.
- 8.6% of households have electricity.
- 30.7% of households have safe drinking water.
- Some 65.7% of households have none of these amenities at all.

In 1998 (the previous Census—the next results will be from 2008) *most* (but not all) of Siem Reap province was identified as having more than 75% of the population below the official poverty line while in 2002 the estimate incidence of poverty in Siem Reap was 54% - that is some 356,000 people of the estimated 660,000 population: the highest poverty rate of all but 1 of Cambodia's 24 provinces.

## SAVONG SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

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Questions or comments? E-mail us at [duncan@kudos-dynamics.com](mailto: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

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