

P: Box 3040 Bassendean Morley DC
WA 6942 AUSTRALIA
T: +61 8 9275 0677
F: +61 8 9275 8634
E: cambodia@awarecam.org.au
W: www.awarecam.org.au

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Dr Gary Hewett



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Hello Everyone
I trust you all got more than enough chocolate over Easter and have decided the only way to take off those unwanted calories is working that little bit harder on doing something significant for our children in Cambodia.

This year certainly got off to a tragic start in South East Asia with the Boxing Day Tsunami and recent earthquakes in Indonesia. The one good result to come from it is that the world's focus has now been redirected to the continuing challenges we all face in the region and hearts have been opened, possibly for the first time,

to do something to help. This month, a team of teachers from Perth College will be taking up twelve year 10 girls to Sunshine House to see firsthand the opportunities that all of us have to make that difference in someone else's life less fortunate than ourselves. I want to personally wish them all a safe and productive trip and look forward to their feedback when they return.

Remember, "Good people do for themselves, great people do for others."

On a sad note, while Ray our National Director has written a

subsequent article in recognition of the wonderful work Sophea has done over recent years in the Eco-farm, I just want to send my heartfelt sympathy to Aun and her family on the passing of her husband in late January.

My thanks go out to everyone who continue to do their part in supporting the Awareness Cambodia dream, whether that's raising financial support, contributing directly, working on the field or in the office. Have a wonderful 2005.

Gary Hewett
CEO

Meet some of children at "Sunshine House"

Photos taken in October '04

Special points of interest:

- Tim (Eco-farm coordinator) & wife Robyn have arrived in Cambodia. "Welcome"
- Purchase of 4 wheel drive for Phnom Penh is underway.
- Our water problem at Sunshine House has been rectified with the sinking of 2 new wells.



Above: Khan & Sophi



Above: Sokhua



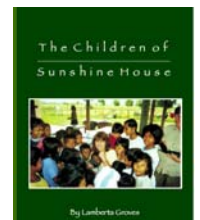
Above: Sophoan



Above: Raksmei

"The children of Sunshine House"

Our book, "The Children of Sunshine House" is now being sold on-line. It is featured at Liberty Gift and may be purchased as an e-book by going to www.libertygift.com, and following the prompts. Some hard copies are still available and orders may be placed at our office.



In memory of Sophea



Reporter: Ray Toy

Shamim and I had returned to Phnom Penh on 8th January; after spending Christmas with family in India. Ka-Ming met us at the airport and on the way home we learned that Sophea (our Eco-farm manager had undergone an operation in Phnom Penh to drain an abscess in the tissue surrounding his stomach and intestines, the operation was successful and Sophea was ok.) Our first week back in Phnom Penh was busy—catching up on work. Sophea appeared to be recovering well. My immediate concern was Sophea and Srey Aun's financial capacity to meet the hospital bills—as I didn't want Sophea leaving the hospital until he was well enough to do so; arrangements were made to meet these costs and we at Awareness Cambodia extend our gratitude to those who contributed.

On Sunday 16th Jan I received a call from Ka-Ming informing me Sophea had deteriorated rapidly. Pushpa and I decided to visit the hospital first thing on Monday morning to assess the situation.

A typical Khmer hospital usually has about 3 patients per room. The room is about 5m square and may or may not have hygiene facilities. It is the responsibility of the relatives to care for a patient, including cooking, the purchase of medical supplies etc. Relatives must stay in the room to nurse sick family members. It is not uncommon for the whole family to stay. Cambodian public hospitals are run down and inadequately staffed due in part to the low wages. You simply cannot compare them with any counterparts in a developed nation.

We arrived at the hospital early Monday morning and Sophea didn't look well. He appeared slightly jaundiced and was bloated due to the fact he was on a constant supply of intravenous saline. He was conscious but couldn't recognise us. Whilst talking to Aun (his wife) we discovered that there were no doctors in attendance over the weekend, in which time Sophea had deteriorated. After much searching we found the surgeon who had performed his operation. During conversation we discovered Sophea had neither eaten for two weeks; nor had he been given any blood—there seemed little medical action concerning his

condition. I soon learned another aspect of the Khmer culture; perceiving a tragic lack of hope, (this mentality is evident across the board from the family to the doctors), they were all resigned to the inevitable. Families neither questioned nor challenged the doctors and the doctors had a *"his prognosis is bad"* attitude. It was clear to us, if ever we needed to hope, it was now.

Aun was reluctant to move Sophea to another hospital—she was so scared & confused. We had to respect her wishes but needed to encourage her. We understood the odds weren't good if he stayed where he was. Meanwhile with our limited medical knowledge we encouraged the doctors into action. Sophea's blood pressure was low and it was decided he needed blood. Pushpa swung into action and managed to get blood donations from visitors staying at Sunshine House. In Cambodia you cannot receive blood unless you have first given it or you must purchase some. It is expensive compared with local wages. I tried desperately to get a western doctor to assess Sophea—phoning and visiting several doctors and hospitals. Pushpa and I even met the expatriate director of a charity hospital—to our dismay they had no beds available and a western doctor would not be available until the following week. I managed to get a Khmer doctor from a foreign run clinic to visit. Unfortunately he was of little help and Sophea slipped into unconsciousness the following day and was placed into *"intensive care"* - the name doesn't project the reality of what actually happens.

Intensive care was mostly staffed by student doctors and there were no nurses in attendance. A doctor I talked with was a 3rd year student, and it was very rare to see a qualified doctor. A standard hospital room in a developed nation is far better equipped than the intensive care unit in the "Russian Hospital" as it is known. Shamim and I got to work. We requested a tube be put down Sophea's throat so he could be fed with a nutritional drink that Pushpa supplied. Shamim showed Aun how to feed Sophea, even though it was her first time undertaking such a task. We got the doctors to insert a catheter—after all what goes in must come out and Sophea had been on saline for some time. There was no doubt we were over our heads in terms of medical knowledge but we persisted encouraging doctors to do their best. We visited twice daily, bringing food and water

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(continues page 3) - **“In memory of Sophea”**

Whilst ensuring Sophea’s medical needs were being addressed. A doctor commented to us on being amazed that western people would look after their employees in such a dedicated manner after he observed us caring for Sophea. Sadly Sophea passed away enroute back to Sunshine House where his family had decided they wanted him to live out his final days.

Sunday was truly a sad day, Sophea was Lapsong’s brother (our driver at Sunshine House). Sophea was a good man; always honest and hard working. It is largely through his efforts that the Eco-farm is the success it is today. We were saddened at our loss and felt deeply for Aun and their two little children. Over the next few days the children and staff of Sunshine House were given the opportunity to pay their respects. Sophea will be sadly missed.

After taking some time Aun has decided to continue working on the Eco-farm and is now the Eco-farm Manager.

The legacy of Cambodia's past still lives on the physical and mental scars remain—the most devastating being a sense of hopelessness. Founder of “Success Magazine”, Orison S Martin said *“There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, no tonic so powerful as expectation for something tomorrow”*. Together we have the opportunity to provide the medicine the people of Cambodia so desperately need to help heal this nation—a hope for a brighter future.

Ray Toy

Cambodian National Director

Who is Awareness Cambodia?

Cambodia saw the systematic execution of the top 25% of its population under Pol Pot in the late 70s and now reels under a 2nd disaster, having the highest rate of AIDS per capita outside of Africa.

After a life-changing visit to Cambodia in 1995, Perth dentist Dr Gary Hewett founded Awareness Cambodia Inc. Awareness Cambodia Inc is a not-for-profit charity which takes in orphaned children in Cambodia, who either have been orphaned by AIDS or who are themselves HIV+ or suffer from AIDS. Sunshine House is where we house, feed and educate our children.

How do we fund Awareness Cambodia

Awareness Cambodia is funded solely by donations & sponsorship. Our staff is made up primarily of volunteers in Australia and Cambodia. We employ local Khmer staff to act as carers and role models at Sunshine House.

This has at times proved challenging but we have a firm commitment to ensuring our donations get to the Cambodian people and our on the ground programs. This edition of our newsletter contains a few stories on how previous donations have been used to change lives.

Within Australia all contributions made to Awareness Cambodia Overseas Aid Fund are fully tax deductible.

Lending a helping hand



Report: Rick Bristow

Lyn Bristow is a teacher at Northern Beaches Christian School (Sydney, Australia) who teaches year one pupils. One of her students, a girl, has been touched by what Lyn has shared about Cambodia and her visits to Sunshine House. The girl’s father was so moved by his daughter’s stories he wrote a letter to Lyn asking if he could help. He suggested he could provide small sized clothes available through his Surf Shop. Thanks to his generosity, Lyn’s husband, Rick has taken 120 kilos of brand new clothes to Cambodia. Some of which were distributed at Sunshine House. Clothes were also distributed at a needy village called Steng Trong.



Thankyou

Right: Children from Sunshine House displaying new clothes.

Contacting us:



Mailing Address:

**Box 3040 Bassendean
Morley DC, WA 6943
AUSTRALIA**

Office Address:

**International Headquarters
Awareness Cambodia Inc
8/222 Walter Road
Morley, Western Australia 6062**

Telephone: +61 8 9275 0677

Fax: +61 8 9275 8634

Email: cambodia@awarecam.org.au

Web: www.awarecam.org.au

ABN: 69234355895