



# AWARENESS CAMBODIA

Issue 3

2007

P: Box 3040 Bassendean Morley  
DC WA 6942 AUSTRALIA

T: +61 8 9275 0677

F: +61 8 9275 8634

E: [cambodia@awarecam.org.au](mailto:cambodia@awarecam.org.au)

W: [www.awarecam.org.au](http://www.awarecam.org.au)

[WWW.AWARECAM.ORG.AU](http://WWW.AWARECAM.ORG.AU)

## The Why & Who of ACI

In the late 70s Cambodia was bombed, heavily land mined and saw the systematic execution of the top 25% of its population under Pol Pot. It now reels under a second disaster - AIDS, amongst the highest rates outside Africa. Still recovering from its violent and traumatic history, much of the country remains without any reliable economic or social infrastructure.

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. Its first project (Sunshine House) takes in orphaned children in Cambodia who either have been orphaned by AIDS, or are themselves HIV+.

Sunshine House provides a stable environment where our children are housed, fed and educated. They are equipped with agricultural skills through the means of an onsite eco-farm. ACI is transforming Sunshine House from its current "small village" status into a larger community called:

### "The Awareness Cambodia Community" Kompong Speu

It will embrace medical and dental clinics, a House of Progress for our developing young adults, a day hospital and further business development within the eco-farm. With AIDS maintaining an alarming rate throughout the country, many children have been abandoned or orphaned and are easy prey for the drug traffickers, forced labour and prostitution. Child prostitution remains a serious problem in Cambodia. UNICEF estimates that 30 to 35% of all sex workers are aged between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

Awareness Cambodia has worked on the ground for over a decade targeting the ever changing needs of Cambodia, taking ideas such as Sunshine House, House of Progress and Operation Nightingale from a dream and making them a reality. We invite you to partner with us in seeing these initiatives' continued development.



Gary & Kim back row  
with the family

## "Rebuilding the children of Cambodia"

On behalf of the team at Awareness Cambodia, let me start by extending a warm welcome to all our supporters and friends.

Earlier this year I was interested to read in the Macquarie Dictionary's Word of the Year 2006, that on top of the list was a new word; affluenza. It's a noun meaning the dissatisfaction that accompanies consumerism as a path to happiness.

Hamilton and Dennis's book by the same name poses this question: "if the economy (Australia's) has been doing so well, why are we not becoming happier?" The authors note that our GDP doubled between 1980 and 2005, but that "it is now well established that once income levels reach a particular threshold, further increases do not increase national happiness".

They went on further to argue that affluenza causes over-consumption, "luxury fever", consumer debt, overwork, waste, and harm to the environment. These pressures lead to "psychological disorders, alienation and distress" causing people to "self-medicate with mood-altering drugs and excessive alcohol consumption".

Bearing their thoughts in mind, I suggest the work we partner in; to care for the sick, clothe, feed, educate and give orphaned children a second chance at life, isn't simply helping those less fortunate than ourselves. It helps us escape this insidious malaise, affluenza, preparing the way for us to get the most out of life.

So once again, a heartfelt thank you to all our partners as we create new opportunities for the children and poor of Cambodia.

Gary Hewett

Founder/Chief Executive Officer

## From Kim's Desk

Let me introduce you to Danelle Legg who has taken over my role on the front desk. Danelle will now be overseeing sponsorship, newsletters, receipting and so much more. Please don't hesitate to contact myself or Danelle should you need assistance; our office hours are

**Tuesday to Friday - 9am and 3:30pm.**



Danelle

On a personal note I want to extend a heartfelt *thankyou* to all who have made my time on the front desk so enjoyable. Over the last 4 years I have had the privilege of being actively involved in the growth at Awareness Cambodia. It truly has been a highlight in my life! I will now enjoy a little extra freedom, allowing me to travel more with Gary to Cambodia, so together we continue developing the bright future of "Awareness Cambodia".

## Lap Top news! Lap Top news! Lap Top news! Lap Top news!



A quick update for the Perth people who received my email requesting second hand laptops. The exciting news is I received 8 excellent recycled machines from Wayne, Deputy Principal of Girrawheen SHS and the Angkor Project. Two will be going into our new project, the Internet Café, to serve as internet phones, one used within the Angkor project and the other five machines used at House of Progress to assist our teenagers with their upper school studies. And finally a big thank you to Kayvin and Yearling who so generously donated a brand new laptop to assist in our growing responsibilities at the Perth office.

**We couldn't do it alone!**

## Volunteering in Cambodia



My Story By Blaise Rego

Recently I returned from a trip to Vietnam and Cambodia, and while in Cambodia, I was fortunate enough to volunteer my services in an orphanage just out of the capital Phnom Penh.

I volunteered with an organisation called Awareness Cambodia founded by a local Perth dentist, Gary Hewett, and worked in an orphanage in Cambodia called Sunshine House which was erected in 2000 from donations made to Awareness Cambodia to make a home for children orphaned due to the ravages of AIDS.

Sunshine House is more like a small village than a 'house', with 49 children aged between 2 and 17 living there. It is like one big happy family with everyone having meals together, with breakfast at 6.30am before most of the kids go off to school, and then lunch at about 11.30am and dinner at 5.30pm. All the children have set chores, rosters and different classes during the day, and even the little kids are taught by the staff during the day. There is usually time for games of volleyball, soccer or cards after dinner, before a debrief from the staff and carers and then a sing along before bed at 7.30pm. I didn't know what to expect prior to going there and what I experienced was far more than I

expected.

I remember the day I met the National Liaison Officer, Pushpa Nabham who was orientating me to the culture, amenities and life at Sunshine House, and she asked me if I was ok with rats. I thought that she was joking but she wasn't. I absolutely hate rats and just the thought of them was giving me second thoughts of packing up and heading home. I only encountered what I presumed was a rat on two occasions, and don't know if it was them that startled me or me that startled them, but either way, we both ran for cover.

The amenities at Sunshine House, were very comfortable, although basic. I was fortunate enough to be housed in a guest house which had a western toilet and a shower, a lot more than I was expecting. The electricity was powered from a generator that was run during certain times of the day and would occasionally break down. I managed to help fix it on a couple of occasions and then I was tagged as the generator expert and called upon to help repair it when it wasn't working. I didn't mind except for the oil and grease I had to wash off my clothes afterwards.

As part of Sunshine House, an Eco-farm is being developed with a piggery, chooks, ducks and some vegies, not only to help sustain Sunshine House, but also provide agriculture training for the children and create an opportunity for long term self sufficiency.

I was asked to teach the staff and some of the older children Senior First Aid, which initially didn't pose a problem, until I found out it had to be

translated into Khmer. I had a translator, Rahour, who is one of the staff working at Sunshine House, and he was a blessing to me and turned out to be my right hand man for countless things. You don't realise how difficult it is to teach in a foreign language and on many occasions when the message wasn't getting through and the poor acting was failing as well, the only thing to do was laugh and move on before trying again at a later time. I was very impressed at the end of my 4 weeks, that I had accomplished what initially seemed like an impossible task, and successfully taught Senior First Aid to my 25 students.

Another venture being implemented by Awareness Cambodia is Operation Nightingale, which is a project employing local Khmer and overseas doctors to provide free medical clinics to remote villages and provinces near Sunshine House. I was privileged to be able to assist with the Health Clinic on a couple of occasions, and was overwhelmed by the 50 or so people waiting for hours to be seen by a doctor. The first occasion there was a visiting doctor from England, Dr Andy, to lend a hand with Dr Piseth, and I was able to assist him, along with my interpreter Rahour, to see patients. I mainly took blood samples and blood pressures and gave medications while the consultation was going on. The language barrier is a huge disadvantage for diagnosing the illnesses that are presenting, and not to mention that the majority of cases are chronic problems that have been left to fester and worsen until they reach an unbearable level.

*Blaise*

*Article kindly reprinted from HeartBeat Magazine August 07 edition with permission from Blaise Rego*



Above: Blaise training Sunshine House staff in first aid.



Above: Left to right, Dr Andy, Dr Piseth and Blaise working at Operation Nightingale



Above: Cleaning the water tank, the liner had a tear and couldn't be repaired. A new liner was sent up in the container. (See container story page 4)



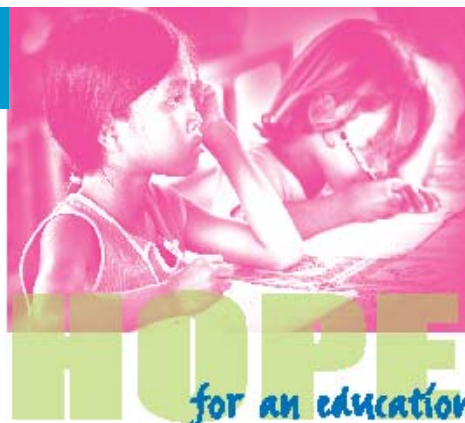
Above: Volunteers accommodation. This was initially a tent under shelter, an idea borrowed from Africa. The rats made a quick meal of the tent and we have put in wooden walls which works a treat.

## Sponsorship News



Srey Mao

On June 28th 2001, Pushpa received a phone call concerning 2 orphans who had been abandoned at a Health Centre. The children's mother had died of AIDS and for approximately two months their grandmother had looked after Srey Mao and her brother Thon. The grandmother had 14 children of her own, of which 12 were still alive. Her new husband had instructed her to "get rid" of the two children so she took them to the health clinic and asked the staff to leave them on the streets of Phnom Penh.



HOPE  
for an education

Because of Awareness Cambodia's project—Sunshine House, these two adorable children, were saved the horror of being left alone on the streets of Phnom Penh. When Srey Mao arrived at Sunshine House she was covered with infectious sores. After a medical exam she was found to be HIV positive. As she was being cleaned by one of the Sunshine House staff she asked, "why are you cleaning me? Will this make me more beautiful"?



Srey Mao

Today Srey Mao is a bundle of joy. She laughs heartily and loudly and is a happy girl by nature. She enjoys riding her bicycle, playing marbles, reading picture books and drawing coloured pictures. She is not too keen on studying but tries hard. She has been on ARV drugs for 4 years and these drugs have greatly improved her quality of life.

Because of sponsorship Srey Mao leads a very different existence than what so easily could have been.



Srey Mao

### Child Sponsorship

We have two forms of sponsorship that helps fund our work in Cambodia. Child Sponsorship and the Monthly Partnership Program. Both programs help us meet the cost of running Sunshine House and House of Progress.

A child sponsor is someone who has made the decision to personally invest in the life of a child in need. Through sponsorship your child's life is totally transformed. Child sponsorship provides food, clothing, a home, school uniforms, school fees, medical support etc. We employ local Khmer women to function as surrogate family figures and care givers at Sunshine House and House of Progress. See above how life changing coming to Sunshine House was for Srey Mao. We currently have children available for sponsorship at Sunshine House. Email the office today for more details.

### Monthly Partnership Program

The most consistent and daunting challenge we face is raising the funds to continue to make a difference in Cambodia. Our MPP Sponsors donate a regular amount each month, which is a great way of assisting, as you only need to commit to what is affordable. As part of the MPP we send a yearly report in Jan of each year and a 12 month statement issued at the end of each financial year. Our child sponsorship program and eco farm go some way to meeting our costs at SH and HOP, but it is our generous MPP Sponsors who supplement the budget.



Above: The outside of the café will in time be an alfresco area. The Internet Café occupies the ground floor of HOP.

Exciting news! The computers have been purchased and broadband is now connected. The Internet Café is located on the ground floor of the House of Progress in Kompong Speu. It will form a communication hub for local residents and tourists. One of its aims is to encourage the people within the local township and villages to learn new technology tools and advancements. An important aspect will be to establish a training program at the café, during quiet times for our young people, to expand their skills and open up wider opportunities within the work force. Some of the opportunities for our children at House of Progress will be the training in hospitality, IT, small business management, meal preparation and financial management.

### Internet Café Update

To our knowledge, as with the Eco-farm, this idea hasn't been tried previously in the area, but we are convinced with the right input and training it will grow to become a business that not only makes the House of Progress financially self-sustaining but also supports the local economy. To develop the Internet Café we are seeking funds. If you would like to partner with us in its continued development, please contact the office.



A special thankyou to **Missione Possibile, Designtec & Vision Cambodia** who have financially assisted ACI with the initial fit out.

**Awareness Cambodia Newsletter**



## Container for Cambodia

After what seemed like endless packing, it was time for the container to have one final carton squeezed where “no carton has gone before”. Endless paperwork now complete, our freight has hit the high seas with the ship docking in Cambodia in a few weeks time, where Lesley - our Project Manager will organise the unpacking and delivery of goods to our various projects.

Periodically we need to get heavy and awkward equipment on the deck and nothing works like a container; this time is no exception. This container for example will store a new generator for Sunshine House to replace our tired old generator (thank you Bentley Imports ) which has recently been surviving on a “wing and a prayer”, many

cubic metres of school books which will go to our sister schools located in Kompong Speu (Angkor Project) greatly assisting the school libraries (see picture below of a current school library) as well as numerous boxes of medical supplies for Operation Nightingale to assist our clinics in distributing free pharmaceuticals; a very costly exercise - thank you to Symbion for your generosity.

Our sincere thanks go to Simon & Amanda and Morley Rotary whose donations made sending the container possible. The truth be told, it is simply impossible to mention everyone who helps make these things happen, so on behalf of our team at Awareness Cambodia let me express our appreciation to every company, group, business and individual for your partnership in making the load of others in Cambodia just a little bit easier.



Above: Just a few of the boxes that are heading to Cambodia in the container.



Above: Korn Pissey High School, the library shelf is situated in the rafters.



Above: Kitchen utensils kindly donated by Propert Australia. These will be going to various ACI projects.

# RATS

Report by Kim Hewett

I'm always fascinated by the problems we encounter while working in Cambodia, and the lateral thinking needed to solve them. Due to limited resources, the solutions need to be ingenious and cost effective. Our latest problem is big, hairy rats! We have found the best way to keep Sunshine House from being overrun by these furry creatures, is to employ local rat catchers from the village. Every two months they undertake a 'rat clean out' and for each rat caught we pay 300 reil (10 cents). This unconventional method works on three levels — it financially assists the villagers, is eco-friendly, and the field rats are also a good food source for the villagers. I've been told they taste quite good, although personally I have never been tempted to try satay rodent. Fortunately, our 'rat catcher' keeps the pesky problem under control. These rats can do a lot of damage as they eat through just about everything! Recently, a rat got into our water storage tank and damaged the lining. This is an urgent problem as we are in the wet season, and collecting water for the coming summer months is a priority. A repair patch was hastily couriered to Cambodia with high hopes of a cheap repair; but sadly it proved ineffective and a new liner was purchased in Perth costing ACI \$1 500.00. Simple things we take for granted like mains water and power are only a dream at Sunshine House. Unexpected costs are always disappointing and trying to stretch the budget is a constant undertaking. But the silver lining was that the container was still docked in Perth and we were able to ship it to Cambodia without added expense. Our hope is that it will be installed before the dry season is upon us. If not, we will need to apply our creative thinking yet again and come up with a bargain plan!

*As I was editing this story an email arrived from Pushpa with the following quote : “Last night rats killed 10 ducklings. They can find the smallest hole in the wire fence and get in for the kill! They are a menace”*

**We currently have children available for sponsorship at Sunshine House & House of Progress. Email the office today for more details.**



## A sale in a swimwear shop On a stormy winters day

Report by: Lamberta Groves

Kerrie Dickson, the owner of LARX, a well known swimwear shop on the Northern Beaches peninsular of Sydney, decided to have a sale with all proceeds of selected items to go to Awareness Cambodia. The date was set and every effort was made to make sure the day would be successful.

Advertisements were placed in the local newspaper and items were selected for the sale. Liz Hird and myself were recruited as volunteers to "man the tables" for Awareness Cambodia.



On Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2007, Sydney (and much of NSW) was hit by the wildest storms in 30 years. Great day for a sale in a swimwear shop, I thought. The decision had already been made to have sale items for Awareness Cambodia placed on tables OUTSIDE the shop and we decided not to change the plan. Liz and I set up a couple of tables and racks of clothes outside and noticed that there were very few people in the area but there was plenty of rain and good strong winds gusting through the streets.

I had an idea to increase interest "I will wear some of the merchandise". Being cold and windy I decided swimwear wasn't an option so I put on a hat and scarf. One customer looked at me and said, "I was going to buy that scarf but now that I've seen it on you, I don't want it". Mmmmmm that strategy didn't work I thought to myself. As I was pondering my sales routine and taking mental notes on how to improve, we heard a mighty roar—the wind had taken one of the racks. Clothes were billowing out the sides and it was rocketing towards the road. Liz ran like a startled gazelle and managed to catch it. I had visions of cars racing a rack of clothes and the clothes winning!



Above: Lamberta & Liz

Later that afternoon a shop assistant had her wallet taken from the staff room. We had a look at the close circuit TV to find the culprits. The cameras had a clear picture of the theft so we cancelled cards etc and called the police: real detective stuff.

So, did we sell anything? With so many adventures that day there hardly seemed time for a sale, but in spite of all our series of events we made over \$2000.00. Now, there has to be a lesson in this so I made one up for you!

*"Find the right cause and even a sale in a swimwear shop on a stormy winter's day will prove fruitful."*

### Maintenance Team

### March 2008

2008 is nearly here and we're in the planning stage of the March Maintenance Team to Cambodia. It will run from the 7<sup>th</sup> March 08 to the 21<sup>st</sup> March 08. If you're a carpenter, electrician, tiler or a handy person who knows their way around a paint brush please join me as we make a difference in the lives of the children in our care.

We will be working at both Sunshine House and House of Progress. You will have opportunity to spend time with the children, see the sights which are both good and challenging, and come away knowing you have made a difference.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Email Rob McCullough: [rob@awarecam.org.au](mailto:rob@awarecam.org.au) or phone

### Past Teams



# A proud moment for the Sunshine House Band

Report: Pushpa Nabham

The Sunshine House Band was invited to take part in an outdoor concert in Kompong Speu. It Comprised of Somnang bass guitar, vocals, Sok Hua lead guitar, Pisey keyboard, vocals and Rahour on the drums, they were both excited and apprehensive about the event. This was their first gig, and to complicate matters, it was in front of a large unknown crowd.

A popular local band, also playing at the event, got together with the SH Band for two practice sessions. In the minutes leading up to the concert, the tension built. This was exacerbated after the first band's faultless, energetic performance. Finally the announcement came, and it was time for the SH band to perform. I have to say this was such a proud moment. They played with skill and passion, so much that my eyes filled with tears (not that I ever doubted they would). The finale was a 'superband' item, involving SH band, a local band and Missione Possibile band.

Everyone I've spoken to since the concert had high praises for our SH band, they have become the talk of the village! Congratulations!



Photos of our kids practicing in the music room at Sunshine House.



Above: Music teacher giving lessons at Sunshine House.

Please fill in the form below and return by FAX/POST/EMAIL

- I would love to partner with you and commit a monthly gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- I would love to contribute a special one-time gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- I would love to sponsor a child @ \$55.00 p/m \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: ABN: 69234355895

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](mailto:cambodia@awarecam.org.au)  
Web: [www.awarecam.org.au](http://www.awarecam.org.au)

### YOUR DETAILS: (Please Print)

I Wish To Pay By Cheque/Credit Card

Name:

.....  
First Name Surname

Address:.....  
.....

Country:.....Post Code.....

Email: .....

### PAYMENT DETAILS: Please debit my (circle)

Visa Amex MasterCard

Card Number:

□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

Expires:...../.....Signature:.....