



## John and Tess Castledine, Cambodia

### Dear Friends and Family,

We hope you've all enjoyed a lovely Christmas and New Year. In Cambodia it's been a wonderful celebration with our family and friends.

We began Christmas Day as we do every day at six-thirty with a praise and worship service and devotions, reflecting on the significance of the day remembering God's gift to us of Jesus Christ.

We also had a Christmas tree decorated with lights and the children each received a small bag with some special treats. Some beautiful knitted teddy bears and scarves

were sent to us during the year from a group of dedicated ladies in Brisbane and the children received one of these each along with a few marbles and small toys.



Much of the day was in preparation for the Christmas party that evening. The girls in their beautiful dresses, wearing makeup and their hair done were all stunning and looked so mature. The boys wore their best trousers, with shirt and tie, looking as we say in Cambodia, 'songha' (handsome).



That evening the community centre auditorium was transformed into a party venue. Tables and chairs across the floor, Christmas decorations around the doors, windows and across the newly completed stage, the Christmas Tree in one corner.

The three hundred guests enjoyed performances by the children. Teachers Pam, Sopeak, Maly and Sreylin

January/February '08

have been overseeing their daily practices during the past few weeks and it all came together on the day. A Nativity play, traditional Khmer dance by the girls and another more modern dance performed by a group of the older children were all enjoyed by the guests which were made up by local government leaders, policemen, some family of the children and friends. Afterwards we enjoyed dinner together and had fun with the children dancing and celebrating.

We're coming towards the end of the cool season here in Cambodia and during the past couple of months we have seen an increase in our family. Several new children from the local village have joined us to learn and are all settling into classes well. Some of these children have come to learn with us before but due to family circumstances they didn't continue. We're praying this time they will be able to continue learning with us.

We've also seen growth in our small animal herd with new goat kids and a calf being born. The calf was a girl which is great news because in time we'll be able to breed from this cow as well. We're well underway to having a healthy breeding stock to begin our farming program.

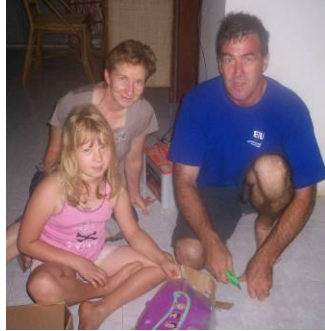
Visitors from several countries have dropped in recently to see us. In November Peta's mum Robyn and niece Helena came to stay for a couple of weeks. Robyn enjoyed spending time with Peta and seeing the changes which have occurred since her last visit. Helena had a lot of fun getting to know the children and learning about life from their perspective.

In December we've enjoyed a visit from our friend Cecil who brought a lovely couple Allan and Gill, all from Australia. Gill is very talented in making and



performing with puppets and during a couple of days in December Gill shared her talents with us. Some of our older students enjoyed learning how to make the puppets. Now they're practicing using them and we are all looking forward to their performances in the future!

Also in December we had a return visit from Kirsten who first came several years ago on a YWAM team. This time returning with her brother Tyler, they visited on the island for almost a week and everyone enjoyed having them around. Tyler and Kirsten spent much of their time taking photos and gathering video for a dvd project they're working on AND very generously donating two video recorders for us! We are very much looking forward to having a dvd available on the work here at Sovanapoom sometime soon.



Greg, Debbie and Emma from Australia returned on their second visit in mid December to lend us a hand in the work. Greg is an electrician and has been very helpful working on some wiring around the place. Both Greg and Debbie have been a real blessing in many areas as they have put their hand to whatever has been needed. Amongst their other duties they have assisted in the school with reading, individual testing, correcting and helping the care for and love the children. Emma is enjoying getting to know the children and is adjusting well to the culture.

### *School* A message from Pam:

As 2007 comes to an end we thank God for his faithfulness and grace throughout the year and look forward with anticipation and expectation to what He will do in 2008.

We want to express our thanks to Elle who served predominately in the school for three months in the latter part of the year. She did an amazing job and built beautiful relationships with the children.

Our thanks too to Gill who brought to us her puppetry talents. Within a few hours Gill had several of the children using puppets, writing scripts and presenting a performance. We look forward to extending what you began. Thank you also to those of you who made and donated the puppets to us for our use.



We currently have three groups of children in the school; pre-schoolers aged 1-6, lower school 6-8 years and

middle school 9-15 years. Whilst it is satisfactory it is still far from ideal as so much more could be achieved with more staff and personnel. We have just moved the classes into the new auditorium which will provide for the two older groups with the younger children downstairs.

Whilst we celebrate God's provision there remains many needs yet to be met. You may consider assisting in any one of a variety of ways:

1. Assisting with funding or construction skills towards provision of desks, chairs, cupboards, children's play equipment for the grassed and shaded areas
2. Invest your holiday time, long-service or retirement into these children's lives. Simply supervising children's play time would greatly assist and relieve us as well as using what may seem to you as the most basic of skills - cooking, sewing, reading, craft, basic computing, music, drama, science, library, health, vocational skills etc.
3. Sponsoring our family of children or support a volunteer. You may not be able or desire to come yourself but could certainly assist those who can.
4. Assist with the medical, dental, optical and pharmacy needs of our large family.

Thank you for your on-going contribution to this work and ministry. We so value your support and encouragement. Richest blessings to you all from our school and students.

### *New Building*

Because the permanent bedrooms we're planning in the new Centre are a major project and the old building the children are now living in is well and truly on its' last legs we've decided to build some temporary accommodation for the children in the new building.

The two rooms will house all the children until the other rooms are finished and can be used for meeting rooms or other accommodation in the future.

This week we've removed the roofing iron off the old building and are using it for the roof in the new rooms. Once that's complete and a few more finishing touches are done all the children can move into their new rooms. It will still be very crowded, but at least we will be able to sleep with peace of mind that their accommodation has secure foundations.

### *Prayer Needs*

Please pray with us for...

- For more teachers and aides long & short term
- For the young men in our church, that they mature in leadership & choose to live responsibly.

## Church

Christmas is a time of celebration in the Sovanapoom Church and our Christmas party every year is a much anticipated event in the local community. Through this we are able to share with many people who would not normally attend a church service about Jesus and why He came to earth.



The regular Sunday morning outreach continues to attract hundreds of people each week. Through this and the Christmas party we are able to reach many people with the love of Jesus and help some of the poorest in our community.

Just before Christmas we celebrated with a young



mother the birth of her baby girl. The 2<sup>nd</sup> child born to a single mum who lives in a nearby village. Despite being desperately poor she is a good mother to her two girls and looks after them very well. On the Sunday before Christmas the baby was dedicated in church and given the name Hope. Although on the surface this young woman's situation seems hopeless without a husband, very little family and in a country with no social security, we see a future for her and her children and as a church we are helping her with food and care as much as we can.

Thank you for your support for Sovanapoom Care so that we can continue to assist children and families who come to us in need.



*"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute." Proverbs 1:8*

## Spotlight:

Sojear is a young man who has really been maturing lately and is growing into a responsible young man. He first came to us along with his family in March 2006. The middle child in a family of five boys, Sojear is a good student, learning and helping his teachers.



Sojear's father works itinerantly as a labourer or fisherman. Although Sojear's father works, as with many men here he drinks everyday. Squandering the little that he earns on alcohol there is usually nothing left to support his family or provide for his children. Sojear's mother who is in her forties stays home to look after her youngest child who is still a baby.

Sojear and two of his brothers live at the Sovanapoom Home. Sojear and his older brother are learning in the middle school with Teacher Pam and his younger brother is in our pre-school class.

Through the education Sojear and his brothers are receiving they will have an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty that their parents are in. Whether they work in one of the businesses we will be establishing in the future or in employment elsewhere they will be equipped with both life skills and an education.

Sojear's mother loves him very much. She tries to work hard to take care of Sojear and his brothers to the best of her ability.

As he studies with us Sojear is learning to speak in two languages, both Khmer and English. He is learning to read and is doing well in his studies as he joins in with our family at Sovanapoom.

Sojear's story is not one of tragedy like some we know, but without help Sojear and his brothers could have made up a percentage of some of the depressing poverty, illiteracy or child labour statistics on his generation of Cambodia's young people. Now he has hope for a better future for himself and in time for his family.

*Verily I say unto you whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" Mark 10:15*