

## John and Tess Castledine, Cambodia



March '07

*Dear Friends and Family,* We're well into the year now and hasn't it gone fast! At Sovana Poom we've had a busy start to 2007 with lots of visitors spending time with us, helping to teach and work around the place, they've been a real blessing!

Tess and I moved our new home base which is a rented house on the island and out from the office apartment in Phnom Penh. It's great to be back living closer to the work and reduces our travel times across the river each day. The house is large but fairly basic with the traditional squat toilets and water we pump from the river daily. One of our neighbours is also the local butcher with the abattoir in his backyard and the other neighbour runs a loud generator all day. So all that atmosphere, along with the constant flow of young people in and out of the gate it's never quiet. But this is village life in Cambodia, and we're fairly used to it by now!



*Traveling salesman in our street*

In the administration side of things Peta has been working on various assignments for us as we endeavour to set in place our administrative processes in the Phnom Penh office. Later in March and throughout April Peta will be heading back to Australia and NZ for a break to visit family and friends. So please be patient during this time as the office will not be regularly attended. We're looking forward to having Peta back with us in May.

The work is going well here; we're being stretched and growing all the time. We purchased ten new goats in January to add to our resident three. Now one of the new additions has given birth to a kid so we're growing again!

That's all good news as this is one of the projects we're working on towards creating a self-sustaining community at Sovana Poom. In the future we see potential for farming & agriculture, many businesses and other ventures being established by our students to fund this work. Our vision is not only to teach the students while they are young but to continue to work alongside them to provide ongoing jobs through the businesses, housing through the young men's skills in construction, and into the future an education for their children.

It doesn't stop at this generation, we believe in order to make a difference in this country it will take time and commitment and that's what we're here to do.

*School* We love having visitors, especially those who can help us teaching the children. An important need we have at the moment is for some teachers to join us fulltime in the work here.

In January we enjoyed the company of several great short-term teams who visited us to help out. Teen Mission Australia, YWAM Adelaide and YWAM Amsterdam all came with great energy, new ideas and lots of enthusiasm!



Along with the teams we also enjoyed the company of Adrianna Zocco & friends from Sydney and Michael & Alison Stadler from Newcastle. The young children especially enjoyed Adrianna's exuberance in song and stories, whilst Michael & Alison's class had some great English teaching during their stay.

Another couple who have been a big part of our school lately is Nigel and Debbie Doughan from Sydney, currently residing in Phnom Penh. These guys have come to the school every Saturday morning since January to teach the older students English pronunciation and grammar skills.



This is a lesson our guys all look forward to and their vocabulary and pronunciation have really improved since the lessons began. We really appreciate you guys taking your day off to work with us.

A very big thank you to everyone who's visited to help!

At Sovana Poom we encourage everybody to share their knowledge and skills with another. Even the young people joining us as students who have learned something more than another, can teach that to a fellow student.

I believe that there may be people at home now who have skills and experience they can pass on. Just as many of our visitors have come and taught from their experience along with us, we welcome people who are interested to visit and share some of what they know with our students.

Whether you have skills in a trade or business, maybe you love to sew, photograph, sing, maybe your passion is writing or cooking or computers? Volunteer teachers these past months have shared their knowledge with us in such varied areas as: electrical work, myob, graphic design, geography, report writing, keyboard lessons, English language and the list goes on! If this interests you and you'd like to spend some time here passing on some of what you know to our students then please contact us, we'd love to hear from you!



## Church

Pastor Thoeun and his wife Sopeak have been well and busy this year.

In Sovana Poom Church we have had some growth the past couple of weeks. A young man joined in our Sunday morning service and heard the Gospel for the first time. Choosing to give his life to Jesus Christ, he then came to us for help. Although our new friend is 27 years old, he is an orphan with no family and therefore no security. As a new brother we have welcomed Somnang into our family both spiritually and physically. Now both a friend and a brother, he has found a new life and home with us.



We see the Church as not just a place of worship on Sundays but also as a way of outreach to help people where they are at and share the love of Jesus with our community.

As part of the extended Church family we'd like to thank Pastors Greg & Janet Schier and Vic & Fay Stolar of CityNet COC in Beenleigh QLD, for their visit and input into our Bible College students in February. The students have always enjoyed 'Mr Vic & Mrs Vic' visiting and it was great for them to meet Pastors Greg & Janet this time too!



## New Building

Thanks to David & Lynelle Hills for their contribution during February. Lynelle was a great help in the office whilst David's expertise as an electrician were put to good use in the new building. We're looking forward to seeing David back again soon!

Work on the new building is progressing day by day. Last Thursday John and the boys were working hard at it from 4am until almost dark in the evening pouring foundations for stage two: bedrooms and classrooms. Forty ton of concrete went down in just one area to ensure we're building our new house on the rock.

Along with our trainees many of the visitors in January helped out with digging a foundation trench, mixing concrete for the rendering and painting. Not only learning construction skills through this they're understanding the importance of teamwork, preparation and following instruction. All great life skills!

Although we haven't yet received funding for this second stage of the building we are proceeding day by day. Just as the first stage was begun in faith so also each brick of this next stage is laid. With the impending months of the wet season soon upon us, the Mekong River will once again rise to the level of our current building. As it regularly floods out the kitchen and washing areas of the Centre, we'd really love to be able to move into the new building before this happens again. So the construction proceeds!

## Spotlight:

When Elizabeth first arrived at the Centre in 2005 as a little girl barely more than one year old she was very sick. Suffering from severe malnutrition, she spent her first days with us lying almost lifeless on a mat in the Home. Without an immediate intervention Elizabeth would not have survived.



Elizabeth is an orphan, her mother was murdered by her second husband simply because she was seen talking to another man. Elizabeth had not been cared for properly by anyone since the death of her mother and she was brought to us just in time.

Now a shy three year old with beautiful wavy black hair and a very cute smile Elizabeth is a happy little girl. Through lots of loving care and prayer she recovered from the neglect of her early years. This child that appeared so close to death not long ago now plays happily with the other young ones. With a loving home at Sovana Poom Elizabeth now has a bright future full of promise to look forward to.

*"Verify I say unto you whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein"*

*Mark 10:15*