



Sovanapoom Care Newsletter

November / December '10

Dear Friends,

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter, we hope you enjoy catching up on all the latest developments in the work here.

We've been busy between working with the students on the farm project and the Community Centre's activities and with Peta out of the office in November it's disrupted the communication channels a bit, but we're back on track now and getting excited about this Friday night's (10th Dec) Christmas For The Kids charity dinner in Sydney!

Our good friends Rebecca Breeds and Luke Mitchell, after visiting Sovanapoom earlier this year, returned home passionate to make a difference for the community here in Cambodia. They have enlisted the help of Bayview Boulevard Hotel, Sony Music and Channel 7 TV Stars, Mission Australia and many generous individuals, businesses and organisations to donate gifts and services towards the event which has been approved by Global Development Group. It promises to be a night full of fun, frivolity, auctions and entertainment.

We are so grateful for all those supporting Sovanapoom Care both through this event and those who give all through the year from Australia and around the world. Sovanapoom Care is a small organisation with a limited number of financial supporters, but with your generous help we are able to make a big difference in the lives of poor and vulnerable people here in Cambodia.

CHRISTMAS FOR THE KIDS

Proudly Supported by



Rebecca Breeds and Luke Mitchell with Sovanapoom Children

You may have heard about the recent tragedy in Cambodia at the end of the Water Festival. The annual Festival draws huge numbers of people from all over Cambodia to the city each November and the city's population doubles for the long-weekend holiday. Rural people save their money and follow their Province's Long-Boat Team to the city where up to 80 men at a time compete in boat races on the river.

Many people sleep rough at this time and take great risks in traveling on overloaded boats, in vans or buses. We always dread the news reports which too often tell of those who are involved in accidents along the way. This year was particularly tragic when on the last night of the Festival hundreds of people pushed onto a narrow bridge connecting the Koh Pich island with the city. As a result of the crush as many as 400 people lost their lives and many more were injured. Our prayers have been with those who were injured and the families of those impacted by this tragic event. Thankfully none of the Sovanapoom family and friends were attending the Festival at this time.

Despite this sad incident affecting the people of Cambodia in November, we had a situation which could have been tragic turn around and result in a miraculous healing! Sopoin is a young mother who has experienced the toughest year of her life. In February her husband passed away at just 26 years old, leaving her with three young boys and pregnant with their fourth child.



Sopoin has a loving extended family who have supported her through this tough time and she has been committed to working with us in the kitchen at Sovanapoom. We have helped her with pre-natal hospital visits and encouraged her and her children as they've come to accept the loss of a husband and father.

Sopoin's baby was due in November and she has received good reports from her hospital checkups along the way so there was no reason for concern. However, at some time in the last days the baby turned around into the breach position. Being her fourth baby Sopoin wasn't concerned during the night as the contractions started and she didn't alert her mother who is a traditional birth attendant. By the next morning when she was in quite a lot of pain and her mother recognised that the baby was facing the wrong way it was too late to do anything but proceed with the breach delivery. The breach birth was a very difficult one for mother and child. After many hours of painful labour Sopoin's baby was born, but he was not breathing.

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Frantic phone calls to John (who was away at the farm at the time) and the midwife/grandmother was directed over the phone to try to resuscitate the baby, while the whole Sovanapoom Family prayed. Thirty minutes later and hope was dwindling, his little body had turned blue and gone cold. Then suddenly as if by divine intervention, he gasped then his little chest began to rise and fall as he sucked in his first breaths unassisted. Very quickly colour returned to his skin as his heart began beating, blood flowed and he came to life!

We continue to pray for little Daniel that his turbulent start won't leave him with any lasting affects. He's so far proving to be a happy baby and both mum and baby have recovered well. They're both receiving support through our Early Childhood Program to attend the hospital for post-natal checkups. We're confident this little family is on their way to full healing from the traumatic events of this year.



Volunteers & Teams

2010 has just flown by and we've been really blessed with help from generous volunteers to teach and care for the children along with our Khmer staff. Coming to the end of the year now we've had some changes:

Andy and Elyse finished up in November after spending ten months volunteer teaching at Sovanapoom. We appreciate their time and efforts with the students, their passion for life and people made them well loved by the students and teachers!

Mandi and Gabi's first stint has come to an end and they've returned home to Texas for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Mandi has something to share in the next column about her experience so far.

Stan and Lori our friends from Christmas Valley, Oregon arrived in November. They're planning to spend a few months with us over Christmas escaping the cold at home and sharing their skills with the Sovanapoom family. We're loving having them here and you'll hear more about what they've been up to so far later in the newsletter.



Peta was seconded to the Global Development Group office in Brisbane for a month recently and has just returned to her desk after squeezing in a visit to see her family also. We're happy to have our office working at full speed again.

We've also enjoyed visits from a couple of Aussie teams. The Schoolies Team from Kempsey NSW, made an impression on the students here over a few days in November. Their lessons and games were a real hit with the children and it was great to spend some time with Pastors Burrell and Sandra Glaspell too!

We enjoyed a visit from the Citipointe Church Team for the Sunday Outreach. The children also enjoyed a few hours of fun with new and old friends from the team while they were here.

This Sunday Outreach (a ministry of Sovanapoom Church) has been attracting crowds of around 2,000 people recently as local families are doing it particularly tough and the noodles we give become an important source of sustenance for their week.

Introducing... We're excited to introduce a new family who have joined us here recently.

Joseph and Sokha and their children Sokwun and Sarah come to us from a rural Cambodian province. Joseph and Sokha have previously worked with children and have lots of experience educating and training children. Sokha is a trained Khmer teacher and Joseph has a very caring fatherly heart for the children, along with their two children they are quickly becoming a valued part of our family.

From the Heart - Mandi Silvers

What a joy it has been to witness dreams unfold and hope shine. I've seen a malnourished, sick child grow and heal through the months, a Sovanapoom sew shop open and miraculous provision when everything ran out. Excitement in my heart hasn't just come from big events like these, but also from little things. A gleam in a child's eye before they paint a picture, receiving new play-dough to mould, a walk with friends to the local market, catching tadpoles with a team of expert tadpole catchers, uncontained giggles from girls swinging really high, a dog delivering newborn puppies, hearing young children reading in two languages and sweet little hugs throughout the day.

Thank you for supporting such a special place. The hope in my heart has swelled and I can't wait to see what the next two months hold!

Spotlight We first introduced Elizabeth in early 2007, she had been with us about two years then. When we met her in 2005 as a baby barely one year old, she was very sick. Suffering from severe malnutrition, she spent her first days with us laying 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 because she was seen talking to another man. An old lady had taken her in, but already impoverished, this adopted grandmother had little more than love to offer this traumatized child. Through lots of loving care and prayer Elizabeth's health improved dramatically at Sovanapoom, but she was still emotionally very insecure.

The other children treated Elizabeth like normal, they continued to love her and tried to include her, despite her preference to sit in the corner and her very strong attachment to the grandmother. Over time we began to see improvements, she started to open up, pay attention to the teachers and respond to her classmates.

One day a volunteer in a team was playing a game and she picked Elizabeth up. We were shocked, this little girl didn't allow anyone to get that close! It was a real breakthrough and since then she's improved in leaps and bounds.

The grandmother took Elizabeth to visit her home province in 2008 and decided to stay with her relatives there. Early in 2010 it was a wonderful surprise to see them back again, Elizabeth is now six and the grandmother wanted to see her get an education which she knew she couldn't afford herself.

Elizabeth is now very outspoken and confident, she's a real little teacher and loves to look after the little ones, directing them in her games and play. Elizabeth has found her family at Sovanapoom, and we're confident that she will have a very bright future ahead.



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Project J522 - Development Activities

What is Project J522?

Sovanapoom Care is a local non-government organisation in Cambodia and we partner with the Australian charity Global Development Group. Sovanapoom Care is the implementing organisation for "Project J522". Project J522 forms the Development and Relief program of Sovanapoom Care and has the goal of providing vocational training—including construction techniques, sewing and tailoring, teaching, establishing an Early Childhood Centre and providing maternal support, and working towards sustainability through the agricultural activities of the Model Farm. Together with Global Development Group we are helping to develop and build the capacity of the local community.

Other community programs of Sovanapoom Care include Sovanapoom Church and Sovanapoom Community Outreach. These other programs are not funded by tax deductible donations received from donors who give to Global Development Group as they are considered welfare and do not qualify for such funding from Australia. These programs are supported by international, church, and other direct donations we receive.

Development activities are work which is considered to produce benefits that are sustainable and will endure after the assistance has ceased. Sovanapoom Care believes that all of the work we undertake in Cambodia is effective towards the rebuilding of this nation and that by providing both care, education and training to the vulnerable children and youth in our programs we will be empowering them to transform their lives and give them opportunities to fulfil their dreams whatever they may be.

Vocational Trainees—Construction

Work has continued on the new accommodation building so that the rooms within the main centre building can be converted into our new Early Childhood Centre and be put to use for the youngest children and mothers. It's going to be an exciting development for this group as they're constantly moving their little class to wherever is suitable at the time—often having to move quickly over the wet season when the clouds break suddenly, to avoid getting an early shower!

The new rooms will give the mothers space to care for their children in a secure and clean environment. We hope to equip the rooms with educational supplies and toys to promote learning at this key time for young minds.

Whilst working on the new accommodation building the boys have been improving their technical skills significantly. They are learning electrical, tiling and rendering by working in a hands-on capacity alongside professionals. With Stan here as well his engineering background provides a great foundation from which he is working with the boys to create design solutions for various building and farming challenges we encounter.

John, Stan and the boys have also been busy working on adding to the existing drainage system at Sovanapoom by installing a grey water drain from the kitchen through to the back of our property. Stan has worked with the boys to weld a grate to cover the drain, another great opportunity for the boys to practice and improve their welding skills.



In 2009 the team from Oregon donated the steel and welding tools and they worked with the boys to construct our play equipment and swings. The playground has been a great source of fun and games since then, but with so many children it's been showing signs of wear and tear.

Keen to repair the broken tyre swing which has been so loved by the children, Stan got in to figure out how to replace the swing's swivel mechanism as after so much play it was completely worn out! He devised a new one from the tow ball off our pickup truck. Working with the boys, they set it in place and the kids were back to enjoying their swing. Though by the looks on Thoeun and Sopeak's faces here they're not quite sure of it yet!



The next job planned is to design a new swing set for the smaller children—they'd better make it strong!

Vocational Trainees—Teachers

Thanks to the support of Australian Volunteers who worked alongside our trainee teachers, and the Hope Education 'Teachers Are More Precious Than Gold' Conference in September, our trainee teachers have really progressed in their confidence and classroom skills this year.



The implementation of the school curriculum has also greatly assisted both trainee teachers and students who now have a learning plan for each child to follow.

We're looking forward to having some more volunteer teachers and helpers with us for a few weeks over



Christmas and as we transition into the new school year for 2011.



Project 1522 - Development Activities

Vocational Trainees—Sewing

We have recently opened a sewing shop in the village!

Sopaek (Thoeun's wife) has completed her training course in tailoring and thanks to generous donations from Australian friends and the hard work of her husband (and his student helpers) her shop has opened.



Providing training and hands-on experience to students from Sovanapoom Care and a sustainable income for Sopaek, we are excited about this new micro enterprise development.

Sopaek has been busy throughout the year working from her home to produce clothing ordered by her neighbours and others in the village. She has also received orders from volunteers and friends as far abroad as Australia and the United States.



Lori is also working with girls at the Centre on their own sewing projects as they learn new skills and improve old ones in this area. She has been so inundated with requests to learn that she's had to make a schedule to fit all the students in!



Here's Lori teaching some young girls knitting, they're working on headbands and beanies (—the cool season is almost upon us here in Cambodia!). Others have been busy learning how to take up hems on their pants, sewing skirts, shirts, and Lori has even taught

some to sew a backpack!

Lots of patience has been required with our sewing machines which are constantly breaking down. Lori's made several trips to the city in tuk tuks to get them fixed. She's determined though, and despite the challenges of equipment and language barriers, her students are learning sewing stitch by stitch and building their personal confidence with new skills along the way.

One particularly keen student has been Sreyvun. She is the young lady we profiled last newsletter who was born without hands or feet. Here she is at the sewing machine working on making herself a skirt. Amazing us with her ability to thread the machine needle and work the fabric as well as anyone, she is always an inspiration and reminds us all, particularly the children that determination and a can-do attitude will get you a long way in life!



Farm Update

It's been an exciting time at the Farm as we're working through our first rice harvest off the land. It's been a great learning process for us all and the boys are complaining of having sore backs and hands after all their hard work!

They've worked alongside ten local labourers to cut the rice stalks using the traditional hand sickles. It's been a very big job to clear the 7ha (17acres). Later we hope to purchase a rice harvester, but as funds for that are not available at this stage the boys have been learning how to harvest the traditional way.

The next task is to hand-thresh the stalks which have been cut and left to dry in the fields. We're hoping to purchase a rice mill for US\$5,000 so that we can then polish our own rice. This will allow us to keep the by-product of the rice bran and husks. These by-products are extremely valuable for the chickens and will be also used in other Natural Farming techniques.

This week we'll start ploughing the fields and using the new rotary tiller attachment on the back of the tractor to break the dirt up while it's still soft enough before the hot weather arrives and dries it all out too much. We then need to continue the process of levelling the rice paddies and creating dykes. As our land was only freshly cleared last year it's still undulating so we're continuing to work on levelling that and create a proper rice paddy field which has raised mounds around the borders to hold the water in for growing and an outlet to release the trapped water. This will take some time to create, but with our own tractor now we're well placed to continue working on this.

This first trial of rice and cassava crops has proven that rice is the best crop to plant at this stage. The cassava has grown extremely well in areas of the land which are slightly raised with sandy soil. However most of our cleared land is lower and holds too much water in the wet season which isn't the best condition for growing the cassava.

We will leave the cassava already planted in the ground to continue growing. It will be harvested next year and we can re-use the stalks for planting again. The part of our farm which is already cleared of trees is the lower area and therefore holds more water in the wet season. The remaining uncleared hectares are on higher land with sandier soil which will be better for growing the cassava. Cassava is an excellent cash-crop here and is valuable to grow under the right conditions. We hope to have some funds available in 2011 to have the trees and bushes cleared from the remaining 11 hectares of land.

We are also looking forward to establishing the chicken breeding project. We need to develop an incubator for the eggs which doesn't use electricity. The rural area where the farm is located doesn't yet have electricity connected, so we have to be creative with our designs .

This project is still in its infancy, but we're looking forward to establishing this farm as a source of income for the other projects of Sovanapoom Care.



Donations over \$2 to this Global Development Group approved aid and development project: "J522 Sovanapoom Care" are tax deductible in Australian & USA.

Please Don't Forget: Use our project number "**J522 Sovanapoom Care**" in all donations made to Global Development Group; this ensures that your donation will be applied to our project. If you have made donations previously but not included J522 as the reference please email us your name, the date and amount you donated to:
admin.sovanapoom@gmail.com

Project Governance: J522 Sovanapoom Care is proud to be a partner of Global Development Group (ABN 57 102 400 993), an Australian Non Government Organisation [NGO] – and Global Development Group USA carrying out humanitarian projects with approved partners and providing aid to relieve poverty and provide long term solutions through the provision of quality aid and development projects. Global Development Group takes ownership of the project according to AusAID rules, providing a governance role and assisting in the areas of planning, monitoring, evaluating and auditing to ensure that the projects are carried out to Australian requirements.

Fundraising: We welcome support through fundraising activities, however all fundraising for and on behalf of Sovanapoom Care and Project J522 must be approved and authorised by Sovanapoom Care and Global Development Group and conducted within approved guidelines. Please contact Sovanapoom Care for more information.

DONATION INSTRUCTIONS

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Sovanapoom Care and Global Development Group are working together to build better lives for the poorest of the poor and to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Cambodia.



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*Wishing you all the best for Christmas and the New Year,
with love from John & Tess, and all the team at Sovanapoom Care!*

Thoeun & Sopaek



John & Tess



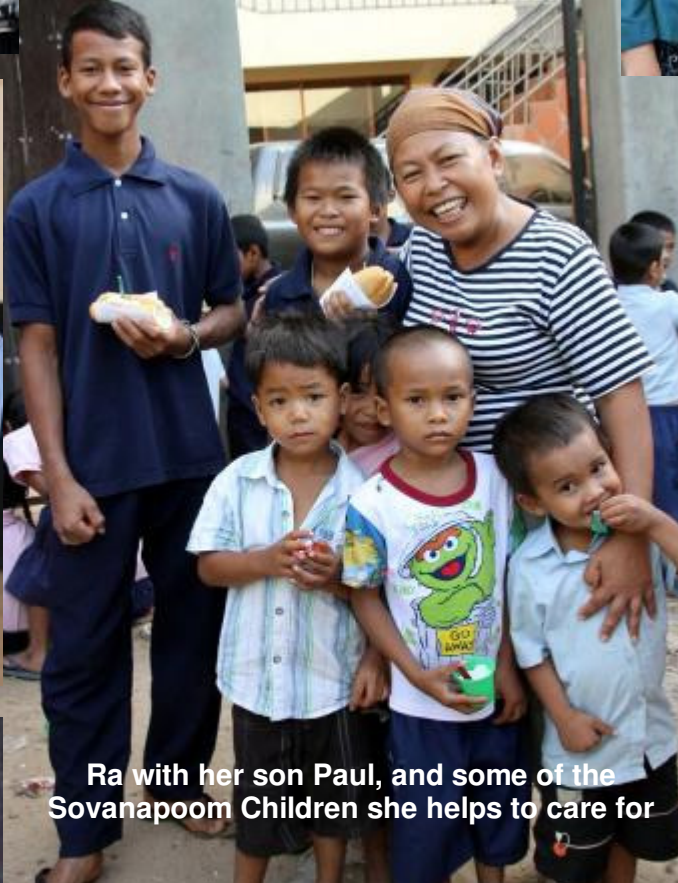
Sreylin, Tonet & Junia



Sreyvin, Sopaek & Sophea



Ra with her son Paul, and some of the
Sovanapoom Children she helps to care for



Cheeky student with Peta



Joseph, Sokha,
Sarah & Sokwun



Sovanapoom Kindy Students



Baby & Grandma



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