

Build Your Future Today

"Education is the key to developing economic self-sufficiency, personal well-being and peace for the individual family as well as the whole of Cambodian society"



A Biannual Newsletter

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June 2013

International Children's Day

On June 1, 2013, volunteers, staff, and students at the BFT center celebrated International Children's Day. During the festivities, students performed dances and songs, and were recognized for their hard work in classes. The fun-filled day ended with a cake-fight and dancing in the rain.

In 1992, Cambodia ratified the UN convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). On June 1, Cambodia celebrates the implementation of the CRC by observing International Children's Day. The day is to be observed as a day of activity devoted to promoting the ideals and objectives of the welfare of children around the world. At the BFT center, International Children's Day is

celebrated as a festival and day of fun. On June 1, 2013, volunteers, staff, family, and students came together to dance, eat, and watch the children's performances. The children

commenced the day with singing the Cambodian national anthem and honoring other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Norway, Singapore, the United States, and Australia. They

also sang songs in English and performed choreographed dances. Later, the children and teachers played a quiz game for prizes. The day continued with great food, dancing, and laughter. Even a rainstorm did not dampen the mood. The day ended with a cake fight between the volunteers and students and dancing in the rain.



The celebration began with a traditional flag ceremony honoring Cambodia and other countries



A Message from the Director and Founder

The years of subjection to the Khmer Rouge left me with one goal: ***"After the Pol Pot Regime destroyed Cambodian society, I only wanted to help build a new community to improve the quality of life for Cambodians"***.

My decision was not only limited to my work, it embraced my life with a strong vision. I believe that intellectual and economic tools are required to attain self-sufficiency of the Cambodian people. This can only be realized once it is accepted that education is the means to improve well-being and peace for the individual family and the whole of Cambodian society. The creation of Build Your Future Today Center (BFT) sprouted from this determination.

Before BFT, thousands of children had no opportunity to

receive better education. Before BFT, there were many children under five years old who died every year because they lacked proper care. Before BFT, there were thousands of children living with severe malnutrition. Before BFT, there were many adults and teenagers unable to read or write their own language.

Since 2006, our dedicated staff, volunteers, compassionate friends, and donors from around the world have joined together to work tirelessly, shoulder to shoulder. Together we work to provide the opportunity for people, especially children, who have been living through hardships and poverty with effective solutions to improve their lives.

Looking at the accomplishments of BFT, I must express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all our past and present donors, supporters, friends, and volunteers who

have been kindly contributing and committing their time, money, and energy to make changes in the lives of the impoverished. If everyone of us is working towards the same goal, I trust that we will be able to overcome the upcoming challenges. So let's continue to work with compassion and sympathy to build hope, peace, and a better future for the young generation.

I would like to express my gratitude to all my dedicated staff, foreign and Cambodian, who have united to seek change for the last six years. Thank you for your hard work. Your effort to reach out and help others is why BFT is known and trusted, as a unit of loving individuals offering needed help.

Prof. Sedtha Long



Ongoing Programs

Our Mission: "Intellectual and economic tools are required to attain self-sufficiency of the Cambodian people."

Community Education Development



- Basic language education in Khmer and English
- Computer and technology training
- Donations of uniforms and study materials
- Access and transport to schools
- Adult literacy and life skills support
- Early child education promotion

Child Support Center



- Housing and family support for orphans
- Team building activities through sports
- Traditional dance classes
- Culture exchange with international

Community Health/ Nutrition Development



- School vegetable gardens and fruit trees
- Nutritious food feeding program for community children under 5 years
- Hygiene and sanitation training
- Child growth
- Primary Health Awareness
- Emergency Health Support

Community Peace Building



- BFT workshop on peaceful community living
- Domestic violence reduction workshops
- Counseling for families living in crisis
- Culture exchange with international volunteers
- Family integration and adoption

Community Capacity Building and Livelihood Improvement



- Generating income through job placement
- Generating income through animal rearing and vegetable growing
- Scholarships for social economic development
- Community market support
- Road construction supported by the Lions Club of Singapore



Community Education Development



Build Your Future Today Center provides community education through inclusive education, community participation for those who do not attend school, and adult literacy and life skills training.

At the BFT center, over 160 children are studying English, computer training, the arts, and leadership free of charge. Their instructors are wonderful volunteers from all over the world. So far, over 100 children have graduated their English and computer courses at BFT. Officials from the ministry of education and local authorities presented the children with certificates during their graduation ceremony.

BFT also provides education to remote villages in the Siem Reap province. For example, BFT has donated a mobile library to Arak Svey village, and is currently building one at Trach Chrum, Kok Yieng, Bos Em, and Sre Robong village. These libraries make educational books and games accessible to the villagers. Furthermore, this past year, BFT has donated about 1000 school uniforms and 250 bicycles to seven different schools in surrounding villages.

Closer to home, BFT also sponsors a weekly "Talk Time" in which Siem Reap citizens engage in conversational English with volunteers at a local cafe.

Child Support Center



BFT Center believes that orphans and poor children deserve to grow up in a safe and secure environment. We provide fun, educational, and nurturing activities which help develop the children's self-confidence and teamwork.

Once a week, BFT volunteers teach swimming classes to students. Our friend, Lotus Launch, sponsors these classes so they are completely free for every student. Swimming is a critical skill that many Cambodians lack. The children enjoy their classes immensely and it helps build their confidence.

In addition to sport activities, BFT promotes the arts amongst their students also. Students at the center and villages participate in photography, painting, drawing, traditional dancing, beading, and craft making.



Community Health/Nutrition Development



BFT has achieved outstanding progress in continuing its work on improving nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, and community health.

The Community-Base Safe Mother and Child Project (CMCC), funded by our partner GlobeMed, has been successfully implemented in many villages. We are happy to announce that CMCC is now being introduced to Sre Robong, a village 80 km away from the center. The CMCC projects provide shelters, wells for clean water, social survey and BMI analysis, nutrition, health education, and early childhood development.

Along with the CMCC, our volunteers teach many health lessons in 20-25 villages on Dengue Fever, threadworms, malaria, sanitation, HIV/AIDS, prenatal care, and nutrition. After the lessons, families are encouraged to follow up with questions and engage in a discussion about their own health. For example, one breastfeeding woman in Sre Robong had a severe infection on her breast. BFT volunteers admitted her to the health clinic and provided funds for treatment and care that she otherwise would not have had access to. In another instance, BFT volunteers found one child at Arak Svey to have severely low BMI that the nutrition project did not help. BFT admitted her to the children's hospital and discovered a severe heart condition. Thanks to funds from BFT friends in Australia, she underwent heart surgery and is now on the road to a successful recovery.

Community Peace Building

BFT center works to reduce family violence by providing moral education classes and access to a strong support group which offers counseling for times of family hardship and crisis.

Besides health education, another focus of BFT is family adoption. BFT builds houses, provides job training, and sets up village banks to start up families.

One of the first families adopted was Chaknoeun's. She is a divorced mother of four and was severely depressed and poor. She attended BFT's adult literacy classes in her village, and after graduating, she announced her dream to be a tailor. BFT brought her to town to learn tailoring skills and bought her a



sewing machine. Now she is earning money, making school uniforms and teaching her own tailoring classes. Last year, she supplied about 1,000 school uniforms. She is very happy and wants to share her positive changes with others. Recently, she goes to nearby villages to teach adult literacy also.

Another adopted family is Eepov's. A few years ago, BFT found Eepov, trying to raise her eleven children by herself. BFT taught her to read and write, and soon after she expressed her desire to become a basket weaver. BFT provided training and the funds for her to start up a basket weaving business. Currently, she is earning a stable income and able to send her children to school. She is proud to announce that one works in a restaurant and another is a contractor.

BFT also organizes monk visits to promote a positive family environment. Many parents experiencing post dramatic stress disorder beat and abuse their children and turn to drugs and alcohol. Volunteer monks try to prevent this with Buddhist teachings on love, peace, compassion, and teamwork. Hundreds of families are visited once a week by monks who provide counseling and works to improve mental problems and livelihood.

Another project that has been successfully implemented for many years is the MotherClub. Its focus is to empower women by encouraging them to apply what they learned from BFT literacy and health classes to their everyday lives.

Community Capacity Building and Livelihood Improvement

BFT provides training life and business skills training along with working capital assistance and microfinance.

Volunteer, Oscar Bodilavall, is an agricultural specialist who teaches the villages how to grow produce more efficiently. He focuses on growing vegetables, improving soil, and setting up irrigation systems. We have established home gardening and training for over 40 families experiencing food shortages.

After graduating adult literacy training, five to twelve villagers join together to form a farmer club and decide what crops to grow in the village. BFT finances their start up by setting up a village bank. This system promotes village cooperation and longterm economic sustainability. So far, over 150 farmer clubs have been successfully put in place in surrounding villages.



Furthermore, this past year, the Lions Club of Singapore and friends of Singapore have funded water wells to be built in Sre Robong and Chob Smach so that the villages can have access to clean water.





Thanks and Recognition

We would like to thank the BFT staff, international volunteers, and donors, from the bottom of our hearts.

Volunteers and Interns



BFT would like to thank all the volunteers who came out to Siem Reap this past year to share their knowledge and compassion with the Cambodian people. Many incredible medical volunteers, such as Mia and Melissa, were critical in the health lessons and health check-ups at the villages. Other volunteers helped with English teaching and staff training, such as Gillian Gray from Sydney, Australia. We are also very grateful for our long term volunteers, Konnie, Jo, and Terry. Konnie is a consultant for BFT, and runs its websites, and coordinates volunteers. Jo is in charge of BFT's public relations and fundraising. We would also like to congratulate her on becoming manager at European Guesthouse! Finally, Terry is critical to English and computer training curriculum. We would like to thank him for his great patience and perseverance.

Srey Rath

Srey Rath always has a beautiful smile and a bright "hello" for everyone. She never



loses her positive, lively attitude even though she is one of the busiest staff members. Along with bookkeeping, she is an administrative assistant, teacher, computer trainer, volunteer coordinator, and heads microfinance. She is truly an amazing woman, and BFT would like to thank her for all her hard work and for always making us laugh.

Sath



Sath is kind, dedicated, and always ready to help a person in need. He is the program director, managing and overseeing all projects. His main focus is the village and school of Cham Resh. Once a secluded and poor village, Cham Resh is now flourishing under Sath's leadership and devotion. It is evident that Sath is very passionate about his work, and BFT is forever grateful.

MESSAGE FROM OUR SPONSOR IN AUSTRALIA

On behalf of 'The Friends of BFT Australia' I would like to congratulate Professor Sedtha Long, his team and all the many supporters and volunteers who contribute to the many projects undertaken by BFT for their amazing work. In the 5 years that we have existed we have been inspired and thrilled by the commitment and dedication of all involved. We hope that this relationship will continue for many years to come. On a personal level I can only be grateful to have met Sedtha, his family and the many friends I and my wife Mich now have in Cambodia and thank you all for enriching our lives.

We all look forward to your visit and also to our next visit to SR.

-Charles Slucki (Founder of Friends of BFT Australia)



Looking forward to an upcoming documentary on BFT

For the past three months,



Dieter Seegel has been working

tirelessly on a documentary film to spread awareness about BFT. Please look for it on international television channels and film festivals.

Please help continuing to support BFT!

Look out for the book, "The Last One" about a man's experience escaping the Khmer Rouge. Some of the



profits from this sale of this book go to BFT.

Also look out for the online cookbook, "Alhama Kitchen"

The author also graciously donates some of the book's profits to BFT.

Introducing Build Friends Travel Cambodia

BFT is introducing a new travel agency to help raise awareness and funds for the center. We are organizing

original and authentic experiences where tourists can enjoy the

beautiful Cambodian countryside.



www.buildfriendstravel.com

BFT would also like to welcome our new board director, Bert Hoak, from Alaska.



Thank to our Many Other Valued Friends

- Friends of Gold Coast, Australia - donating \$27,000 for pick-up truck
- Friends of Melbourne, Australia - building construction for classrooms in Oroong village 130 km
- GlobeMed from the University of Virginia
- Credit Sussi of Singapore & Friends of Norway - funded house building and renovation for the poor adopted families
- Lions Club of Singapore - donated funds for bore wells and 1,000 trees to be planted and road building
- Krama Wheel of Texas - donated funds for school uniforms
- Friends of Boston - donated funds for community training
- Friends of Germany - donated funds for education
- Robert Ellis family from San Francisco - donated for Angkor Thom project and long-term donor since 2005.
- Friends of Singapore support the poor children
- Molly Malone - quiz night fundraisers
- European Guesthouse - tree sales to raise funds for BFT
- Anderson family of Australia - donated community training center for peace building lessons
- Austin to Angkor - donated to build community training center in Cham Resh
- Make Every Child Count - donated for four year project in Cham Resh
- AboutAsia School - funded for an English teacher and has been our partner for many years sending volunteers
- Medicorps volunteers
- Friends from Denmark and Lego Company in Hong Kong - providing Legos to villages
- Supporters from Australia who sponsor staff university education (Odom, Vudthy, Sath, Amm)
- Republic Polytechnic Center of Singapore - providing health education, teaching photography to children, and donating cameras as well as other learning materials
- Lotus Launch - long-term volunteers and sponsoring free swimming classes for BFT children



Thank You!



Ah Kune!