

LIFE AND HOPE ASSOCIATION

Bringing hope into life through loving care and education



Newsletter 2011



Welcome to the Life & Hope Association

The Life and Hope Association (LHA) is a non-profit organization run by the monks of Wat Damnak in Siem Reap, Cambodia. We are committed to breaking the cycle of poverty by providing loving support and access to education to the poorest and most vulnerable people in Cambodia — especially children and young women. 2011 has been an exciting year for us. Take a moment and let us share with you the important developments in our programs and in the lives of the children we serve.

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Message from the Executive Director

LHA's mission is clear. We are committed to improve the lives of those most in need by providing compassionate care and educational opportunities, especially to poor and vulnerable children and to disadvantaged young women.

I am sometimes asked what motivated that vision, so I would like to use this space to explain. As a member of the first generation in post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia, I grew up feeling a sense of responsibility to rebuild the social structure that had been destroyed. I believe our generation must become a role model for younger generations of Cambodians.

This was the motivation that led to the creation of Life and Hope Association. In six years, it has grown into an organization that serves over 1000 of the poorest and most disadvantaged children and young women in our region. In the pages that follow, you will learn more about the six programs we run, each guided by our commitment to break the cycle of poverty by providing compassionate support and educational opportunities.

But beyond those we currently serve, there are millions of other vulnerable children and disadvantaged young women who remain underserved. A dysfunctional and often corrupt government system seems unwilling or unable to respond to these urgent needs. I believe we must find other ways.

My vision is to expand on what we have learned in LHA, and to replicate it throughout the country through other Buddhist temples. In order to do so, the first need is to rebuild the capacity of the monkhood that was so diminished in the Khmer Rouge era. In particular, we need to renew the tradition of socially engaged Buddhism.

To meet those needs, my plan is to bring other monks to Wat Damnak to give them leadership training while simultaneously exposing them to LHA. My hope is that these engaged Temple leaders will then return to their communities with the energy and the tools to spread the model of integrated programs built on compassionate support and educational opportunities for the most disadvantaged.

That is our dream for the future. But for the present, our priority remains making our existing programs as effective as they can be. In that regard, I would like to offer my deep appreciation to LHA's exceptional management team for their talent, skills, and compassion, to our dedicated staff of house-mothers, teachers and others who serve so lovingly, and to our many volunteers for their dedication and commitment to LHA.

I also offer sincere thanks to our generous program sponsors and other major donors, many of whom are listed later in this newsletter. In addition to those listed, we also offer our sincere thanks to the many other individuals from all over the world who have committed their time, energy, and resources to our ongoing support. Your loving and generous hearts are greatly appreciated.

It's been a wonderful year for LHA. We head into a new year convinced that with your support, we can bring about a positive and enduring change to society's most disadvantaged people. Through compassionate support and educational opportunities, we will continue to offer them a significantly improved LIFE AND HOPE for a better future.

In peace and love,

SOMNIENG



LHA Mission, Vision, Goals and Values

LHA's Vision

We envision a fair and equitable society built on compassion and loving-kindness and offering education for all.

LHA's Mission:

Our mission is to improve the lives of those most in need by providing compassionate care and educational opportunities, especially to poor and vulnerable children and to disadvantaged young women.

LHA's Strategic Goal:

Our strategic goal is to develop a successful model of change that offers society's most disadvantaged people a significantly improved LIFE AND HOPE for a better future, and then to replicate it to bring a transformational change to society.

LHA's Values:

We provide our services with a sense of compassion, respect, and loving kindness. We run our organization with integrity, professionalism, and accountability.



Creating new windows of opportunity



The future lies in the education of our girls



Angkor Thom Junior High School

Now in its fifth year of operation, Angkor Thom Junior High School (JHS) now has 213 students in grades 7 to 9. JHS is different from the normal government schools. After morning classes, students can attend additional afternoon lessons that are offered without charge every day.

That means that the JHS school day runs from 7 AM to 4 PM, and for a half day on Saturday. A strong incentive to attend school and stay all day is the free breakfast and lunch offered to students every day. This positive learning environment along with the students' commitment has resulted in 66 of the 67 students passing their national ninth-grade exam this last academic year. It's a success rate that far exceeds the national average.

Under the sponsorship of German foundation Hilfe für Kinder in Kambodscha, the JHS curriculum extends beyond traditional subjects such as Khmer, Math, Biology, Geography, Chemistry, and English. These students are also offered cultural and skill-based courses such as Computer, Carpentry, Sewing, Music and Art.

This year, the German foundation also purchased additional land to expand the existing vegetable garden. Not only will it provide students with agricultural skills, but will also improve their diet and reduce food preparation costs.

The latest JHS project is to build another boarding house on school grounds, again with the generous support of Hilfe für Kinder in Kambodscha. It will double our capacity to offer a safe home and nurturing support for 50 students from extreme poverty, abusive environments, or distant locations.

Looking Deeper Inside

This year, through the support of *Hilfe für Kinder in Kambodscha*, led by Dr. Siegfried Zinkeisen and Mrs. Gerlinde Zinkeisen we awarded 11 scholarships to our poorest students to attend TeJo Hun Sen High School. In addition, through the partnership with EGBOK, a US based organization, eight JHS students have successfully passed entry-level exams and have been admitted into the prestigious hotel and hospitality training schools of Paul Dubrule and Sala Bai. All accepted students receive scholarships for the duration of the one-year course and assistance in finding a job afterwards.



Each Child is special
and deserves our love



Life, hope, and love



Children's Development Village (CDV)

This year, CDV has invested a great deal of thought into how to prepare its older children for transition into the world. As more children who grew up in CDV reach their mid- and late-teens, Venerable Somnieng and the program leaders decided to build two new houses adjacent to CDV's agricultural land, each accommodating up to six boys aged 16 or more.

These older children work in CDV's organic vegetable garden, growing food that they can sell to the CDV kitchen. This provides them with a small income as well as important lessons in personal responsibility, self-sufficiency, and money management.

2011 was also marked by the first large group of CDV graduates transitioning into more independent living in the larger community. Nine students graduated from CDV this year to continue education beyond the level available locally, to transition into employment, or to be reintegrated with extended families back in their home villages.

In each case, these young people remain under the caring and supportive eye of the CDV program. Those con-

tinuing their education are provided with a full living allowance, study materials and regular visits to offer support and ensure good behavior and regular school attendance.

The CDV places vacated by these graduates have been taken by newly admitted children, all carefully screened to ensure that the poorest, neediest, and most vulnerable are given priority. Three children between three and six years old have entered the program this year, and a dozen more are being reviewed and screened for admission.

Looking Deeper Inside

After five years at CDV, 20 year old Doung Kheam was ready to move out into the world. CDV provided support for him to attend technical school in Phnom Penh. Once he is qualified in bicycle and motorbike repairs, he plans to open a shop near CDV to offer repair services to surrounding communities while also teaching CDV kids this skill.

Kheam's place at CDV has been taken by Minea, a five-year-old HIV-positive boy who arrived in June. After his mother died of AIDS, his father became concerned about Minea's deteriorating health. Unable to support or care for his son, the father could not find anyone to help until the monks offered the boy a place at CDV. Under the care of doctors, Minea is settling in well to life with the other children.



Planning the future . . .
a new PAGE house



Life and smiles at home



PAGE: Program Advancing Girls Education

It has been a wonderful year for the 14 girls from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds who came to PAGE so they could fulfill their dream of continuing their education. Before PAGE, they were destined for a life working in the rice fields, brickworks, or street markets. But instead, they now attend high school and aspire to follow in the path of girls who have graduated from the program and with the support of a PAGE scholarship, are now attending universities.

2011 has also been a year of wonderful collaboration with EGBOK (Everything Is Going to Be Okay), a US-based NGO that is opening up career opportunities in the hospitality industry. A PAGE girl is now training at the area's leading hotel and tourism training school.

Seven new girls from disadvantaged backgrounds have taken the place of our recent graduates. With that

intake, PAGE is currently supporting 15 girls as they continue their education.

But the big news for PAGE is that we will soon have a new home. With a generous grant from the GO Foundation (largely due to the efforts of Robert Pattinson, the star of the Twilight movie series), land has been purchased and construction is in progress on the first two houses that will accommodate at least 24 girls next year. Eventually, the site will allow PAGE to expand to 35 or even 50 girls.

Looking Deeper Inside

Although PAGE has only been operating for a few years as a pilot program, six girls have already completed high school, with five going on to university. The latest success story is Noun Vichny who came to PAGE in 2008. Upon graduating from high school in July, she was awarded a World Bank Scholarship to the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Two PAGE girls already studying there are helping her settle in. Vichny will study law and economics and plans to work in local government and help the poor and disadvantaged. We wish her every success.



Training continues in a brand new building!



Hotel De La Paix—LHA Sewing School

A year ago, the Sewing School moved into a new facility/building generously funded by Hotel De La Paix and MasterCard. Like the simple straw-roofed, open building it replaced, the new two-level structure is on the grounds of Wat Damnak adjacent to LHA's office.

The ground floor houses the classroom where 25 girls spend 10 months learning sewing skills from their wonderful teacher, Mrs. Vanleuk. On the level above them, 14 sewing school graduates offer current students a daily reminder that their new skills will provide them good jobs. These girls work on contracts obtained by LHA to make everything from school uniforms to souvenirs.

To date, more than 130 students have graduated from the program, and a follow-up survey of 37 girls conducted on June 2011, found that 36 of them have been using their skills in full- or part-time work. On average, they are earning \$105 a month, considerably more than a teacher's salary.

Looking Deeper Inside

Nheap Pot's father died when she was young, and several years later, her mother left the family. So at 15, Pot began working in the rice field to support her three siblings. She jumped at the opportunity to attend the sewing school in 2009, she stayed on to work on contracts for NGOs and companies through LHA's marketing network. She now earns up to \$110 per month, an amount that allows her to provide more support to her family.

Learning a language and building a future

LHA-Foreign Language School

Every day, more than 200 students who could otherwise not afford English classes pour into Wat Damnak. Here, **each evening, LHA's Foreign Language School (FLS)** offers free classes taught by the monks and local and foreign volunteers. Language skills give these poor young people access to jobs in the hospitality industry, the major employer in Siem Reap, home of world-famous Angkor Wat. With FLS enrollment up 60% from 2010, more lives are being changed every day.

Take just one example. In two years of hard study, Van Sovann completed three levels at the Foreign Language School. At the airport, his job was to board flights, but he wanted to become a check-in agent, a job that required good English skills. After completing his classes, he not only took his dream job, but was soon promoted to supervisor in charge of some 100 employees. The Foreign Language School changed his life.





Food, a social contract and a better life . . .



Meeting basic needs



Sustainable Community Project (SCP)

This year, the program previously known as Food for Education (FFE) evolved to become the Sustainable Community Project (SCP). SCP continues FFE's practice of identifying situations where children are sent to work to contribute to their family's survival. In exchange for a commitment to send the children to school, the program continues to provide these poor families with monthly food provisions.

But the scope of SCP has grown to tackle **the problem's underlying cause** – the lack of education and skills that traps parents and children in a cycle of poverty. Relocated in the Peak Sneng area near LHA's Children's Development Village and the Junior High School, SCP has initiated a program that leverages the resources of those two nearby programs.

CDV's organic vegetable garden is being transformed into an agricultural training school where the district's poor and largely unskilled farmers can learn simple techniques to improve crop yields. And at JHS, villagers will be offered sewing classes to give them the skills to earn extra income. Finally, to provide decent housing for families that often live in **unimaginable situations**, LHA's monks

will continue to oversee the construction of Peace Houses.

Last year, by providing assistance to 70 families in the six villages it serves, SCP ensured that 170 additional children went to school. In exchange for providing them with the food the children would have earned, the program requires parents to sign social contract, agreeing not only to send their children to school, but also committing to giving up alcohol, gambling, and violence in the home. Regular home visits monitor that this contract is being respected. It's all part of an integrated program to break the cycle of poverty and improve the quality of life in these poor communities.

Looking Deeper Inside

Khib Lim, handicapped by a landmine, lives with his wife in Jubsom village with their six children. Facing great stress, Lim consumed alcohol daily and was violent to his family and neighbors. But since signing the contract with LHA early in 2011, his relationship with his family and neighbors has been transformed. Lim has renounced drinking **and violence**, and the couple's children now attend school regularly.

Lim now wants to open a bicycle repair shop, while his wife hopes to run a small grocery shop. Impressed by the changes they have made, SCP plans to expand its service to offer micro-loans programs to families like this who have shown they can change their lives.



Life & Hope Association

Wat Damnak (Buddhist Temple)

Siem Reap, Cambodia

Office Phone: (855-0)63 761 810

Cell phone (Venerable Somnieng)

(855-0)92 929 962

Email: lifelandhopeangkor@gmail.com

Website: www.lifelandhopeangkor.org

Thanks to our Supporters!

Program Sponsors:

Angkor Thom Junior High School

Hilfe fur Kinder in Kambodsha e.V.
Germany

Sustainable Village Project

Rice for Cambodia, Australia

Sewing Training Center

Hotel de la Paix, Siem Reap

Program Advancing Girls Education

Chris and Barbara Bartlett, USA

Children's Development Village

Chance für Kinder in Kambodscha n.e.V.

Rudi Leitl and Astrid Fischer-Leitl, Germany

Sophie Offer , USA

Woodstock UU Church , USA

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Partner Org: Go Campaign, <http://www.gocampaign.org>

How to Donate:

In the United States and Hong Kong, you can make a tax-free donation through our partnership with the Give2Asia Foundation, an organization that collects tax-free contributions for smaller nonprofits. To make a donation, please visit www.give2asia.org/lha

LHA is a small organization without the structure or overheads of larger NGOs. That means that we may not have the infrastructure to receive donations directly in every country. But we do have a network of Rotary clubs, churches, and nonprofits that channel funds to us. Contact us and we will tell you how you can donate tax-free from your country.



How to Volunteer:

If you are willing to help poor and disadvantaged children and young people, you can make a difference by volunteering at LHA. We welcome qualified English teachers, medical providers, office workers, or anyone who has a skill they would like to share. Just contact us at the address above.

