

# Friendship with Cambodia Activities Report - 2008

## *FWC Celebrates 5 Years*

*Look how far we've come  
thanks to your support*

Our annual budget grew from \$20,000 to \$135,000. The rural students sponsored in school increased from 20 to 110. Seventy-five percent are girls.

Our aid to Cambodia increased fivefold to:

- Help Street Children
- Assist Families Living with AIDS
- Offer Vocational Training for Landmine Survivors
- Provide Matching Grants for Rural Poverty Relief:
  - Micro-credit Programs
  - Schools, Houses, Wells
  - Community Centers
  - Cows, Fishing Boats
  - Bicycles, Motorcycles

Craft buying from disadvantaged and disabled artisans increased from 7 shops to 30.

We added programs to:

- Prevent Trafficking of Women and Children and Assist Victims
- Empower Women through Micro-credit Programs, Vocational Training, and Leadership Training
- Help Rural Communities Protect Natural Resources
- Create Youth Clubs, Fund a Librarian, Donate Books for Rural Children



*Children devouring our donated books*

Added Staff – in addition to Bhavia Wagner, Executive Director, we now have Carol Gleason, Travel Coordinator and the following volunteer staff: Karen Molleson, Student Sponsorship Coordinator; Linda Young, Crafts Program Coordinator; Peggy Baldwin, Office Assistant; Pujita Mayeda, Socially Responsible Book Project. Volunteers increased from 25 to over 75.



*New school in Siem Reap Province*

## *Genocide Trial Raises Important Questions*

As the Khmer Rouge leaders are put on the stand, Cambodians hope to get the answer to the question: *Why did they kill their own people?* The tribunal is important for bringing justice and closure to Cambodia's horrific mass murder of 1.7 million people – 30 years later.

### **Why does genocide happen?**

In the case of Cambodia, Pol Pot had a blind ideology of a utopian society based on Maoism, where everyone would be equal and pure, at the level of an uneducated Khmer peasant farmer. This ideology grew out of anger over economic injustices: extreme poverty in the midst of compassionless wealth.

There also was resentment toward foreigners resulting from encroachment by the Thais and Vietnamese during the previous 1000 years and the French occupation that ended in 1954. Four years of US bombing in Cambodia during the Vietnam War destabilized Cambodia and its government, setting the stage for the Khmer Rouge to take over.

### **How can we prevent genocide?**

The organization Genocide Watch ([www.genocidewatch.org](http://www.genocidewatch.org)) has identified eight predictable stages of genocide. It is helpful to become aware of these stages, so we can assist in preventing future atrocities.

1. Classification – us vs. them
2. Symbolization – i.e. clothing
3. Dehumanization – naming evil
4. Organization – isolate in camps
5. Polarization – eliminate moderates
6. Preparation – death lists
7. Extermination – mass murder
8. Denial – clear conscience

The process leading to genocide can be stopped at any stage. Teaching acceptance of differences, and stopping hate propaganda and hate crimes are essential.

### **How can we assist recovery?**

The process of recovery includes:

- 1. The need for justice**, which the trial of the Khmer Rouge leaders is finally providing.
- 2. Rebuilding trust** through projects in which people work together for the common good, such as Friendship with Cambodia's community construction projects, women's self-help groups, and natural resource protection associations.
- 3. Help with economic recovery**, such as our credit programs and start-up grants for houses, wells, schools, irrigation, community buildings, and other projects.

### **Genocide Survivors' Oral History Book Now Available**

*Soul Survivors: Stories of Women and Children in Cambodia* by FWC Director Bhavia Wagner can be ordered through FWC. The lives of the genocide survivors are testimonies to the strength and goodness of the human spirit. \$16 plus \$4 shipping and handling. Proceeds benefit FWC.

## ***A Cambodian Journal –***

*I just returned from Cambodia a few days ago, on September 30, 2008. This was a working trip for three board members and two staff, including myself, from Friendship with Cambodia.*

***We started out in Siem Reap, where the ancient temples of Angkor Wat are located. It was the rainy season, which means high humidity and an occasional down-pour in the late afternoon. The rice fields were emerald green and waving in the breeze.***

***Board President Lowell Hill and the rest of us visited Friendship with Cambodia projects including our Shelter for Street Children. Our hearts melted as we met each of the 20 children and they told us their name in English “My name is (Sophy).” Our program is improving their futures, as they come from harsh conditions of hunger, poverty, and domestic violence.***

***Carol Gleason, Friendship with Cambodia’s Travel Coordinator, helped research our forthcoming book on socially responsible travel in Cambodia, evaluating numerous hotels and restaurants that are training programs for disadvantaged youth and members of the Child Safe program to stop sexual exploitation of children.***

***We also visited Angkor Hospital for Children, which provides free medical care to the poor. Carol, a travel agent and our part-time employee, is a retired physical therapist who, prior to joining FWC, raised \$30,000 to support this hospital.***



*Carol at Angkor Hospital for Children*

***Just for fun, we had an elephant ride through the jungle and temple ruins. My elephant’s name was Geeban and she is 45***

*years old. As we were climbing the stairs of the elephant boarding platform her trunk tickled my feet as she searched for her banana treat that I held in my hand. Her driver picked a leaf from a tree and played a melodic traditional Cambodian tune as we passed by wild monkeys.*

***Linda Young, our volunteer Craft Coordinator, shopped ‘til she dropped, visiting 30 charitable craft stores that support disabled and disadvantaged workers with training and fair trade policies. After spending nearly \$6000 in support of these artisans, she has a wide variety of gifts for us to resell to raise funds for our projects. Purchase high-lights include an incredible assortment of fashionable handbags made from a variety of materials: natural woven reed mats, colorful organza, and hand-loomed silk.***

*Linda also brought back highly popular black pepper from Kampot Province. Pepper farms have finally been restored after being destroyed during Cambodia’s genocide (1975 – 1979).*



*Linda and her elephant*

***Our visit to families affected by AIDS living in the slums of Phnom Penh was encouraging, because some of the widows are benefiting from our vocational training and small loan programs. They have started small businesses – such as selling vegetables in the market or becoming a beautician. The squalor these families live in is beyond belief – a dense hovel of blue plastic tarps and rusty corrugated tin perched over an open sewer. A little boy pulled out his box of toys that came from someone’s garbage – a badminton racket with only a few strings left, a worn out Barbie doll with no clothes, and other odds and ends. But he seemed so happy to have toys.***

***Next we visited the Veterans International prosthesis project and saw artificial hands with red finger nails for women being manufactured, as well as durable working legs. Three older men were waiting for their new limbs to be fitted, while a young man tried out his new leg on an obstacle course.***



*A landmine survivor tests his new limb*

***Unfortunately, there still are 2-3 new landmine victims each day in Cambodia. Before joining our board this year, John Dennis raised tens of thousands of dollars for this prosthesis project through his Presbyterian church in Corvallis, Oregon.***

***We visited our Women’s Shelter. The formerly trafficked and battered young women who are in our cooking vocational training program prepared a stunning meal for us, including my favorite dish: amok - a flavorful steamed fish curry custard served with rice.***

***After a week in the cities we were ready for a trip to the coastal province of Kampot to visit some of our rural poverty projects. On the way we took a side trip to Chambok, an eco-tourism project started at Kiriom National Park. Village people served us a nice lunch. Unfortunately, we didn’t have time to take the ox cart ride or guided nature walk up to the waterfall.***

***Eco-tourism is a way to employ local people in projects that protect nature and sustain the ecosystem, so they don’t have to cut trees or kill wildlife for survival.***



*Wild monkeys at Angkor Wat*



Two of our rural poverty social workers

**Our rural poverty program has many facets, including sponsoring poor but motivated students to attend school.**

Karen Molleson, Friendship with Cambodia's volunteer Student Sponsorship Program Coordinator, came on this trip. For the past four years she has facilitated an annual personal letter exchange between sponsors and students. On this trip Karen and the rest of us met with 14 of our sponsored students from Kampot Province.

**We visited our student Kosal's home, set off in the rice fields.** His family is very poor and their house is on the ground with a dirt floor. Most families build a house on stilts to stay dry. Kosal's bed was screened off in one corner, and above it was a picture of Abraham Lincoln, a man who overcame many obstacles in his life.



Walking to our student Kosal's house

Kosal's father is 61 years old and works two jobs, a laborer digging ditches in the day and fishing with a hand net in the tidal flats at night. Most people retire at age 50 because life spans in Cambodia are short, but Kosal's father has pledged to keep working until his children finish their studies.

Linda, our Crafts Coordinator, is Kosal's sponsor and was delighted to meet Kosal and his parents. Kosal's father had tears in his eyes as he thanked Linda for sponsoring his son in school. Kosal acted as our local guide and speaks fluent English, a very bright young man who wants to become a medical doctor.

**We also met with one of the Women's Self-Help Groups that we have supported, at Seng's home.** Seng's nice new house was built next to the tiny hut that her family lived in before she improved her life. Over a period of four years and with a series of small loans for fishing equipment, she increased her family's income. Again, I saw tears in the eyes of the women as they talked about how hard their lives had been before and how much better they are now. They have new houses, cows (which are an asset that can be sold when cash is needed, often for medical care), and motorcycles for transporting fish to the market.



Seng's new house (next to her old one) was built after participating in our Women's Self-Help Group and Savings Program

**What really impressed me on this trip was our meeting with a group of women in rural Kampot who organized themselves to challenge the port that was being built illegally on their community fishing grounds.** The dredging and filling is destroying the fishing resource and the project is displacing 300 families.

These local women organized two protests of 100-200 people at the site. They succeeded in delaying the construction and are now meeting with the project owners. Some of these women participated in Friendship with Cambodia's women's leadership training program. They are now able to address problems in their community with skill and confidence. We made a donation to support their efforts.



These women are working to stop an illegal port from destroying their community fishery and livelihoods

**In the evening we went to a newly rebuilt Buddhist temple to join the national holiday celebration of P'chun Ben (Ancestors Remembrance Day).**

We sat on the floor with everyone else and received a chanted blessing. The temple was filled with elders. Women wore their best hand-woven silk skirts and white scarves tied diagonally across their blouses. Outside, young people ate and talked in the carnival-like atmosphere.

**On the last day of our trip we met with staff from the eight small rural non-profit organizations (NGOs) that coordinate our rural poverty programs.** Many of them traveled two days to get to Phnom Penh for the meeting, riding their motorbikes on muddy roads. We were impressed with their positive spirits, success stories, and dedication to their work.

**We left Cambodia with renewed enthusiasm for our programs and hope that you, our donors, will continue to fund these worthwhile projects.** Please join me in supporting our friends in Cambodia whose lives are so much more difficult than ours.

Bhavia



Karen, Lowell, Linda, Carol, Bhavia

# Friendship with Cambodia

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Please let us know if you wish to be taken off our mailing list.

Our work in Cambodia is funded by individuals who make tax-deductible donations. Thank you!

## *Have you ever thought about traveling to Cambodia?*

You are invited to join our trip February 3 – 14, 2009. We will visit our humanitarian projects and do some sightseeing, including Angkor Wat, a World Heritage Site.

It will be a socially responsible trip, because it is designed to help people in Cambodia. We will eat in restaurants that are training and empowering former street children, stay in hotels that are locally owned and treat their staff well, and go to shops where the crafts sold support landmine survivor artisans. We will take children living in the slums on a fun excursion.

Cambodia is a wonderful country to visit. The people are kind, the culture is beautiful, and the food is delicious. This special trip includes experiences such as a boat excursion on the Tonle Sap Lake, an ecological treasure, and we'll spend time in a rural village with families that are benefiting from women's micro-credit programs.

This trip is tax-deductible and is designed to fit within a two-week vacation, including travel time. The trip cost is \$2000 which includes almost everything except airfare. Part of your trip fee supports our humanitarian projects.



*FWC's trip is called Inside Cambodia:  
Meet the People – Make a Difference*

This trip is a way to give back to a country that has suffered so much in the last 40 years, including US bombing, a genocide that killed a quarter of the population, and 20 years of civil war. The country is now at peace but struggling to rebuild in spite of challenges like landmines and poverty. We will see the positive effects of efforts to improve life for people there and learn what makes a successful aid program.

You can find a detailed itinerary on our website. Contact our Travel Coordinator Carol Gleason (541) 752-3959 or [cigleas@comcast.net](mailto:cigleas@comcast.net) for an application and more information. Your application and deposit of \$250 are due by December 5, 2008. This trip is a unique opportunity that we hope you will consider.

*Let's relieve the suffering  
of others and give them hope.*

## *University Student Fund*

We are thrilled to announce that nine of our sponsored students just finished high school. This is a wonderful accomplishment because less than 10% of rural students complete high school as the result of poverty. And what is even more impressive is that eight are studying at the university this October. These are their majors: medicine, computer technology, finance, agriculture, law, management, accounting, and engineering.

Three years ago the only careers the students knew about were teacher and doctor. Our social workers helped them form a youth club and learn about career options, social problems in Cambodia, and leadership.

We are starting a special fund to support these university students in their studies and need donors to pledge support.

### **Friendship with Cambodia DVD**

A nine-minute DVD created and donated by film maker Tiara Delgado introduces our humanitarian work. You can order a copy for \$10 which includes shipping.

### **Friendship with Cambodia's Board of Directors**

- Vern Arne, John Dennis, Lowell Hill, Shoshana Kerewsky, Terry Kirby, Robin Mauney, Karen Molleson, Donna Napier, Linda Young, Ravy Young.