

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2007

Since March this year the Trust has raised just over \$6000 to buy books for the school libraries in Takeo, Cambodia. Thank you for being one of the contributors. We wanted to keep you up-to-date with what the Trust is planning.

Book Buying

The book buying happens when Jennie Wilson, one of the trustees and tour leader with Gecko Trails, heads over to SE Asia for their tour season between November and March. Jennie has regular contact with Siphon and Mach Meas who teach at the two schools and they have put together a list of titles that the schools want. Jennie will be meeting them in Phnom Penh during December and they will spend a couple of days going the rounds of the publishers and markets buying the books. What fun! We also hear that Moy Sophea, the Senior High School, has recently built a new library so there are definitely going to be lots of shelves to fill. Our plan is to spend the bulk of the \$6000 the Trust has raised this year. There's no point in hanging on to money in a bank account in NZ when it can be achieving our objectives in Takeo!



Jennie with Siphon and Mach

Our plans over the next year or two

While we recognise that there is an enormous need to develop educational facilities in Cambodia, we believe it is better for us, at least initially, to focus on schools we have already worked in. We already have good links and trusted partners in these schools and in that community. We hope in the next year to begin to contribute to the development of a library in the local primary school Vihea K'Poh. In the two High Schools, Kla Krohim and Moy Sophea, we will focus on developing bi-lingual libraries, while the primary school will have books in the Khmer language.

Our rationale is that by contributing to all levels of the education system in that area, a momentum will be created and a book learning culture will develop in the community. We believe that the use of books/reading will provide wider opportunities for students as they progress through school and will enhance their capacity to enter tertiary education. This assists individuals to move out of poverty and to gain a better life for them and their families.

While there is a small core of books in the libraries, the stock of books needs to be renewed regularly to maintain interest in the library and reading. There is no budget allocated by the Ministry of Education or the provincial Education Authority for the purchase of new books. Furthermore library books are not seen as a priority when compared to the purchase of basic texts, development and/or repair of classrooms and the need to improve teachers' salaries. The purchase of complementary educational material is encouraged where the school is able to access alternative funds. Therefore the cost of expanding the number of books and restocking the library shelves can only be carried by the schools if there is external help.

Training Librarians

We've also received a special donation that will pay the bulk of the cost (US\$322) for a three week librarians training course for a second person at Moy Sophea. With a roll of over 3000 students and hopefully a growing library we are delighted with this as the librarians are really important in ensuring the books are well kept and the library systems are effective. Earlier special donations have covered the cost of training for one librarian at Kla Krohim and one at Moy Sophea. Through this training the women involved develop a career path as well as the school libraries gaining support to operate well.

Special donations from Penguin New Zealand and Pearson Education

We were very grateful to receive a generous supply of books from these companies, books that had been their sales team samples. As well as novels suitable for the more advanced students in the Senior High School, there were a large number of colourful basic readers which will be most valuable for the pupils just starting to learn English. We are hoping that with a number of people travelling on the next VSA Adventure to Cambodia the books can be distributed across the group's luggage so that we don't have to pay freight or excess luggage!

More Mundane matters

On the less exciting but important organizational front, the Trust is now registered with the Charities Commission, CCI 1646 if you want to check up on our details.

We've also applied for a grant from the Morgan Family Charitable Foundation (yes the TradeMe money). We've yet to hear whether that has been successful or not.

All the money donated is used for developing the libraries. Any administrative costs (including this newsletter) are covered out of the Trustees' pockets.

Thank you once again for your support.

Warm Regards

Helen Walch
Chair

