



BOOKS FOR CAMBODIA

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Book Purchasing

It is always exciting to depart for Cambodia with money in hand knowing that more books will soon be purchased for the two school libraries in Takeo province just south of Phnom Penh we are supporting. For those of you who have spent some time in Cambodia you will realize how the books are appreciated by the students and one has only to visit the libraries to see firsthand how totally engrossed they are in reading. In fact they are so keen to read that they hardly glance up when we appear. Books have the potential to open up a new world for these students and I believe it does just that.

If you have never had books available you cannot read a story for pleasure, find out about

the world or even the country you live in. Now with regular book donations on an annual basis the school libraries are accumulating a range of books, including bi-lingual books.

Selecting books in Cambodia is different to buying books here in New Zealand. We purchase from several publishers, SIPAR Books being the main one. Most other books are bought from the local market where the prices are more competitive. Prior to the purchasing the librarians compile lists of the required books and staff from each school select the books. The range of books is slowly expanding as more publishers begin business. (See article on p3)



Although we mainly purchase books for the two libraries at Moy U Sophea and Kla Krohim High Schools we make smaller donations of books to several local NGO organisations such as the KDFO orphanage in the vicinity of the municipal rubbish dump in Phnom Penh. (see photo)

Jennie Wilson

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Libraries at Kla Krohim and Moy U Sophea

Moy U Sophea – A new library has been built at the school and all books have now been transferred to it and it is now operating. Recently floor mats were purchased for the students to sit on. Ouch Sarom, librarian, has recently completed a three week library training course.

Kla Krohim – The library was looking excellent on our visit and the students use the library

on a daily basis. The School Director, Duch Sarin, is very appreciative of the support for the library and the ongoing donation of books. Im Mach, the Assistant School Director, has also completed the 3 week library training course in March 2008 and plans to hold a library training course for other local teachers later in the year. This means there will be more

schools keen for support from Books for Cambodia.

Jennie Wilson

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A Letter from Siphen

Dear all of BFC members,

First of all I would love to say Thanks you very much again for trying to help my students in my community.

At the moment the new library has just started and working on books placing and will take this week and next week to organise. Students are waiting to use the materials in the new library. I spent my time helping Thy, the librarian, a lot because just herself now (Sarom at the training course .and Davy is on leave ,baby) all the books that we just bought are very useful, the students like to read very much - crowded inside the library , large room now . For the training course, Mach thought that he wants



Son Oun, the Kla Krohim librarian, accessioning the new books while students are engrossed in their books.

to arrange and run a workshop or training course for the province level by the beginning next school year.(September 2008)

We need to contact and agree by the provincial of education department in Takeo first. We hope we can do it.

So far the two librarians that had trained are improve a lot in the library job, like the books is organised and checked for the missing and figure it out .

Siphen Meas

Librarian Training Update

Four school librarians have now completed a 3 week live-in library training course.

They have all returned very enthusiastic and keen to implement their newly acquired knowledge. For the sustainability of the libraries having trained teachers is extremely important. In the future these librarians plan to run a course for teachers in their local area as well as meeting regularly on a monthly basis.

The Assistant Director, Kla Krohim High School, Im Mach recently returned from the Librarian Training course in March 2008 wrote -

"I just finished librarian training course with SIPAR at Sihanoukville for 20 days and came back home yesterday . I'm so appreciate that Books For Cambodia supported me to join in the course with SIPAR group .The course was very interesting for me to get news knowledge and experiences to im-

prove myself for present work and also future .

During I stayed at Sihanoukville I talked to the representative from SIPAR and Ministry of Education about my purpose in the future that I want to train the secondary librarians and if possible we provide some books for their school after they finish training course similar to SIPAR did and doing for primary school . So, that is the reason I want to do and help Cambodian students through reading or using the library more over it is a part of human resource development to improve the country .

For secondary school don't have NGO help about this yet ."



Training in progress

New generation revives 'lost culture' of reading

Phnom Penh Post, Issue 17 / 02, January 24 - February 7, 2008

Behind closed doors, Cambodia's book-worms are hard at work. There may be few people reading on the street, but analysts say reading is on the rise as the once-popular Khmer pastime re-emerges from a turbulent era that rendered books an unnecessary part of life.

After the Khmer Rouge lost their grip on power in 1979, immediate efforts to rebuild Cambodia fell far from reviving the book industry something a new generation of readers hopes to change.

"After the war, people only thought about finding a way to survive. We didn't think about knowledge," said Hun Sarin, director of the Department of Books and Reading under the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts.

As literacy rates and standards of living rise, more people are settling down with a good book and rediscovering stories of the past, said Thonavet Poav, director of The Federation for Development of the Book Sector in Cambodia, a non profit organization made up of book sellers, authors, publishers, distributors, librarians and representatives of government and non governmental organizations who wish to alleviate problems affecting the development of books and reading in Cambodia.

"People aren't aware of how good Khmer literature is and it is only a matter of time before it is rediscovered," said Poav.

Theary Theng, financial director of Phnom Penh retailer Monument Books, said a more open society means Cambodians can learn about a broader variety of subjects.

"Before, many topics were forbidden. Now, we can learn anything we want," she said.

But getting books into readers' hands remains a challenge, with analysts indicating that access to reading material and publishing practices need to improve.

"Even for those in the big cities there are an insufficient number of libraries, most understocked with no regular government initiative to promote reading," Helen Jarvis, author of *Publishing in Cambodia*, says in the 2006 revised edition of her book.

Writers, publishers and printers are confronted by an industry still in its early stages of development and, without the presence of official publishing houses, responsibility falls on authors to produce their own books.

"One in three writers handle the whole process of publishing and marketing their works themselves by photocopying and selling their copies to friends at market stalls," Jarvis wrote.

Unable to afford books in Phnom Penh's selection of upmarket bookstores, most readers take advantage of the over 150 roadside kiosks and the concentration of bookstalls at the Psar O'Russey, Olympic and Thmey markets.

Part-time bookseller Keo Saravuth, 28, said business was improving at his mother's bookstand at Psar O'Russey market. In the ten years since his mother set up shop, he has seen a sharp rise in book sales, particularly of Khmer fiction books costing \$1.50 to \$3.

"We are starting to read more and more," said Saravuth. "Before there were not many books to read, now people can find whatever they want."



To help those in the countryside also find what they want, the

Department of Books and Reading plans to start a mobile library that will travel nationwide in the next few years.

Help from abroad is on its way, too. Last month, a delegation from the US-based International Freedom to Publish Committee visited Cambodia on a fact-finding mission at the invitation of the Center for Khmer Studies.

Committee chairman Hal Fessenden told the Post there were many NGOs doing important work to build a literary culture in Cambodia but his organization made up of members of the Association of American Publishers could enhance their efforts by identifying concrete steps to rebuild "a lost culture."

**"Getting books into readers' hands remains a challenge
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Who's Who

Jennie Wilson is the trustee who visits Cambodia most frequently and is responsible for book purchasing.

Siphen Meas and Im Mach*, husband and wife who teach at Moy u Sophea High School and Kla Krohim respectively are our key contacts in Cambodia.

SIPAR is a French NGO working in Cambodia. They have been developing school libraries in 6 provinces but do not work in Takeo where our Trust concentrates its efforts. SIPAR helps develop school libraries and trains librarians, as well as publishing a wider range of books suitable for school libraries.

Stephanie Edwards who visited the schools as part of a VSA Adventure in January 08 has agreed to become a trustee.

* More about these people in our next newsletter.

Your Help is needed – please use this return slip

I would like to help with the purchase of books and training of school librarians in Cambodia

Here is my donation.

- \$16 (approx 10 books) \$32 \$64 \$80 other Please indicate the amount)
- My cheque is enclosed.
- I have deposited the money into the BOOKS FOR CAMBODIA account 15-3953-0614339-30
If you are doing this by internet banking can you please ensure your name appears on our statement so that we can send you a receipt .
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