

Rebuilding Hope





Building New Homes, Giving New Hope

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Those that can least afford tragedies are often the most likely to suffer from them. Narla, a JWOC Dollars for Scholars student, gave us more proof of that statement when he came back from collecting micro-loan repayments. He reported that a fire had burned down twelve homes in the village where JWOC’s first micro-loans started.

A child had been cooking fish when the flames leapt out of the grill and onto the walls made of leaf and bamboo quickly spreading to the roof made of dry palm leaf and grass. The kids had run from the house and within minutes the flames spread to the neighbors’ homes made of the same dry materials. Fortunately no one was hurt in the fire, but in less than half an hour, twelve homes were destroyed.

“We lost everything,” explains Chi Cheath, who lost his home and all his possessions in the fire. “Eight of us lived in that house. My wife’s parents, my four kids and us,” says Cheath as he stands next to his wife Som, holding their one month old baby.

They are finding temporary shelter in the home of a family that is away visiting their home village for the Khmer New Year. “The family told me we must move out when they get back. I need to make a new house,” says Cheath.

Working as a stand-by tuk-tuk driver for a hotel in Siem Reap he only gets paid when the hotel needs him, and now during the low tourist season he will not have enough money to build a home in the foreseeable future.

“I get paid fifty dollars a month in the high season plus tips, but now there are no guests. Last month I only got fifteen dollars,” Cheath says.

Water Wells Prevent Further Damage

When Narla first heard about the fire, he went to see the damage and was amazed when villagers did not ask for help or complain, but rather thanked him.

“I was so surprised,” says Narla. “In the village, everyone had a smile on their face and thanked me and the other students for providing the wells. They said that the wells saved

many of their homes from being burned.”

A few months prior, JWOC contributors donated four water wells that were installed nearby the homes as part of the Clean Water Project. When the flames started to spread, the villagers rushed to the wells and used the water to extinguish the fire.

While 12 families lost their homes, no one was seriously hurt and the rest of the village was saved by easy access to water.

The final home in the line of destroyed homes had holes in the roof and one wall scorched, but remained standing because the well across from it provided water the villagers needed to protect it.

“By the time the fire truck got here we had put out the fire,” says a man who overhears the conversation about the community effort to pump the wells and put out the fire.

The wells were originally installed to provide clean water for the community to drink, cook, wash, and irrigate crops. Now the wells have been used in an entirely unpredictable way – to save homes.

Because of the contributions from people in far off places, Cambodians have been able to reduce their personal tragedies. When they said ‘Thank you’ to Narla, they were saying thank you to all the people that have donated to JWOC.



Village residents stand in front of the remains of their home that was destroyed in a fire in Siem Reap.



A JWOC water well, across from the origin of the fire, was used to prevent further damage to adjacent homes.

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Top Left: Neighbors working together to rebuild homes. Top Right: Homes during construction. Bottom Left: Before rebuilding. Bottom Right: After rebuilding.

Finding a Solution

In the remains of burned clothes on the ground and blackened posts where the walls of homes once stood, there was a new problem needing JWOC's attention. After finding success in villages with the Microfinance Fund, and the water wells benefiting the community in unforeseen ways, it was time to solve the housing problem for these people.

Under the banner of *See a Problem, Solve a Problem*, JWOC gathered the families to discuss a solution that would help the victims rebuild their homes and give ownership back to their way of life. Yet, picking up the pieces following a tragedy is not always easy.

Chea Samon, at 48 years old, was saving his money so he could pay the dowry for a wife after his first wife died five years ago. "I lost my savings and everything in my house. I had saved over one thousand dollars but lost it all. For five years I saved my money. It is now gone."

Not knowing how to open a bank account, he kept his life savings hidden in his home. He explained how the Red Cross gave each family emergency relief consisting of rice, some pots and pans, 100,000 riel (just under \$25), and a tarp which hung as the closest semblance of a home.

For villagers like Samon, they needed a way to get back on their feet as soon as possible, but did not have enough

resources to rebuild their homes. Talking to Cheath and Samon it became obvious JWOC needed to help. We had never intended to help build homes but this was a tragedy that donors have given JWOC the means to minimize.

After discussing the needs and desires of the villagers, an agreement was reached to provide them an opportunity to rent-to-own their new homes. Based on the success of the Microfinance Fund, JWOC loaned each family enough capital to pay for the materials necessary to rebuild their

home. After receiving these resources, the village rebuilt their new houses as a group. An amazing sight to see - neighbors with different skills helping to build each home.

The average cost of each home was \$307, and the families agreed to pay back an affordable sum of \$10 in monthly

repayments at zero percent interest. Once the loans are repaid in full, the families will then own their homes.

With twelve people now living under the roof of his new home, Cheath and his wife have high hopes for the future. Cheath's wife Somol says, "It's better than before because now many more people can stay at our house."

While Cheath is away at his job, Somol watches their four children at their new home. With a shy smile she says, "Thank you" in English, and continues in Khmer, "If I didn't have the money from the organization [JWOC] I don't know what I would do."

Without collateral, she had no way of borrowing money from a bank to rebuild her home. But thanks to wonderful help from donors all over the world, JWOC was able to solve a problem as it happened and rebuild homes for villagers like Somol and her family.



Cheat (center holding his baby boy) stands with his wife, Somol, outside their new home together with the 10 other people who live with them.



Dollars for Scholars Focus:

Connecting Cambodian Students with International Supporters

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For Cambodian student Heng Bunsung, writing emails has become more than just an opportunity to learn about life outside Cambodia and the chance to practice his English. Having lost both of his parents during the civil war in Cambodia, Bunsung now calls his university sponsor ‘God Father’ in his emails.

At 25, Bunsung received a JWOC scholarship in September 2006 to study Tourism and Hospitality at Build Bright University (BBU) in Siem Reap with the help of California residents Janice and Loren O’Connor.

Bunsung and Loren O’Connor now email back and forth on a semi-weekly basis, and have formed a remarkable bond. Bunsung sends O’Connor poems about his experiences and life in Cambodia, and O’Connor relates his life in California to Bunsung.

“I email Loren to talk about studies, teaching, finding wells, going to the countryside to meet the poor people, family, and help to improve English,” says Bunsung. “I really enjoy hearing from Loren and I admire his kindness to the Cambodian people.”

Finding time to write emails and poems is not always easy for Bunsung given his hectic schedule. In the morning, Bunsung teaches Beginning English classes to children as part of his scholarship requirement from 6 – 7 AM. Then he hurries to VLT Tour Company where he works as a tour operator from 8 AM – 5:30 PM. After work, he manages to eat a quick dinner



From left, Heng Bunsung, Loren O’Connor, and Dave Proodian teaching at Bunsung’s volunteer English class.

Hi Loren,

I am very well thanks, I have already told to my students about experience with you, about eating, picking food and they are very surprised about. They asked me many things about you. They really want to say hello to you, Loren.

By the way, I took a trip with Sela around the Tonle Sap lake it is a good experience for me and learnt a lot with it.

When you come to Cambodia again my English not the same as before, I guess.

I will send you picture of mine later.

Take careGod father, Loren.

Take care.....Bunsung

before attending night classes at BBU from 6 – 9 PM.

Bunsung’s busy schedule speaks to his desire to help others and improve his future. “I work very hard there [at VLK] because I want to get good experience. I hope to be a lecturer at university in the future. If I work hard now, I think my life will be better later,” says Bunsung.

Teaching English to students also gives Bunsung more practice and experience for the future. “I like meeting the new students, because when I meet the new student everything is happy. I feel very happy because I see they are smiling and talking. When I teach I usually teach them stories and sometimes joking during the exercise, and they laugh so I’m happy.” With his class size surpassing 50 students, Bunsung’s smiles must be contagious.

In December 2006, O’Connor and fellow educator Dave Proodian came to Cambodia to visit Bunsung and see Cambodia for the first time. While in Siem Reap, they were able to meet Bunsung, learn more about his life, help to teach his students, and treat Bunsung to a dinner at Raffels Hotel.

O’Connor says, “It has been a pleasure emailing and visiting with Bunsung. It was an amazing experience [helping to teach] at the school and watching Bunsung, so bright and talented. He had never been on an elevator or in a hotel.... what a pleasure to watch his excitement.”

Bunsung and O’Connor continue to develop the remarkable bond that started almost one year ago. As Bunsung writes in an email to O’Connor, “When I read your email I feel that I seem very close to you. I don’t know why? It is probably the fate that makes you and I have met each other.”



The Power of Microfinance: Business Heats Up

Microfinance Expanding

Business Heats Up

It is mid-day with the thermometer peaking at 98 degrees in Day Thmei Village, and children are finding shelter under the small roof of Lay Eng's home.

For 200 riel (5¢), they are buying a sweet ice drink called *tagaw chu*, which means crushed ice. A sweet syrup added to the top provides some extra relief from the heat.

Business is good for Lay Eng, who lives in a one room hut with her ailing mother and sixteen year old son. She is currently on her second loan from the JWOC Microfinance Fund and used her original loan of \$100 to purchase the machine to crush ice that makes *tagaw chu*.

"I borrowed the money to start this business, and the profit I make I can use to support my family," Lay says.

On an average day, she sells 20-30 drinks and adds, "the profit I make is enough to buy rice and food each day."

After Lay completed repayment on her first loan, she borrowed a second loan of \$125 from JWOC to add more goods to her business. With other snacks and foods available to buy, she hopes to have a variety of products to sell throughout the year.

"When I finish this loan I hope to borrow more money so I can add drinks for the children and people who live around



A young girl happily receives a crushed iced drink from Lay Eng on a particularly hot afternoon in Siem Reap.

my house," explains Lay as she makes a drink for a young girl.

Knowing that she will be able to borrow more money in the future as she repays her current loan, she is confident in the future of her business. For now, the children in her village are happy to be able to visit Lay on hot afternoons!

Microfinance Fund: Expanding Outreach

JWOC has trained 7 new Dollars for Scholars scholarship students to be loan officers for the Microfinance Fund. These students are now responsible for interviewing new loan clients, collecting repayments on a weekly basis, and offering advice for the development of clients' small businesses.

Working as volunteer loan officers during their time in University, scholarship students are receiving invaluable experience in banking and finance fields. With the help from the scholarship students, JWOC is expanding its outreach to new villages in Siem Reap.

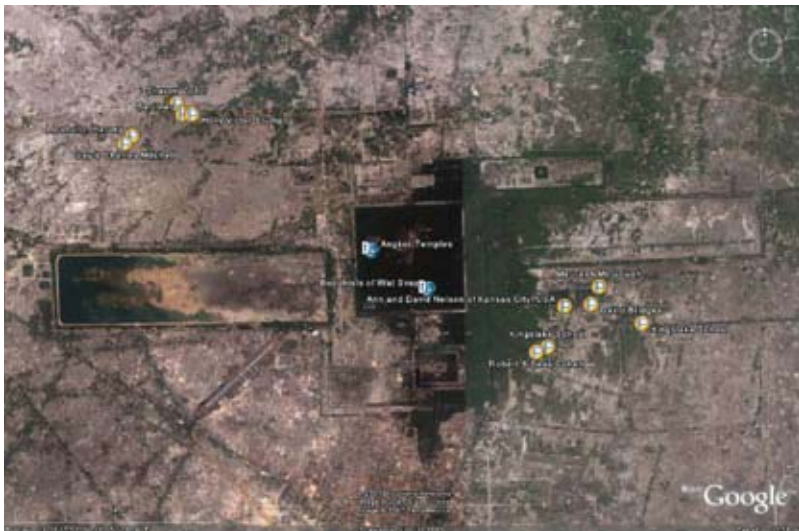


JWOC Dollars for Scholars students give new loans to villagers to start and expand small businesses.



Clean Water Project: GPS & Well Testing Education through Computers

Clean Water Project: GPS & Well Testing



With so many wells now in place in Cambodia and many more planned for the future, JWOC is using GPS technology and Google Earth to map existing and future wells.

This summer, JWOC is pleased to welcome two groups of long term volunteers, West Point Cadets and Oxford University students. These volunteers will be helping in a variety of ways, one of which will be testing the water from the wells to ensure the water is safe for drinking. Results from the testing will also be added to the maps.

Education through Computers

Having so many new students eager to learn to use computers, JWOC recently purchased 5 new computers to enable students to practice their skills at the language schools.

A total of 10 computers are now available for all students to use in the afternoons. The computers are equipped with basic word processing, spreadsheet, language training, and typing software. With JWOC Scholarship students teaching classes, more students now have the ability to gain valuable skills and practice computers.



Well Price Increase

Due to price increases of water well materials in Cambodia, JWOC has increased the donation amount for our Clean Water Project.

The new donation amount for one water well is \$100, which does not include a sign. For an additional \$25, JWOC can make a sign with wording of your choice. (The sign is now optional.)



Students studying computers take a break for a quick photo.



Cambodia: A Runner's Challenge

Marathon Training in Cambodia

“Seek psychiatric help.” That was the advice a runner and family friend told me when I asked how to tackle my first marathon. I think he was only half joking because marathon training is a serious task, and also because I’m training in Cambodia – not exactly a runner’s paradise.

As I lace my shoes to start my 12 mile run at 6 AM the sky is barely light, and I try not to focus on the up-coming challenging conditions. They will be formidable – a flat and dusty terrain, unpredictable dogs, and brutal heat.

I head out onto an unpaved road barely wide enough for two cars. A row of three lorries is making its way into town creating huge dust clouds. I squint, take a deep breath and pick up my pace through the red dust cloud. No more trucks in sight for now. Phew!

There are a few paved roads, but the myriad of bicycles, motorcycles, cars, lorries, and pedestrians with carts makes running on paved roads too treacherous. So I continue running on the dusty road with less traffic and pass a group of small thatched huts. As I look in, I cannot help but notice these ‘homes’ lack furniture, running water (or even convenient access to any clean water), toilets, and electricity with each home almost touching the next. A group of five small children, who don’t have a single pair of shoes among them, giggle, wave, smile, and yell, ‘Hello, hello, hello!’

I wave back to them, smile, and repeat ‘Hello,’ but draw out the last syllable to make them giggle a little more.

It is mile four and the terrain has opened up. Burnt rice fields extend as far as the eye can see, while a group of water buffalo graze near the road. An old woman is hunched over holding a rope connected to a water buffalo’s nose. As she sees me approaching, her face is transfixed in bewilderment. ‘Why is he running? What is he running from? Is he crazy?’ she must be thinking. I smile and her face immediately brightens to match the gesture.

There are many scruffy-looking dogs along the way. Some do not have the energy to move as I run by, while others start barking well before I approach. Seeing someone running outside the home they are protecting, these dogs begin to bark on instinct and sprint at me full speed, rabid-like and teeth shining. The initial response can be terrifying, especially when it is unexpected and the canines come chasing from out of the wood work.

I have been pretty lucky so far, and I thank Buddha I haven’t been bitten yet.

As mile six approaches, it is getting hot. It is now May and the middle of the hot season averaging 39° C (102°F) with high humidity at midday. I have brought some extra money with me so I can buy small bottles of water along the way at some of the local stalls. I am soaking wet now, and I ask the young woman, “Tec tagaw meun dtay?” (Do you have cold water?) She says, “Yes” and I buy a bottle for 1,000 riel (25¢).

While I take a minute to collect myself and add a packet of electrolytes to the water, a little boy runs to the woman crying. She picks him up, lifts up her shirt and starts breast feeding him without any hesitation. I figure this is a good time to change my music.

After I finish my water, I say thank you in Khmer and begin to run back the same direction from where I came.

I feel rejuvenated now, but after the next three miles, I notice my pace is slowing. This becomes clear when an old man passes me on an archaic bicycle. He looks back and smiles showing his few remaining teeth. “One, Two.... One, Two...” he says.

I burst out laughing. This encounter gives me a bit of hidden strength, and I try to keep up with him.

When I get home, I take to eating some fruit and re-hydrating (a task that usually takes the better half of a day.)

Finding motivation to train under these conditions is taking some creativity. Beyond my own personal goal of just finishing the marathon, I know I have a greater purpose. I am running the ‘Run Paradise’ Phuket marathon as a fun way to raise money for JWOC.

The same passion I feel for the nonprofit, I am trying to put into my training. Passing by homes without electricity, running



John running in the countryside of Cambodia.

water, or a toilet, I think to myself, “How bad is my pain? It’s only temporary.” I keep running.

Getting out and running in the countryside in Cambodia has its challenges, but knowing that my hard work is going to do some good in the world, and having a sense of purpose keeps me going. It keeps me focused. Seeing villagers smile makes me smile back, and that’s all the psychiatric help I need for now.

- John Walsh, *Managing Director of JWOC*



How to Help

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JWOC is making significant steps to improve educational opportunities and health standards in South East Asia, and the success of JWOC relies upon the support of its generous sponsors. JWOC asks for your help in making this possible through a donation to the projects of your choice.



I/We would like to support Journeys Within Our Community (JWOC) by making a tax-deductible contribution toward the following project:

Clean Water Project. Giving the gift of clean water. Enclosed is \$ (\$100 for one well)

I would also like to make a sign above the water well to include the following information (\$25 extra):

.....

Language School. Enclosed is \$ to support the Language Schools.

Dollars For Scholars Scholarship.

Enclosed is \$ to support one student for one year at university (\$ 400).

Enclosed is \$ to support one student through graduation of 5 years (\$ 2,000).

Enclosed is \$ for the general scholarship fund.

Peace Village. Enclosed is \$ to support the Thanh Xuan Peace Village in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Village Microfinance Fund. Enclosed is \$ to develop small businesses.

General Project Fund. Enclosed is \$ for JWOC to use as they see fit or as described above.

Comments:

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Name(s):

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Address:

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Please make checks payable to
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