

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CAMBODIAN DIRECTOR

In this newsletter:

- *Message from the Director*
- *Our Agricultural Training Programme*
- *Photos at our school*
- *Staff training*



Hello, I am Chanty Ho, the Cambodian Director of Helping Hands. On 21st of October I joined a very large meeting in Lberk village, which is right next to Prasat Char village. The meeting was attended by government officials, NGO's (non-government organizations) and about 1,000 villagers. The goal of the meeting was to discuss impending food shortages, the reasons for food shortages and how they can potentially be avoided.

One of the speakers, an agricultural expert from the government, said there were various reasons why people may start suffering from food shortages such as; the rising cost of food (the price of rice has doubled over the past year in Cambodia), the rising cost of petrol (gas), the deteriorating quality of the soil and changing climate conditions (sometimes too little rain, sometimes too much). He went on to say that the villagers should be growing more vegetables so that they have enough to eat and some left over to sell. He said they had to learn better agricultural skills so they could grow more.

The Asian Development Bank has begun giving out emergency food aid in the form of rice to 68,000 families in Cambodia (as reported in the Phnom Penh Post on 30/10/08).



My own opinion is not that the people are not hardworking, but rather that their lack of skills and education is what prevents them from growing more food. This is why Helping Hands conducts agricultural training programmes. Helping Hands wants to develop the people – not just give them charity, even though giving handouts is easier. We teach people how to fish – we don't just give them the fish.

CHANTY HO

OUR AGRICULTURAL TRAINING PROGRAMME



For some time now Helping Hands has been running agricultural training courses. We conducted two courses in Prasat Char village and have now started our third course in the village of Lberk. This course is also attended by people from another village called Peam. (As they hear about it more and more people want to do the course.)

A young Cambodian lady who has a university degree in agriculture conducts the courses. The villagers come to learn every Sunday (for the whole day) for a period of 12 weeks.



Unfortunately, we discovered that most of the first part of the first course wasn't particularly successful because the villagers didn't have a lot of trust in Ratha (the trainer). They have quite a lot of superstitious beliefs and they believe that for your crops to grow then you must plant them on a Monday. If you plant on any other day they will fail. They even tried to bet with Ratha that her crops would fail!

It was only around week 9 or 10 when they saw that the vegetables she had planted were growing, and growing extremely well, that they began to have faith in her. Hence the reason we had to run the course twice in Prasat Char.



At the end of the second course I asked them whether they had learnt a lot and they enthusiastically exclaimed that they had. They told me, amongst other things, that they now know how to make compost, know how to build up their garden beds so they can grow vegetables even in the wet season and know about making nurseries for the young seedlings and then how to transplant them.

As part of the course we supply them with tools and seeds and all participants who finish the 12 weeks then get the concrete pipes needed to make themselves a well to make it easier to water their crops.



Ratha also encourages them to join together to make a co-operative to sell some of their vegetables and to pool the money so that they have money to borrow if they need it.

You can now see snippets of video on youtube. Just click on the links you will see on our newsletter page

www.helpinghandscambodia.com/cambodiannewsletters.htm

PHOTOS FROM OUR SCHOOL



Students learn about, and are encouraged to wash their hands.



Our morning students receive a nutritious breakfast (ingredients based on the World Food Programme's recommendations to combat protein malnutrition.)



Happily waiting in line for breakfast.



After breakfast, the students all brush their teeth.



The students all help out with the chores at the school.



STAFF TRAINING

We are constantly aware of investing in our Cambodian staff and giving them every opportunity to improve and grow. They are the future of Helping Hands (and Cambodia). Amongst other things they are learning computers, English and better teaching techniques.

Chanty (our director) recently attended a week long training course in Phnom Penh at a training organization called Silaka. The very high quality programme was all about managing an organization. We are proud to say that Chanty finished at the top of the class with a score of 100% on the final exam.

HOW TO MAKE A DONATION

*For information about making a donation please go to the **“How to Donate”** page of our website or email Deborah for details.*

www.helpinghandscambodia.com/Donating.htm



“Your generosity is their dignity.”

A quote by one of our younger supporters – a 10 year old French girl called Lise.

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