

## Newsletter 17

Newsletter posted 19 June, 2007



### **GETTING READY FOR THE RAINY SEASON**

Life in the countryside is governed by the seasons. At this time of the year everyone is getting ready for the wet season, which means preparing their home for the heavy rains that will shortly be falling everyday. We have also been doing this at the school. A leak in the roof has been repaired and porches have been built over the doors to stop the rain coming in. We are also about to install some water tanks so we can collect and store the rain water.



**OUR NEW WATER PUMP** - Why do we make such a fuss about clean water and toilets? Because unclean water and poor sanitation, according to the World Health Organisation, causes 80% of all sickness in the world. Cambodia has the highest rates of infant and child mortality in Southeast Asia. Diarrhea from unsafe water is the number one killer of children under the age of five. According to UNICEF's 'State of the World's Children' Report for 2005, some 14% of Cambodia's children die before reaching the age of five; around 9.7% dies before age one. Many of these deaths could easily have been prevented. A key part of preventing child deaths and improving survival is providing access to clean water and sanitation facilities as well as education on sanitation issues. Giving people access to clean water also helps break the poverty cycle. Illness caused by bad water impacts on families financially through medical expenses, transport to the doctor or hospital, cost of medicine, lost wages, etc.



*From this..... to this*



There is an organisation in Phnom Penh called RDI - Research Development International and they are addressing the above issues by developing new and innovative water pumps, etc.

We recently purchased and installed one of their "rope pumps" at our school (from a local Siem Reap organisation called



"Teuk Saat"). We dug a new well, lined it with concrete pipes and then enclosed it with the rope pump. The pump is very easy to use - even the smallest child can use it and large quantities of water can be "pulled up" in no time at all. It's such an improvement on the typical "open well" that most of the villagers are using. Combined with the water filters the quality of water that the children are now drinking at our school is exceptionally good.

Two of our villagers went in to Siem Reap to get trained in the installation of the pumps so that we can install them ourselves. One of the villagers was a man called Mr Chlooin - you can read his story below.

**BRIAN**, from Darwin, Australia is here helping out at the moment (thanks Brian!). I first met Brian when I came to Cambodia as a tourist - he was our tour guide. Amongst other things, he has been spending a lot of time at the school, in particular helping Sopeap, our teacher, to improve his English. More on what Brian's been doing in the next newsletter - some exciting stuff's been happening!



**MR CHLOOIN'S STORY** Mr Chlooin lives in Prasat Char village with his wife and three boys who are all under 10. He also has some grown up children. He makes a living as a farmer and both he and his wife work extremely hard.

During the time of Khmer Rouge regime (1974 - 79) Mr Chlooin was sent to live and work in a village about 50 km's from Prasat Char. He married his wife just after Cambodia was liberated from the Khmer Rouge by the Vietnamese. His wife, who was completely unskilled and can barely read and write, was assigned to be a nurse during the Khmer Rouge times. With virtually no training she was assigned to look after the sick. \* If you're interested in finding out more about what happened to the people of Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge times the movie "The Killing Fields" is very good. A lot of people don't realise that the fighting didn't stop in 1979 when the Vietnamese came. In fact, in 1990 in Prasat Char village the government forces were still fighting the Khmer Rouge soldiers. At one point Mr Chlooin was tied up and beaten with a large stick by government soldiers who believed he was with the Khmer Rouge (which he wasn't and never had been). They "interrogated" him for 24 hours trying to get him to confess to being Khmer Rouge. He told us that had he given in and said he was he would have been shot.



It was also during this time (1990) when the fighting was going on that landmines were laid down in the Prasat Char area. Mr Chlooin was one of the first people to start farming the land and so unfortunately lost his leg when he stepped on one of the land mines. (Thankfully they've all be cleared now.)

Mr Chlooin often asked us for a generator and water pumping machine. He said because of his false leg he found it difficult to water large areas of his farm and was therefore limited in how much he could grow (and subsequently earn). Farmers usually carry two watering cans which are supported by a thick stick balanced across the shoulders. Mr Chlooin found this too painful because of the weight it applied to his leg. Being such an obviously hard working man we wanted to give him the equipment that he needed but were reluctant to "give" such an expensive thing to one family because of our policy of not giving charity and also so as to avoid issues of jealousy. We finally struck on the idea of getting him to work for Helping Hands in return for the equipment he needed. He was given the job of repairing and maintaining all the water pumps we had built in the past. He went to the original installer and learnt how to repair them and then enthusiastically got stuck into the job. As mentioned above, he has also now been trained in how to install the new type of pump we are using.

Mr Chlooin has had his current false leg for about 7 years. When he went to Siem Reap 7 years ago to get it fitted he had to leave his wife and young family behind in the village to look after the farm (it takes about two weeks to get a new leg made and fitted). While he was away a pack of about 8 wolves came to his house and tried to get his 2 month old baby. His terrified wife was home alone with the baby and scared them off by banging a big metal pot with



**a large stick and making as much noise as she could. She then lit a huge fire to keep them away. It wasn't all that many years ago when tigers were still seen in the Prasat Char area too, though none have been seen for quite a while now.**

**Mr Chlooin needs to get a new leg. His current leg no longer fits well and falls off easily. He told us one story about the day his leg got stuck in the mud in the rice field. He was looking after his cows, they bolted and he tried to go after them and his leg got left behind! The everyday hardships people go through here are hard for us to imagine. Mr Chlooin has to deal with mud everywhere during the wet season. Due to his leg being old and worn out it also causes him pain.**

**Handicap International operates in Siem Reap. Brian went to visit them to discuss Mr Chlooin and his old leg. He discovered that they supply prosthetic limbs for free, but the problem is that the patient has to stay at their premises in Siem Reap for about two weeks as the leg is made, fitted and the patient learns how to use it. Mr Chlooin needs and wants a new leg but the prospect of spending two weeks away from the farm at this time of year (the beginning of the rice season) is simply not an option. Instead, he visited Handicap International and they made some minor repairs and adjustments to his leg and then he will come back into Siem Reap after the rice season is finished and go through the process of getting a new leg.**

**Mr Chlooin and his family (like most Cambodian's) have got some amazing stories and live very hard lives. What amazes me is the way he retells these stories, sometimes even with humour. To him its just the way things are.**

I will do another newsletter very soon because many other exciting and interesting things have been going on. So until then.....



Bye bye