



KEP GARDENS NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2013

Hi Everyone,

HAPPY KHMER NEW YEAR!

Much has happened since the last newsletter but that is the way of the dry season and Khmer New Year and things usually quieten down a lot over the rainy season. The past couple of months have been very, very hot but a lot of rain over the past few days has cooled things down considerably. It will probably start to build up again before the season finally breaks. Dreadful time of the year here weather wise but when you know it will finally cool down and there is light at the end of the tunnel you can put up with it – just.



For 3 days we went backwards and forwards to the Sonya Kill Memorial Hospital, about 5 kms further on from Kampot, over the dusty, potholed road to take all our students up to the age of 16 for ear, eye and general health checks. There were only 6 that we had to take back with parents for further treatment so backwards and forwards we went for the next two weeks.

A couple of asthmatics but generally they were in pretty good shape. A couple of ear infections but all had good eyesight. The first day was a bit messy but then the hospital got the hang of having so many at one time and the next two days ran smoothly. The Khmer doctor in charge of the Paediatrics section was just great with the children and a lovely man, obviously trained and worked overseas.

Thanks to Arie and Dini, our first BeMore volunteers, this will become an annual event on

our calendar. Can't help but think there are many more children in the village that need this kind of care but I guess we have to start somewhere and can't help everyone.



In February, the Year 12 students and their teachers from our Career Student Programme attended a whole day workshop at Max Discovery Cambodia. The morning was spent on team building activities and the afternoon on personal achievement activities.



The students and teachers had never experienced a training programme such as this and the next week at school were full of enthusiasm talking about what they had gained from the experience and how they had done things they never believed they could do. The workshop was conducted in a safe, professional environment involving all team members with sessions structured for team discussion and outcomes. We are working on another personal achievement project before their exams in August which will hopefully reinforce belief in our two students who are lacking in self confidence.

Ulla, a friend from Sweden visited for a month in February/March. Mary, a friend from the UK, brought a friend with her who is teaching in South Korea, and stayed for a couple of days. With the second and third group of volunteers from BeMore during these months our Reading and Conversation Programme has been running very well with many students from each class having the opportunity to read or converse each day.



Margot and Merijn for one month.



Merijn was joined by Lievan Ulla for the second month.



Mary



Lyn



The BeMore volunteers are doing a fabulous job with the children, relating well to them and the children are responding while the older students are taking them to visit tourist sites, inviting them to weddings and generally making them feel welcome and part of the community. So far the volunteers have stayed in Kep and come out each day to Kep Gardens but from May onwards they will be staying here. I hope they like camping!! but living here can only add to their overall Cambodian experience.

Without the volunteers and the occasional friend/s that visit, we would not be able to offer a fully rounded English programme so we thank them all very much for providing us with this opportunity.

Over the next few months we will have up to 4 volunteers at the same time with people coming and going from different countries around the world. We have acquired a couple of bunks so now have sleeping arrangements for 4 with mattresses etc. We are able to offer a bit of luxury!!! Great, just think what different opportunities we will be able to offer the students.

The school Merijn attended did a lot of fundraising for Kep Gardens, all sorts of things like music concerts etc. Thanks to their generosity and enthusiasm we have used part of their funds to buy a new generator. This will provide enough power for the schoolhouse and library when it is built and enable us to set up computer classes in the new facilities. Because of the extra power we will be able to light up the driveway for the students arriving and leaving at night. A minor point, but we will also be able to use the printer attached to the computer saving heaps of time going backwards and forwards to the print shop.

Tom O'Connell and Jo Walsh from Australia had previously donated some money towards a new generator so combining the three donations we have enough power to expand the classes we can offer. Thank you very much to Tom, Jo and the students in The Netherlands who made this possible and a special thank you to Merijn who was the driving force behind the school's involvement.



To ensure this precious possession doesn't get stolen like the last one, we are rebuilding the generator shed in brick with iron doors that will be locked so they will have to make a lot of noise to wander off with this in the middle of the night. This generator is quite large, not as easy to walk off with although they did take the other one to bits to move it. Very soon the new power supply will be up and running. Might have to have a party I think to christen the new generator. Any excuse!!

While Merijn was here he tidied up the website for us and we now have our own Paypal account for donations. Thanks to Bruce for the use of his account and all the inconvenience for him sending notifications, transferring money etc. All fixed now, another job off the list!!

In between newsletters, if you want to keep abreast of happenings at Kep Gardens, you can always go into the Kep Gardens Facebook. We try to keep this updated but I can understand why big places have to employ people fulltime to keep the technology tools updated. Very time consuming.



Over Khmer New Year we had a fundraiser at Kep Gardens. Mission Australia put in many soft toys when they packed the container for us. We set up stalls at the Crab Market and Kep Beach. We were hoping we could sell them to the many visitors to Kep during the New Year holiday. Thank you to the Year 12 Career Students and some of our Upper class students who helped bag and price the toys and for manning the sites on a roster system. Thank you very much to Keat Sarak for the time he gave to organize the students. He gave up a lot of his holiday time to do this for us.





Not as successful as we had hoped but it was a good team effort and a learning experience if we decide to do something similar in the future.

Had a couple more batches of kittens recently but no trouble finding homes for them.



Mum and dad are good mates and dad often comes along to join in the feeding time to have a cuddle too.

Usually on the last day of term we play games, have races etc but it was so hot we decided to take all classes to Kep Beach for a swim. Quite an exhausting day going backwards and forwards to the beach with the different groups, ending up with the older class sitting by the beach having something to eat and chatting. Everyone had a fun time so it was a great way to end off the term and give everyone a Happy Khmer New Year present. Must do it again at the same time next year. This was not our swimming lessons, we will be doing that in the next month or so, just a special treat.

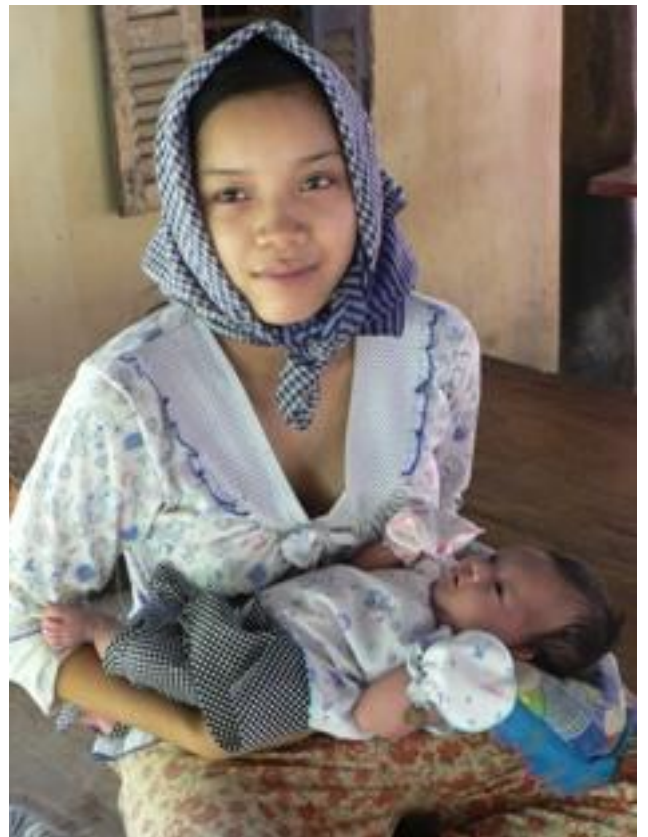
We had visitors staying over Khmer New Year, wanting to get away from Phnom Penh for a few days. After a 2 week break, school has started

again, the first week of a long 18 week term to end the school year.

Also been to a few weddings in the village, one last Saturday where we spent the entire time wet. It poured and the wind was so strong it blew the rain under the open marquee type tents they use. Once it stopped raining we danced and walked in mud. Got bogged a few times leaving my shoes behind but everyone carried on regardless and we all had a good time. The groom is a neighbor of ours and used to come to school for a few years.



The second, Kep Gardens' baby has been born. Sopheak, our trainee manager, and his wife, Tee, had a baby early April. Cute little girl called Phearith. The mother still a baby herself but they appear to be coping. I rather like the photo below.





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Kepong Gardens is a non-profit, non-government organization, with no political or religious affiliations.

Your support is vital to ensure the continuation of the many varied programmes that are offered.

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