



# Just Cauze





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4

SAMARITAN'S PURSE

18

Kong Kmeng

26

Teen challenge

30

Precious Women



# SAMARITAN'S PURSE

Samaritan's Purse Canada is a nondenominational evangelical Christian organization that has been providing spiritual and physical aid to people around the world since 1970. Samaritan's Purse partners with supporters in Canada and with local organizations abroad to provide compassionate and cost-effective assistance through emergency relief, community development, medical aid, and projects that provide safe water.

## CREBO MACLEOD FAMILY

Wanting to make a tangible difference in the world and in their own lives, Tim and Elaine, and their two children, Levi 12 and Tristan 7, of Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, spent four months in Cambodia participating in, and documenting the work of Samaritan's Purse and their partner organizations. Like many of us, Tim and Elaine wanted to know if these organizations really do make a difference. They came back filled with inspiration and hope. When asked how the experience had most affected them, Tim and Elaine both answered without hesitation, 'humbled'.



*'While we were introduced to the atrocities of child trafficking and the rampant exploitation of women, we were heartened and inspired to see the positive work being done to address these issues at a grassroots level. The experience affected us all; our sons learned that home schooling involved more than keeping up with math and spelling as they experienced firsthand how water filters are constructed in rural villages. They taught English to local students, and traipsed through rice paddies where children their age toiled alongside their parents to earn enough money to eat that day. Our entire family became more aware and more caring by sharing our time and giving of ourselves while living among the hurting and impoverished. Importantly, what we experienced was whatever and however we give, it truly does change lives.'*

**'IMPORTANTLY, WHAT WE EXPERIENCED WAS WHATEVER AND HOWEVER WE GIVE, IT TRULY DOES CHANGE LIVES'**

## URBAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION PROGRAM

It is estimated that 30,000 children are exploited in the sex trade in Cambodia every year, a horrendous yet thriving industry that destroys the joy, hope, and innocence of childhood. The Urban Trafficking Prevention Program seeks to protect children at risk of exploitation by training and educating community leaders about these issues. This initiative is supported by Samaritan's Purse Canada in partnership with Chab Dai, a coalition representing more than 50 Christian organizations



in Cambodia. The locally driven program mobilizes community leaders throughout Cambodia, empowering them to implement child protection policies in their own communities. Following an intense three-day training session that addresses trafficking issues and prevention and intervention techniques, these leaders are equipped to share with members from their own communities the potential dangers they may face.

They can assure them that they are not alone and that help is available. They can identify organizations who are determined to end abuse, and that in their role as leaders, will act as primary contacts between their communities, police, and human rights organizations.

Following the training session, a six-week period to mobilize gatherings provides the foundation for grass

roots sharing and education in the hope that thousands of children will be spared the nightmare of abuse and exploitation.

## OUR STORY

We first met the Chab Dai training team when the enthusiastic threesome of Pheng, Tri, and Um arrived at our one-room bungalow in southern Cambodia after their six-hour journey from the capital city of Phnom Penh. What was immediately apparent and confirmed over the following weeks was that Samaritan's Purse Canada had partnered with an incredible group of local staff. This was a team of dedicated warriors with a commitment, drive and an unbridled passion. And a faith in Christ that was inspiring.

Along with more than 40 community leaders from villages around Kaeb province, we sat through three days of intensive training and with the assistance of a translator, were presented with disturbing facts about the high rate of sexual abuse and the horrifying physical impact on women and children. We learned of girls having difficulty sitting and walking because of genital abuse, of girls developing genital cancer and enduring repetitive abortions. These often resulting in hemorrhage, and sometimes, death. We glanced around the room and saw the looks of intensity as notes were taken all around us. There were looks of surprise, and also looks of recognition as the presenter explained that women and children who are sexually abused are often isolated and shunned by their community, suffering from self-blame, feelings of inferiority, anger, and depression. We were told of the high incidence of rape among family members and within villages, a practice that is often accepted and condoned.

We were aware that Cambodia was a prime destination for predators, but were shocked to learn that although 21.7 % of visitors come for the purpose of sex tourism, the majority of sexual abuse is from local men. It was numbing to hear that among some cultures, there is a perception that sex with children is believed to increase a man's strength and longevity. We were told that virgins





Poster: Children are not tourist attractions

are a sought after commodity and desperate, poverty-stricken families will often sell their daughters, unaware of their fate. These girls are then sold over, and over again, and doomed to a life of sexual slavery.

In a further session, we were provided with an overview on the cross border trafficking of children, a problem that is rife in Cambodia. Victims of poverty, these unsuspecting youth are lured to the neighboring countries of Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Korea with the promise of work. Instead, they end up languishing in the putrid belly of fishing boats, laboring in fields, and sweltering in factories. These children are isolated and held captive by their unscrupulous employers. As they are unable to speak the local language, and are without a passport, money, or an awareness of their rights, there is no hope for escape. They are literally held captive.

The first day of the workshop was emotionally draining and we were distraught by what was taking place all around us in this beautiful country. We were however, heartened over the next several days to witness an optimism with a momentum that steadily increased as the community leaders were empowered with information, equipped with a skill set and provided with tools to address these issues. Sitting down and talking with several of the participants during breaks was an eye opening experience and shed much light on why these individuals are leaders in their community; they were not elected, they were not hired, and they were not bureaucrats. This courageous mix represented a cross-section of men and women in the community; a



Training the Trainers: Community leaders listen to presentation



Brainstorming session

Buddhist monk sat next to a local preacher, who sat next to a farmer, who sat next to a teacher....and on and on. These 40 individuals were united through one common denominator; they felt a responsibility and believed it began with education and prevention.

*on a school break and that his bicycle was available. She is determined to enlighten local authorities in her district about these issues and to address them when community members are gathered; 'Trafficking of women and children, and migration are the biggest problem and I will cause awareness in the community with our women and children'.*

With limited resources, posters and brochures were sparingly handed to each participant at the end of the session, the materials clutched with pride and with care. We were touched when one woman proudly showed us a brochure and then quickly took it back again, lest she be short one copy. Leaving the workshop on bicycles, local buses and piled onto motorbikes, the newly trained leaders departed with enthusiasm to begin their missions.

We left the training session proud to be supporters of Samaritan's Purse who were taking a pivotal role in financially supporting and partnering in such a worthy program. This is where we found hope, in the concrete action by Cambodians for Cambodians. Six weeks later we climbed on our motorbike and for the next five days, joined the Chab Dai team scouring the countryside as they provided encouragement and support to the newly trained leaders as local meetings were conducted, This visible external presence made a strong statement; the leaders and the people themselves were not alone, eyes were watching from afar.

*Lida is a teacher and is aware that many families are poor and that parents often encourage their children to leave school to go to work. She wants to educate the 540 students in her school about the problems they may face. She was adamant that individually they cannot work alone to combat these problems; 'we need to work together in the community'.*

*Mr. Sokchen is a farmer who toils long days in the fields and preaches the bible at his home on Sunday afternoons. Like many in rural Cambodia, he became the minster because he was the first Christian in the area. He attended the Urban Trafficking Prevention training so that he could learn about the issue and wants to share both the plight and the hope with those his community.*

*Mrs. Thom is a middle-aged woman who works for Women and Children's Affairs in a neighboring district and came to learn what role she could play. She cycled 12 km each way from her rural home to attend the training sessions, grateful that her nephew was*



Trained leaders depart to begin their mission





Curious and tempted by the incentive packet of instant noodles that were given to all who attended local meetings (they are poor, they are hungry), rural Cambodians flocked to listen. Walking down dusty paths, riding on old bicycles, and crammed onto motorbikes, they travelled to join the gatherings that were held in orphanages, temples, schools, under homes build on stilts – one meeting even held in the midst of a rice paddy. From children to high school students, and young parents

to the elderly, they sat on plastic chairs, stood in groups, crouched on rough-hewn floors, and sat cross-legged on the ground. They listened and learned. For many, this was the first they had heard of issues outside of their own village. For all, this was a message of validation and hope. As the community leaders carefully unrolled their one and only poster at each meeting and shared openly to a hushed audience, there was a sense of change and hope taking place before us. Every individual

**.....AS THE COMMUNITY LEADERS CAREFULLY UNROLLED THEIR ONE AND ONLY POSTER AT EACH MEETING AND SHARED OPENLY TO A HUSHED AUDIENCE, THERE WAS A SENSE OF CHANGE AND HOPE TAKING PLACE BEFORE US**



at a gathering was given a 2" x 3 1/2" help card. On it was a 24- hour phone number to call for emergencies, for advice, and for access to other organizations within Chab Dai's umbrella of support. Groups who could provide rescue, safe housing, counseling and legal representation. This was a card that could change lives.

During this week, the forty individuals who undertook the Urban Trafficking Prevention training delivered their message to several thousand people. We were struck by the realization that if just one girl is prevented from being raped, or one boy prevented from being trafficked, then all our financial support, the careful stewardship of these funds by Samaritan's Purse, the dedicated efforts of Chab Dai, and the courage shown by the community leaders, is in keeping with God's word; *'Rescue the weak and the needy and deliver them from the hand of the wicked' (Psalms 82:4).*

*Post-script:*

And the farmer who is also the Pastor? We visited his church several weeks later, the four of us pressed together Cambodian style on our motor bike, travelling along a series of back roads. We eventually found the lone wooden house at the end of a winding cow path that curled through a pasture. We joined the ten others who had gathered and sat on plastic chairs around a wooden bed frame that was used as a pulpit. Protected from the harsh sun as we sat under the house perched on stilts, we accepted a well-worn bible proffered as a gesture of welcome. Like the service, it was entirely in Khmer. It didn't matter that we couldn't understand; we hummed along to hymns, consumed with the awe of where we had

been led to worship. As the pastor preached the word of God, his wife beat away chickens with a wooden stick. Ducks roamed about our feet and a cow stared on with apparent interest. Rural Cambodia. 'Where two or more are gathered in my name'.





## SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM

Although poverty is endemic throughout Cambodia, the impact along the northern Thai border is particularly dire and Samaritan's Purse saw a need for action. Partnering with the World Food Programme (WFP), Samaritan's Purse has been involved with the School Feeding Program since 2009. Together, the organizations provide a nutritious breakfast to over 2000 children in 21 schools along an 80 km stretch of the border. It is a communal effort; volunteers from the community prepare the hot meal six days a week in exchange for a small monetary token (US \$5) and 1 kg of rice per month. While the cost of the program is just \$.20 per child per day, the benefits are immeasurable. With many families relying on migrant cross-border labor to support themselves, the breakfast is an incentive for children to attend school rather than leave to work in the fields alongside their

parents. The program has become self-sustaining and with the local government aware of the innumerable benefits, they are set to take over the operation on the solid foundation provided by Samaritan's Purse.



## OUR STORY

It was 5:30 am and still dark when the car arrived to collect us from our guesthouse in the Cambodian border town of Poipet. The magnitude of local issues became evident when we learned that our destination was in the midst of active land mines. (And I panic if my kids don't wear a helmet when they ride their bikes!). Although assured that the roads we were travelling and the school grounds were cleared and safe, we were advised not to leave the premises given the inherent risks of live mines. Following a criss-cross of back roads, we arrived at the vacant school and were led to a dank room illuminated only by the glowing embers of a crude wood-burning fire.

At one end of the empty room was the silhouette of two women slowly stirring large black cauldrons, the steam rising in an eerily pre-dawn glow. The simmering soup made from tinned fish, salt, oil and beans would be for many of the students, their only meal that day.

As the sun rose, chattering children trickled into the schoolyard on foot and by bicycle, their bright smiles a contrast to their worn and tattered uniforms. With a dish and a spoon brought from home, each bowl was as unique as the tiny hand clutching it. More than two hundred children took their places at long wooden tables, patiently waiting as the breakfast soup was ladled over bowls of



Preparing breakfast of rice and soup



Breakfast



Children washing their dishes

## FOLLOWING A CRISS-CROSS OF BACK ROADS, WE ARRIVED AT THE VACANT SCHOOL AND WERE LED TO A DANK ROOM ILLUMINATED ONLY BY THE GLOWING EMBERS OF A CRUDE WOOD-BURNING FIRE

white rice. The din of the room was silenced as the meal was hungrily consumed.

As the morning session was about to begin, we were asked by the school principal (who like many of the children, was barefoot) if we would teach English to a class of students. No sooner had we eagerly accepted, than we were volunteered to teach six different classes! What a tremendous opportunity to share directly with these beautiful children. Tristan and I teamed up to work with the lower grades, while Tim and Levi took on the upper levels, rotating through the classrooms throughout the morning. Such attentiveness, such enthusiasm, such joy emanating within the sparse wooden rooms! At one point, Levi found himself leading a group of 45 Grade 6 students on his own, many of them older than his 12 years. As his confidence grew and with his attentive class hanging on his every word, it was clearly a case of children learning from children.



Levi teaching English

For most of the students, it was the first time they had seen a foreign family and we made the most of this opportunity to have fun in the classroom with simple, interactive activities and our uniquely animated family rendition of "Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes". What joy to see the delight on the faces of these children, simply by laughing together.





New School

## BUILDING SCHOOLS

In a country this poor, the Cambodian government barely has the resources to operate a school, let alone the funds to build one. This is one of the many needs Samaritan's Purse has recognized and moved forward with to create opportunity for rural children.

## OUR STORY

Accompanied by the regional director of Samaritan's Purse, we journeyed to a village along the Cambodian/ Thailand border where a school was in the final stages of construction. Funded by Samaritan's Purse at a cost of US \$80,000, the six classrooms housed in the new brick and concrete structure will replace the dilapidated wooden shack used by the community for decades.



Female laborers do finishing touches

Nearby, the construction of latrines and an outdoor sink are a first for the school and represent the importance of sanitation and hygiene.

**IN A COUNTRY THIS POOR, THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT BARELY HAS THE RESOURCES TO OPERATE A SCHOOL, LET ALONE THE FUNDS TO BUILD ONE.**



Old School



Curious School Children

Salvaged from what is left standing of the old school are the filtered water containers. Provided by Samaritan's Purse, there is one ceramic container for every 10 children in the classroom. Water is replenished daily by the students, sourced from ponds and rivers, and brought to school in buckets and bowls. There it is filtered to providing safe drinking water throughout the day as the children study.

As we were led by the school principal to tour the new building, our sons Levi and Tristan spotted a pile of bricks used for the building project and eagerly dived in as if they were giant blocks of Lego. Sometime later when we returned to the schoolyard, we were surprised to see a crowd of curious schoolchildren forming a circle around the boys, quietly watching as they constructed brick towers.

Focused on their projects, our sons appeared oblivious of the attention they had garnered. Then slowly and one by one, the schoolchildren began to proffer contributions, carefully placing twigs, leaves, and single blooms onto the brick structures. Not a word was exchanged as Levi, Tristan and the local children worked together to complete the towers. An unspoken camaraderie had developed, a moment transcending language and culture.

Leaving the school ground a short while later, we looked back to see a flurry of activity as the schoolchildren were building a moat around the perimeter of the towers. A group of small boys were laughing as they balanced precariously on the stones. It was a magical moment as we witnessed the joy that came with the simplicity of play; children are the same all over the world.



Latrines



Ceramic water filters



'Lego' Towers



## CHILD FOR SALE

One of the most important roles of Samaritan's Purse is their very presence in a community. They are beacons of light giving hope, encouragement, love and counseling to individuals and communities throughout Cambodia. They have become for many, a place to turn, share, and learn of God's love.

## OUR STORY

We were taken to a village near the Thai border and introduced to 16-year-old Mia and her family. Sitting on a hard wooden platform under a house perched on stilts and with the help of our translator, we listened as Mia haltingly told her story.

At 15 years of age she had gone to Thailand with her mother's sister, believing she was to work in a factory to earn money for her family. Shortly after Mia arrived in the new community, she was horrified to overhear her aunt making arrangements to sell her to a Thai businessman for \$300. One day as Mia was alone in the wooden shack she shared with her aunt, she saw the man approaching the house. Frightened, she quickly removed the shoes from outside the front door and hid inside; hoping he would think no one was home. Pressed against a wall, Mia shook with fear until the man finally left. Her aunt was angered when she learned that her set up had been thwarted, and demanded that Mia become the man's mistress. More arrangements were made, another deal struck. With no money or passport, and unable to understand the Thai language, Mia was alone and desperate. At great risk and with much courage, she was able to access a telephone and contacted her cousin in Cambodia. Safely rescued and returned home, Mia narrowly escaped a certain fate of sexual slavery.

Mia broke down several times as she shared the harrowing ordeal. Now home with her family and afraid

to leave the village, she wants to train as a seamstress so that she can work in her own community. Samaritan's Purse is assisting Mia to pursue her dream of entering a vocational sewing school, working in collaboration with other local agencies to provide training.

### *The Story Inside the Story: The Gifted Translator:*

With the fear resonating from Mia's voice as she relived her ordeal and with a deep sadness and unjustified shame lingering, we were captivated by the gentleness of the translator as she helped Mia share her story. We were touched by the way she held Mia's hand as she spoke, how she stroked Mia's hair, wiped a tear from her eye, and interjected while Mia gathered her composure. Sensing that there was a far greater gift than her exceptional translation skills, we were moved to talk to this translator we knew only as *Sayorn*.

Sayorn grew up in a poor family, one of six children raised by her mother after her father died when Sayorn was just three years old. She worked to help her family, but was also determined to study despite the financial hardship. Sayorn went to school when she could, ultimately ending up in the 10th grade when she was 20 years old. Inspired by the peace and joy of her English teacher and wanting this contentment in her own life, Sayorn learned of, and accepted Jesus Christ as her savior. There was strife in the family when Sayorn became a Christian and her love of God was viewed as abandonment of the family's Buddhist beliefs. Her mother told Sayorn she must reject her new faith or leave the family home. Even her fiancé abandoned Sayorn because of her Christian beliefs. Banished, she was ostracized and alone. Leaving her community, Sayorn found a job as a cook in a casino in the border town of Poipet, a full day's journey away from her village. There she worked long hours in an environment rife with gambling and prostitution. Her faith in Christ was solid, doors opened and by grace, Sayorn was brought to Samaritan's Purse

**WITH NO MONEY OR PASSPORT, AND UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE THAI LANGUAGE, MIA WAS ALONE AND DESPERATE**

where she is now an integral part of the ministry team.

## BIOSAND FILTERS (BSF)

Illness and death, especially in the very young and the elderly, is often attributed to the lack of clean water in developing countries. The BioSand water filter is a Canadian technology that removes organisms responsible for diseases spread by water, such as cholera, typhoid fever, and amoebic dysentery. It also strains out particles causing cloudiness, and much of the organic matter responsible for taste, colour, and odour. The filter is constructed from concrete, sand, gravel and PVC piping; materials that can be accessed locally. From start to finish the filters are constructed in roughly 10 days, at an average cost of \$100, which covers the raw materials, construction, transportation, supervision, and training for the family in filter maintenance and personal hygiene. The success and sustainability of the BSF program relies on full community participation and in Cambodia, is often initiated by the village chief. A systematic process begins with the attendance of every family at a village meeting where a demonstration and explanation of the filter system is provided. Each family must then sign an agreement to attend follow up hygiene and maintenance sessions and to contribute towards the construction and costs of their own filter.

In one month alone, 1800 BSFs are produced in Cambodia, 300 in each of the six provinces where Samaritan's Purse and Clear Cambodia work with local people. Since 1991, more than 72,000 BioSand Water Filters have been built; countless lives saved and an improved quality of life for tens of thousands of people.

## OUR STORY

Having spent months in rural Cambodia, we were aware that sanitation and water issues are at the root of many health concerns. We knew that Samaritan's Purse was playing a significant role in addressing the problem and were privileged to spend time in the countryside and see firsthand, the work that was being done. Accompanied by the Program Manager of Clear Cambodia - Samaritan's Purse's largest partner in providing safe drinking water in Cambodia - we piled into a truck and drove several hours from Phnom Penh to a rural area of Kampong Chng province to observe the production of Biosand Filters. We



Demonstration at village meeting

arrived in a village in time to attend a community meeting being held in an open pavilion. Here, a demonstration of the BSF was presented to a group of 15 families who were next in line for the filter program.

Riveted by the demonstration of muddy pond water

emerging clear after going through the Biosand filter, family members saw and heard how simple and effective the BSF's were. They told us that they were happy that they would no longer need to boil water to make it safe, a process they often omitted in the absence of available wood for fuel. Several children in the village had died from illness and these families were relieved and grateful for the opportunity they would soon have for safe drinking water. There was a cautious optimism that their lives could actually be transformed.

In the village square, we came upon a group of men and women who were in the final stages of the filter construction process.

They were fully absorbed in mixing a large pit of cement and preparing moulds for their family's very own Bio Sand filter.



Chatting with villagers





BSF Mould



Each family is responsible for constructing their own BioSand Filter



Families receive instruction



BSF ready for delivery



Mixing Cement

With the guidance of a local volunteer, cement was poured into greased moulds and plastic pipes and spouts inserted. One villager had been designated to use a portable vibrator to ensure no air bubbles remained in any of the moulds as the concrete was setting. With the equipment strapped to

his chest, he took great pleasure in his task as he moved about the construction site. Once the cement had set in a mould, the concrete structure was then transported by ox and cart to the villager's house.

We stood alongside one family and observed the final process as a member of Clear Cambodia layered precise amounts of rocks, pebbles, and sand into the filter. Thick,

murky water was then scooped from a nearby pond, poured into the filter... and to the amazement of us all, clear water dribbled out through the tap. Simply amazing!

*Through the eyes of a child: Water Filters (Tristan, aged 7)*

*Yesterday we went to a poor village with volunteer workers from Samaritans Purse. They made one water filter for each family so the villagers do not have to drink dirty water. So this is what you have to do:*

*First you get the dirty water from the pond and put it in the filter, and this is how it gets clean water when it comes out. The filter has several layers of different sand and rocks so when you put the water in the filter it drains through the rocks the sand and the gravel get all the bad stuff out of the water and it comes out clean, and its drinkable. Before when they didn't have filters, they drank the dirty water from the pond and the baby would get really sick and die. Including the mom and the dad, and the brothers and sisters but now they have the filter so they don't have to worry about that any more.*



# Kone Kmeng

Kone Kmeng, meaning 'children' in Khmer is a Christian organization that works with and empowers churches in Cambodia to meet needs in their communities, with a specific focus on the needs of children. The Children At Risk Program (CAR) is designed to respond to at risk children in a holistic approach that incorporates Education Support, Prevention/Protection, Income Generation Assistance and Spiritual Growth; components that together have a significant impact in the lives of children.

## Crebo MacLeod Family

Tim and Elaine, and their two children, Levi 12 and Tristan 7, of Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, spent four months in Cambodia where they immersed themselves in the local culture. They lived in a one-room bungalow with Cambodian neighbors, studied the Khmer language and explored the country while home-schooling their sons. They had the opportunity to participate in and document the work of several partner organizations of Chab Dai (Holding Hands), a coalition of over 50 member organizations working to address sexual abuse and trafficking in Cambodia. Tim and Elaine wanted to explore the work being done in Cambodia and to learn if these organizations really do make a difference. What they experienced filled them with inspiration and hope.



*'We saw firsthand the impact that poverty has on families, the ramifications for children, and the effect on future generations. We were both heartened and inspired to see the positive work being done by Kone Kmeng to address issues in a holistic manner. We observed wells being dug in rural villages and saw the tremendous impact that access to water has on a family and on a community. We saw how the simple gift of seeds can provide a sustainable income and make the difference on whether a family eats or not. We saw how the opportunity for an education can radically change lives. What we experienced was that with astute stewardship, a little can go a long way and that whatever and however we give, it truly does change lives.'*

We saw how the simple gift of seeds can provide a sustainable income and make the difference on whether a family eats or not

## Our Experience

Imagine sitting in an office and meeting the Director of an NGO as he explains in enthusiastic detail, the programs being run by their organization. He then picks up a marker and begins to draw diagrams on the tiled wall to highlight his explanation! How practical and really, who needs a white board?

This creative use of available resources was inspiring and as we sat on the office floor afterward to share in a communal lunch with Pang Sophany 'Panny' and the staff of Kone Kmeng, it was a stark reminder that despite the vision, the efficiency, and the passion for their work, we were very much in another culture, another country. What a country it is, and what an incredible impact this dedicated team is making in the lives of children and their families. We had the opportunity to travel to Svay Rieng, the poorest province in Cambodia where we spent several days that will be forever embedded in our minds. And in our hearts.

A world away from life as we know it and on the outskirts of a remote village near the Vietnam border, we walked in the footsteps of a barefoot village leader, traipsing after him through endless rice fields in an afternoon downpour. Drenched, we scampered to keep up with the sinewy man as he strode with purpose along a narrow winding dirt path. We came across a small patch of land filled with a tangle of Morning Glory growing in the swampy field. A man and his wife were bent among the crawling branches, their arms full of the leafy green vegetable. We learned that until recently, the couple was unable to regularly feed their children, let alone send them to school. With no income and no hope, they struggled to support their family, to make it through each day. Made aware of their plight, Kone Kmeng provided the couple with vegetable seeds, a small plot of land and access to water for irrigation. With these simple tools, the family's life has been transformed. Their daily earnings



Armful of Morning Glory



of \$1.50 from the sale of their crop, enables the family to eat every day and the children now attend school. There is a hope for a better future. As the rain let up and we observed the transaction of freshly harvested produce exchanging hands with a customer on the side of the dirt road, we knew that the couple and their children would look forward to a meal that evening.

Walking back towards the village we came upon a small patch of sugar cane with a thin older woman tending to the towering stalks. We stopped as she waded barefoot through the muddy ground and without pausing, wielded a machete and expertly chopped at a chosen stalk. With a toothless smile, she handed it to us to suck on the sweetness. She beamed with pride as we admired her efforts and chewed on the cane. The irrigation from a well and the start up for the sugar cane plot provided by Kone Kmeng made this venture possible. The income from the sugar cane provides a livelihood for the widow who can now work with dignity and provide for herself.

In the village, a group of curious children crouched on the edge of a deep, freshly dug hole. Preparations were being made to dig a well in front of a one-room wooden shack and the motorized unit was a source of fascination. We joined the children, all of us captivated as the pounding of metal pipes struck through layers of earth inches at a time. We stood and watched for ages as the



Inspecting sand

workers carefully inspected the mud being pumped out through the pipes. Heads bent close in consultation, they rubbed the wet sand between their fingers looking for characteristics to indicate how close they were to the water table.

This well will provide irrigation for a fatherless family of five. They will plant a garden to grow vegetables to eat and to sell. With the assistance of Kone Kmeng, ten wells are dug for families every month and with the access to safe water, lives are changed. To grow, eat, and sell food not only provides a sustainable living, but importantly, children are not forced to sell their labor or their bodies in order to help support their families.

We peered inside a nearby-corrugated tin building where we saw more than fifty children sitting on plastic chairs. A young woman stood at the front of the room, the students listening with rapt attention. The 15-year-old teacher is the highest educated in the village and leads the lessons six afternoons a week. This supplemental school offers a non-formal Khmer education to children who are unable to attend local schools. Some because their families cannot afford to supplement a schoolteachers meager salary – an expectation in Cambodia. Others because their parents encourage them to quit school and work,



Sugar Cane



Digging a well

often as young as 7 and 8 years old. This active hub of learning is just one of Kone Kmeng's supplemental schools that provide an education to more than 2000 children in rural villages in Cambodia. Children who are hungry to learn.

It was an overwhelming day as we witnessed both the realities of poverty, and yet saw how lives can be transformed by the simplicity of seeds, water, and a chance to learn. And hope.

We were invited for dinner at the village leader's home that evening and as special guests, a duck and a chicken had been slaughtered for the occasion. We understood the gesture of respect and appreciated the generosity knowing it was a great sacrifice. Several of the village women busied themselves with bubbling pots over the open flames in the outdoor kitchen, chattering and



A Student teaching students





Supplemental school is held underneath a home

laughing as they prepared the feast for Kone Kmeng's 'Panny' and his guests. As one woman stirred a broth, she proudly indicated the still-feathered head of a bird nestled in the ladle. Another cast iron pot was teeming with animal parts floating in a thick gravy. Nothing was left to waste. Under the wooden house perched on stilts, our sons and the men sat cross-legged on a cracked wooden plank as bowls of the precious food were placed in front of them. A water buffalo looked on from a neighboring pen, the wooden gateposts providing a backrest as the feast was consumed.

The following day we visited the Kone Kmeng centre in Svay Rieng town, a rented two-story building housing eleven teenage girls who attend the local high school.

**As one woman stirred a broth, she proudly indicated the still-feathered head of a bird nestled in the ladle**

With the few existing secondary schools centralized in larger towns, it is virtually impossible for rural children to attend school after Grade 6 - another barrier to continuing education and a better future. We joined the girls as they gathered in daily prayer, sitting cross-legged on the balcony with their heads bowed.

Afterwards, they proudly showed us the one large room where they sleep on thin mats on the floor, their meager belongings hanging on hooks on the wall. Behind this house stood a corrugated tin building that is home for the nine boys attending the same secondary school. The sole furnishing was a long wooden plank that served as a communal bed/dinner table/homework station.



Students bow their heads in prayer

All 20 of the students attend classes from Monday to Saturday and with the supervision of a housemother, undertake life skill training in cooking, morality, agriculture, and bible study. On Sundays, the students cycle home to their villages to visit their families and help with work.

The yard in the front of the boarding house stores the equipment used to drill the wells for rural families. Materials for making concrete rings for latrines were spread out along the side of the house. When sold, they provide income to help finance both the dormitory and the students' education.

There were mango and palm trees in the yard and we were delighted when the caretaker scrambled up a tree trunk, his machete raised pulley-style on a rope around his waist. A few well-placed whacks and a clump of coconuts crashed to the ground below. In moments, we were enjoying fresh sweet coconut milk. Invited to collect their own mangoes, Levi and Tristan were given a long pole with hook on one end and with no small amount of patience, eventually succeeded in capturing their prey.

We had arrived at the boarding house in time for lunch and were informed with great enthusiasm that the previous day's downpour had produced a proliferation of frogs. Yes, it seems we were in for another culinary



Boys' Dorm



Producing latrines to fund education





Catching a mango!



Preparing lunch



Inside a home

adventure! We watched as two of the teen age girls expertly skinned the frogs and left whole, popped them into a metal bowl where they were tossed with an assortment of spices.

A small gas burner was set out on the wooden plank in the boys' dorm and the frogs were pan fried one at a time. As we sat on the ground together and gave thanks for this meal, Levi and Tristan joined our new friends and eagerly consumed the frog served with the sour mango they had just hooked. Fascinated to be walking in the pages of a National Geographic 'moment' that went on for days; I savored the rumble in my tummy. It was a reminder that this was all real.

**Drilling a well part 1 (Tristan, aged 7)**

*Today is going to be an adventure! We are going to see a well get built in a poor village and after it's*

*built the pastor of the village is going to pick a family who needs it the most. The person who got it was a lady that was a widow and her husband died and she's, 56 years old she has 3 kids and now she can grow vegetables and sell them so she can get money. To buy real water and rice, just enough to feed her children and herself. She's so poor that she can't afforded the money to put her house on stilts, so it doesn't flood her house, at least she can get enough money to survive that's all we need to care about so that's good, she has 2 boys and 1 girl and I think she's about a teenager because she went to the casino so she can get money and bring it back to her family, but the girl doesn't now what's happening, so she doesn't even now they have a well in there yard.*

**Kone Kmeng Adventure (Levi Aged 12)**

*Today my mom my brother and I went to a boarding*

*house and some villages in the Svay Rieng province near the Vietnamese/Cambodian border. We went with Penne, the founder and director of Kone Kmeng. At the boarding house (which Penne calls a dorm) we met some kids from fifteen - twenty years old. The kids at this boarding house live there but go home to their villages every Sunday. The kids here are the opposite from in Canada because they want to go to school, and we think school is hard work. The kids are at this boarding house because their parents are too poor and can not pay for school and would rather the children work to make money than go to school. When the kids go back to their villages they do house work and farm work not the typical family time in Canada. I went to one of the villages. This village was in the poorest province in Cambodia. At the village I ate sugar cane that was just picked and it was sweet like a sweet potato after you've just eaten a lemon. I also ate duck feet and chicken and liver. I ate the duck, chicken and liver near a cow pen and sat on the table which is not rude here. The villagers killed the chicken and the duck for us because to them we were their guest of honor. Penne says tomorrow we will be eating frog. Later that day we went to a hotel called "TTP Two Hotel" on the Vietnamese border.*

*Today we went to a village and saw a well being dug near a house in the country side. Around the well there were many kids watching because this didn't happen often.*



Climbing for coconuts

*The well was being built for a widow and her three children. The people who were building the well put pipe after pipe, each three meters long, adding up to 39 meters drilling down to get to the water. It took a long time, three to four hours, until they got to the sand that had the sand water. One of the kids in the village asked me what my name was and I told him and when I left the kids all said "goodbye Levi!" I thought it was sweet that they remembered my name. Normally at lunch I would eat a sandwich, rice or noodles but here I ate frog legs! The frog legs tasted just like chicken except it was more juicier. The reason I got to eat frog was because it rained the day before, and there were many frogs in the rice fields. The villagers collected them and sold them at a market. The frogs were on sale, so that was lucky. After the meal we picked mangos using a stick with a hook on the end. We also drank coconut juice. We saw the coconut get cut from a tree. We also saw how a man climbed up the tree to get the coconuts. Yum! Later that day my family and I went back to Phnom Penh. That night I said to my self how lucky am I to be able to see that.*



Village children mesmerized...

Kone Kmeng:

[www.kone-kmeng.org](http://www.kone-kmeng.org)

Chab Dai Coalition:

[www.chabdai.org](http://www.chabdai.org)



# Teen Challenge

Teen Challenge Cambodia is affiliated with member organizations in 87 countries around the world. The ministry serves the lost and hurting with a purpose to offer life transformation for those with life controlling problems. Support is provided through faith-based mentoring in residential centers combined with counseling, education, and vocational training skills.

## The Crebo MacLeod Family

With a heart for Cambodia and its people, Tim and Elaine and their sons, Levi 12 and Tristan 7, spent four months immersed in the country, the language and the culture. They were privileged to spend time with organizations working to end child trafficking and sexual exploitation, and were moved by the dedication of the Teen Challenge Cambodia team and their faith-inspired passion for the marginalized and the vulnerable.



## Our Story

We met Koy Chhim, Country Director of Teen Challenge Cambodia, at a busy intersection in the capital city of Phnom Penh. He spotted us across the chaos of rush hour traffic and stood waving his arms until we noticed him. Actually, it was the beaming smile that first got our attention, a grin that propelled him through the rest of the day as he enthusiastically shared his passion for his work. Piling into his pick-up truck, we were surprised to be joining not just Koy, but also his wife Rainey who was sitting in the back seat, holding a baby and a toddler on her lap. This it turns out, is how Koy operates. His family and his commitment to Teen Challenge are his passions and they often overlap. Today Koy, Rainey and two of their four children were accompanying our family to the Teen Challenge Women's Centre.

Opened in 2011, the centre provides a residential rehabilitation program that gives daily structure through

... a kindergarten for the children staying at the centre, while their mothers undergo treatment for drug addiction.



the power of worship and prayer, counseling, education and life skills training. There were 10 women, 3 children, and a baby living at the Centre and what we were about to experience was both heartbreaking, and inspirational beyond words.

When we got through the congested streets and to the outskirts of this sprawling city of over 2 million, we pulled off onto a dirt road that led up to a quiet and peaceful property. Disembarking from the pick-up truck and walking across the spacious yard, we were greeted by the sight of a children's climbing frame constructed entirely of branches, complete with a swing made from a rubber tire. Nearby under a grove of mango trees was a narrow one-room building with posters of the English alphabet strung along the concrete walls. It was empty apart from a small table and two plastic chairs; a kindergarten for the children staying at the centre while

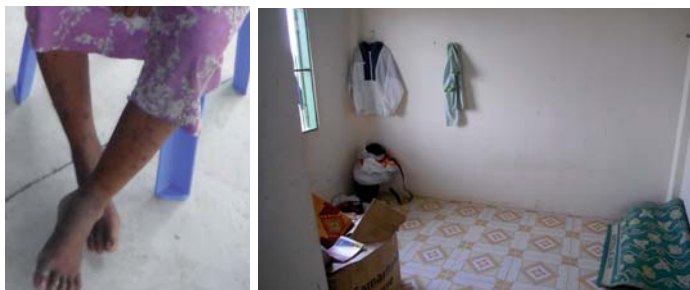




their mothers undergo treatment for drug addiction. Koy hopes that local village children will join the kindergarten as well, not only as a source of income, but an opportunity for the children living at the centre to interact with other children in the community.

Koy proudly indicated a garden that had been planted by the girls and women at the centre. The bright green shoots pushing up from the dry cracked ground were a metaphor for the lives of the women we were about to meet. The garden is a working project providing a practical opportunity and knowledge of gardening, while supplying food for those in the program. Additionally, the sale of vegetables and flowers will generate an income for the centre.

We wandered over to an open-aired thatched structure where three girls were in the midst of a sewing class. They operated the pedal-powered machines with bare feet, their eyes focused on the fabric carefully guided by their hands. Their instructor, not much more than a girl herself, supervised their work. The girls were smiling as they sewed and shyly giggled when we were introduced. Watching their joy, one would never have imagined that their young lives had been ravaged by abuse. We noticed one girl sitting alone off to the side, a glazed look in her eyes as she stared into space. She wore purple cotton pajamas and was barefoot, her lower legs scarred with sores. We learned that she was just 14 years old and recently rescued by a Teen Challenge outreach worker and brought to the centre. A street child, she was addicted to sniffing glue and was 4 months pregnant with her father's child. She was wary of her new environment and appeared completely disorientated. She likely trusted no one and now here she was, surrounded by strangers. It was heartening to know that that for the first time in her life she was in a safe environment surrounded by her Teen Challenge family who would support, encourage



and love her. It is numbing to imagine her fate had she not been brought to the centre. Although her story is heart rendering, all of the women at the centre left behind horrific histories and are bound by the atrocious commonalities of sexual abuse, abandonment, rape, prostitution, alcohol and drug addiction.

We walked around the corner to the communal bedrooms. Woven mats were neatly rolled up and propped against the walls, with minimal personal belongings placed on the torn tiled floor. A simple kitchen area provided space for the women to learn cooking skills and the preparation of nutritious food. There was a sense of comfort and safety under this protective roof and we felt the camaraderie amongst the women in our presence. This fierce protectiveness was evident when we saw that the infant lying in a tiny basket in the middle of the hallway was not only the focus of her mother's rapt attention, but also of everyone else in the centre. Through their collective protection, this babe was harbored in the safety of a world they know to be filled with hurt and fear. But as they are also learning, is filled with the love and grace of God.

Teen Challenge Cambodia: [www.cambodiateenchallenge.weebly.com](http://www.cambodiateenchallenge.weebly.com)



# Precious Women

The first outreach of its kind in Cambodia, Precious Women's purpose is to reach out to vulnerable women working in karaoke bars, beer gardens and brothels (KBB). Through sharing the love of God, the heart of Precious Women is to build relationships in order to see these women restored with respect, dignity, hope and love. This is done through outreach visits to bars, delivery of regular radio broadcasts, hosting women's fellowship parties, church involvement, counseling, a transition home and vocational training. Precious Women's mission is to empower women to improve their lives and work in an environment free from exploitation.

## Crebo MacLeod Family

Tim, Elaine and their sons Levi 12 and Tristan 7, of Kelowna, British Columbia Canada, spent four months in Cambodia where as a family, they hoped to make a tangible difference both in their own, and in the lives of others. While immersing themselves in the culture and undertaking volunteer work, they had the opportunity to spend time with several organizations whose focus is to end sexual exploitation and trafficking in Cambodia; one of them, Precious Women.

*'What Precious Women is doing is remarkable. With a vision and a heart for the vulnerable, they are reaching out to a segment of society who are exploited and abused. Their approach to offering these women*



*restoration, hope, dignity and love is done with sensitivity in manner encompassing shelter, friendship, sharing the gospel, vocational training and an opportunity to start a new life. Their work is inspiring and they are making a difference.'*

## Our Story

### Butterfly Home

We met Seng Solida 'Lida', the founder of Precious Women, at the Butterfly Home in the capital city of Phnom Penh. Tucked away on a side street behind a gated wall, the narrow two-story concrete building is a haven for women who are in transition and need the support and security of a safe home. Counselling is provided where women can share their hearts and come to a place that with guidance, they can make wise decisions about moving forward in their lives. Providing support for alternative sources of income, Precious Women partners with organizations that provide vocational training in hospitality, cosmetology, childcare, sewing and cooking. On the main floor of Butterfly Home is a shelf displaying bracelets and necklaces made from re-cycled magazines; handicrafts that can provide extra income so the women will be less likely to go out with male customers for tips.



Hand-crafted bracelets made from recycled magazines.



Foot powered sewing machine

## Staring straight ahead as she spoke, Butterfly Girl's eyes emanated the grief she endured growing up

There is a sewing machine set up in an adjoining room so those taking vocational training can practice their new skills. It was here that I met a young woman whom I will call Butterfly Girl. Using her bare feet to operate the pedal-controlled Singer sewing machine, she was intent on stitching a white cotton sheet, her head bent in concentration. She agreed to talk to me and with the aid of a translator, haltingly shared her story.

Staring straight ahead as she spoke, Butterfly Girl's eyes emanated the grief she endured growing up. Transient and poor, she left elementary school to join her alcoholic mother who periodically worked as a farm laborer. She never knew her father. From the age of eight years old, Butterfly Girl went to work collecting small branches to sell for firewood and at ten years old, laboured alongside her mother hauling earth on construction sites. Later she toiled breaking rock, hot and dirty work. Violent and abusive, her mother was often drunk and life was difficult. As a young teen, Butterfly Girl left Cambodia and spent

1 ½ years working as a maid in Malaysia. She recounted how her one dream in Malaysia was to earn enough money to buy her mother a silk skirt. She was sent home when she became ill, her only possession the silk skirt she'd bought as a gift for her mother. Shortly after returning to Cambodia, Butterfly Girl received a phone call informing her that her mother had died. Entirely alone in the world, something died in her that day too. Working as a maid in Phnom Penh, she became ill again and was forced to undergo surgery. The prohibitive medical expenses kept her indebted to an abusive employer. Later, a job as a cook's helper in a beer garden led to working as a waitress and ultimately, a hostess. She was paid \$60 month. With no hope of a future and deeply in debt because of her medical expenses, Butterfly Girl agreed to have sex with a customer. The owner of the bar arranged a meeting with an older man. She lost her virginity and the last vestiges of self-respect. For the next year, Butterfly Girl continued in this path of destruction. Drifting in a lifestyle of alcohol, male customers, and



living day to day, Butterfly Girl felt her life had no value. One evening she was approached in the bar by a volunteer with Precious Women who befriended her and told her there were alternatives to her current lifestyle. Intrigued, Butterfly Girl listened. Soon after, she decided to stop working in the bar.

*'My co-workers called and blamed me when they know that I believe in Jesus and they're also happy that I could stop and walk out of the KBB working environment. I felt so excited when Precious Women's staff welcomed and cared about me. Precious Women staff always encourage me and helped me to find the place for vocational skills. All the staff are friendly.'*

With the support of Precious Women, Butterfly Girl has been attending a vocational sewing school and has made a commitment to work hard to acquire a skill that she can use for meaningful and respectful employment.

*'I hope to encourage and reach out to other women who are working in karaoke, brothels and beer bars, to have hopes and dreams for their life. They shouldn't feel hopeless and start standing for their rights. My life is changing since I have participated in the Precious Women program: I am a listening person more than talking, and dare to speak to others people in public.'*



Hostesses outside beer garden

Counselling provided by Precious Women has helped Butterfly Girl to learn to identify and how to deal with social problems, think positively and to understand her self-value. She was adopted into a family from her new church and is learning to share in discussions and develop hope for the future. Though poor, Butterfly Girl maintains that; 'What I never had before, I've got now in Jesus' name. I trust that God has a plan for my future.

**KBB (Karoke bars, Beer gardens & Brothels)**

I had a better understanding of the life Butterfly Girl led as a hostess when I accompanied a volunteer from Precious Women to a beer garden on a Friday evening outreach mission. Somewhat apprehensive, I



Working on sewing skills

I had envisioned a seedy and derelict environment and was surprised by just how innocuous the open-air street side venue appeared to be

much as possible, which entails drinking with them. This is just the beginning. She is also expected to perform extra services and is encouraged by beer garden owners to leave the site with customers for the purpose of providing sexual services. A portion of the transaction is retained by the owner. These women are poor and desperate. They are easily exploited in a culture that does not give value to women. With little education and no other means to support themselves and their families, they descend into a life of torment, abuse and abject degradation. It is all they know. Precious Women's purpose is to bring restoration, dignity, love and hope to these forgotten women.

A hostess who looked to be in her mid-teens readily sat at our table when we invited her to join us. She was curious and open to learning more about Precious Women, taking the contact card that was offered and slipping it into her pocket. She explained that she had come to the city to work but as she could not read or write, there was little she could do to earn money. Desperate to help her family in the countryside, she began working as a hostess. Often numbed by drugs and alcohol, she exists from day to day, relying on business from night to night. Her only friends are the girls she works alongside. It is a sad and lonely life.

Every time a volunteer from Precious Women goes to a local beer garden or karaoke bar, they remember their purpose; 'To bring the love of God to these women and give them the opportunity to start a new life and career.'

Their mission is noble. It is working. One woman at a time.

[www.preciouswomenministry.org](http://www.preciouswomenministry.org)

had envisioned a seedy and derelict environment and was surprised by just how innocuous the open-air street side venue appeared to be. In fact, it could well have been a sidewalk cafe in my own hometown, filled with the laughter and camaraderie of colleagues at the end of a work week. The similarity ended there. Lining both sides of the entrance were a dozen young women sitting in plastic chairs, chatting idly as they awaited their turn to escort customers to their tables.

As men entered and were seated; they were joined by one or more of the hostesses who were there to provide companionship and entertainment. Hostesses are expected to encourage their customers to drink as



