

Serious health issues here for children in northern Cambodian regions – an epidemic of Dengue fever & a mysterious illness that has been killing many many children has now been diagnosed as ‘Hand, foot & mouth disease’ & coming from Vietnam. 66 children died in the Kantha Bopha hospitals alone in June (the only hospital that would be prepared to give figures no doubt!- if news is bad here they tend to avoid collecting information!) - both the free children’s hospitals in Siem Reap are swamped & appealing for funds due to both infections – they have 2-3 children to a bed & have the overflow lying in corridors & every available room has been turned into new temp. wards. They are stretched to the limit – particularly in blood & finances. The ODA kids attend both these hospitals & have offered the Angkor Hospital for Children & Kantha Bopha Hospital, some paintings for them to sell to raise funds to help. They have all received free emergency treatment at some time or another & wish to help in any way they can. Khmer people always want to help others even when they have so little themselves – they are very lovely people!

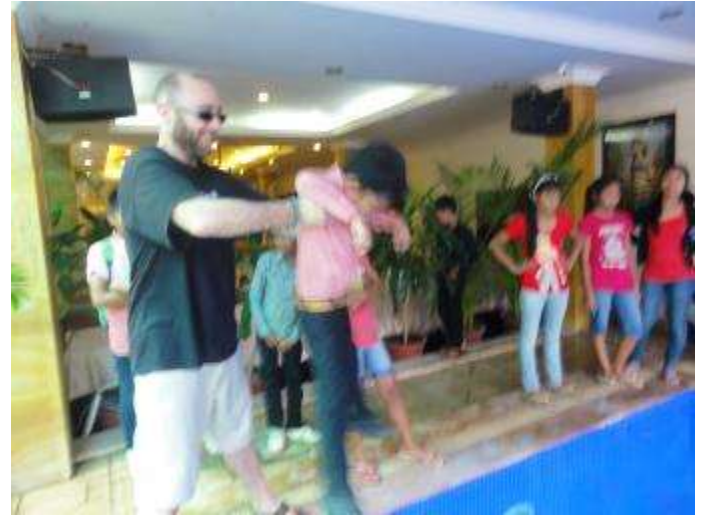
Leng is spraying all around ODA every couple of hours & has bought personal repellent for the kids as Dengue fever is also in epidemic & is spread by daytime mosquitos – he is also stressing to the children to wash their hands as poor personal hygiene has been identified as the vehicle that is spreading the Hand, foot & mouth disease. We have printed up posters sent to us by the hospital & put them up at the village schools for the children to read & inform their parents, neighbours etc. Hard for them out there as many don’t have water wells (\$150 is a fortune for them) – let alone soap! A very worrying time for poor families here.

Well on a brighter note – we have had yet another great project from Richie – many of you may recall his Sock Puppet Project in 2010 – Cinderella Project in 2011 & now this year The Mad Hatters Tea Party!!



Such fun for the kids – all making the items Richie will put in the ODA Show Bags which he will sell at the Mad Hatters Tea Party in Melbourne in August to raise funds for ODA. Along with all the doll cut outs, origami & decorated bottles to be turned into Maraca’s (see pic to LHS) which Richie & Sally oversaw – ODA was ‘Alive with the Sounds of - Doe a Deer a Female Deer’ & ‘Rock Around the Clock Tonight’ with Lee on guitar & Beverley leading the singing with her beautiful voice. Such a busy & fun week with Richie & his great crew of helpers.





Director Richie with his trusty crew – posing a life savers! Michael not such a good life saver???

For those in Melbourne Australia – put this date in your diaries for a fun filled day.

SUNDAY 26TH AUGUST 1pm-5pm

229 Huntingdale Road, Oakleigh Victoria Australia.

Join us for some tea, music and what we do best...madness!!!

Proudly raising money for the ODA Orphanage Siem Reap.

Gold coin donation at door...bring your friends & everyone- kids – grandparents - dogs – you name it they're welcome!!



*Kids watchig the video of the previous week at ODA
See ODA Art Facebook for the video.*

Back to Siem Reap now - Luckily for ODA we had Lyndon (on RHS of pic) a film & doc maker drop in & he shot & edited a video clip of lots of the action from the week & worked all night to edit & put music to it so the kids could watch it at their Mad Hatters Party (really ended up a Pool Party!).

Richie arranged for 4 tuk tuks plus motos & Legs car to bring them all in to Siem Riep & they sang their songs & had a wonderful feast & then swam in the hotel pool (another first!!) then dried themselves in the lovely towels that Richie had bought for everyone. As they were leaving he handed out monster bubble wands much to their delight - so there were bubbles streaming from the tuk tuk's all the way from Siem Reap to ODA along with the chants of Doe a Deer a Female Deer & Rock Around the Clock!!

Such wonderful experiences for all our children to be exposed to & they love Richie & his support crew coming every year at the start of their holidays. Leng & the kids have given Richie a canvas painting of 3 monks to watch over him during his treatment back in Melbourne & they will be praying for him every day.



Tey & Heng – 2 bright young inventers they make things from old batteries & scraps of anything available (or not readily available!!!) – this tractor made from an empty water bottle & is powered by a rechargeable battery from

one of the big boys mobile phones when he will lend it to them!! Inventing isn't easy – you have to overcome obstacles if you are to succeed in life!!! These are just 2 of the smart kids at ODA!

Well after years of not being able to get permission to even repair holes in the roof – suddenly It's Province Election time!! Permission to repair & extend was decreed across the board so all of Siem Reap was in a frenzy (with just 3 weeks to complete it all - I might add!! – luckily that 3 seems to be quite elastic this time!!!) – Richie (of Sock Puppets, Cinderella & now Mad Hatters fame) has been fund raising in Aust to help Leng & the kids if they ever obtained permission - so thankfully the funds were there but – Oh the building materials & builders??? Much demand at such short notice created a huge shortage & bricks, concrete & roofing iron all of which was practically unobtainable – along with a builders to do the work!!!

Leng copes philosophically with things like this & just works thru it - experience I think it's called!!! So 4 builders later (3 exited as things became a speck hard for them so they ran away to a simpler job!!) Planning is a luxury as well as efficient building – Leng wanted to put a 2nd story on the top of the boys bedroom for the girls but materials for that were unobtainable so he extended out. You can add a room onto an existing wall – which cut's off any windows, natural light & ventilation there may have been in the existing room. The fact that 65% of Cambodians have underlying TB – caused originally thru Khmer Rouge concentration camps & now spread on by mothers milk &/or lack of good thru ventilation in rooms - doesn't seem to figure in the governments decisions! Luckily Leng makes the roof high & good air flow thru between that & the walls (allowing mosquitos in!!) But it's such a crazy system – well no system at all I guess – but Leng makes the most of what he can do.

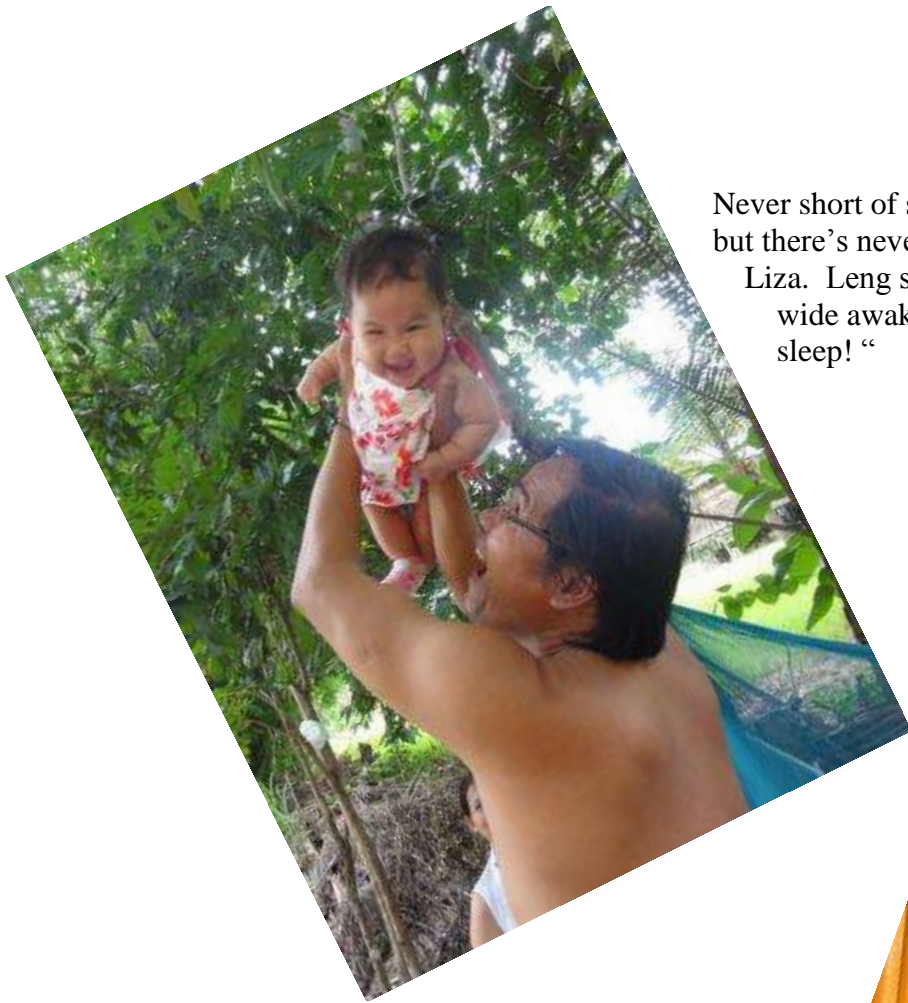
Now the Village Chief has told him when he's completed the extensions he may be able to build on top of them as there are national elections scheduled for next year. So ad hoc and more ad hock but Leng has made the wall supports strong enough to hold a 2nd story. He may not get another chance or if he does it won't be until the next elections in 4 or more years time!! So he makes hay while the sun shines!!!



*Construction or not – a girl has to have a bath eh?
Somehow they cook & eat meals amongst all this*

So ODA is a constructon zone & has been for quite a time now – poor volunteers have coped brilliantly with noise, dust & total confusion – they deserve a medal!!! Not to mention dogs racing thru on new concrete (& the odd cheeky boy!!!) Leng decided to go for gold!!! Being Olympic time - & has had the concrete floors resurfaced with a good durable cleanable surface – that entailed more rubble, dust, confusion & excessive 'noise pollution' - (something they have never heard of here - the noisier the better!! – lucky for them - but unlucky for

volunteers!!! 6 inch angle grinders with diamond tipped disks for these huge areas - then hand finishing with stones & water - for those of you who know these tools!! – in the west it would be a floor grinder & do it is less than half the time but employ fewer people so all good for Khmers in the long run!!! Feeds a few hungry tummies in their families.!!!



Never short of someone to hold or play with her but there's never anyone quite like dad for baby Liza. Leng says "Good now- not quite so wide awake every night now – we get some sleep! "

Pchum Ben Festival has come around again – seems like a only a few months since the last but it has to be 12 – time flies when etc!!! Last year they all slept at the Pagoda at Wat Village where one of the ODA schools is built – this year they just visited 2 pagodas in the ODA schools district.



Leng with some kids from the ODA Village English schools



Early morning saw lots of activity at ODA with an early trip to the market then everyone chippy chopping up to prepare food to take to the pagodas to offer to the elderly departed relatives (& the monks & the elderly people still here, plus the kids themselves!!)

The village teachers all joined us as did most of the students – everyone loves a festival get together – Pagodas & their festivals form their social interaction.



Last year with the sleepover at the Pagoda the kids were up at 3 am circling the Pagoda throwing sticky rice balls for their departed relations so they would know they still remembered them & they didn't need to wish bad things on them!! I think this year with the new baby crying regularly at night – Leng & Sry On decided they didn't need any more interrupted sleep – so opted for daytime visits instead !!! A 12 seater mini bus transported 24 & the overflow scrunched in Leng's car. Lots of traditional dishes but also vermicelli type noodles are cooked for departed as families don't know if they told lies in their lifetime here – but if they did their mouths shrink - hence thin vermicelli slips in their shrunken lips. After lunch the ODA crew went back to the nearest ODA school, & relaxed – a hammock was slung between a couple of trees for baby Liza to be rocked –the others just spread out - interesting to see how much the kids enjoyed just exploring around – coming back with edible things gathered from the trees & sharing them around with everyone – rediscovering their past in the villages no doubt!



Such joy from simply throwing leaves in the air & jumping to catch them – we could all take a 'leaf' out of their book & enjoy the simple things more.

It's a very traditional Khmer upbringing that the children at ODA enjoy – full of their culture & lovely family values – they are indeed lucky children & with all they have experienced in their young lives - they really value the genuine caring that Leng & Sry On so generously share with them. They are all just a big Khmer family who care for each other! Beautiful for us volunteers to have the experience of sharing with them all.

