

**PCHUM BEN FESTIVAL    ODA Childrens big hearts!!**



See girl in red top. At a Pchum Ben Festival today I noticed the kids all going up to one of the bigger boys & taking scrunched money notes out of their pockets. They had heard of a village girl they know who's parents can't afford to send her to school again so all decided to put in bits of their own money earned from their art work sales – so they could help her to stay at school – they know how they would feel if it was themselves!!! She will need a uniform as well but we can supply that from our current Uniform drive – which was started for just these kind of circumstances when parents are unable to buy a uniform so the kids must stop their schooling (or never even get to start).

Wonderful testament to the upbringing that Leng & Sry On provide - that the ODA kids are so keen to put their own little money in to assist others in need & especially for education which they value so keenly themselves. The girl will start year 9 now & was quite overcome with their gift to her. ODA is a beautiful formative home & the children share

together with others as their Buddhist religion & Leng & Sry On teach them. Great young kids!!! Leng & Sry On were very proud of their actions!!!



Khum – crippled since birth – never thought he would have a job. He is so proud today to have the job of security at the ODA/AMA

Waterways sponsored school at Ta Thoum Village – wonderful as he’s there most of every day – not getting far afield in his old wheelchair – he is also good at fixing things & a great help. Leng built a waterproof hut for him behind the school & he shares that now with Samrit – the Village chiefs son. Samrit came to Leng & asked if he could have a job in return for being sent to school – his parents couldn’t afford to send him any longer. Leng has him feeding the chickens, & fish at 2 schools & he’s very proud of his job & so happy to continue his schooling. He helps Khum with the security & cooking etc for the 2 of them & it looks like they have a vege garden on the go now as well. All the kids we come across desperately want the opportunity to continue their schooling.



Khum hand wheeled himself in his old wheelchair - over the rough road for around 5kms to join us all at the Pchum Ben Festival at the pagoda near the ODA English school at Thoum Village. Beaming smile & so happy to be a contributing person in the village now – he was so shy to start with but is growing leaps & bounds in confidence now he feels very useful!!! ODA kids joke with him

& enjoy his company – he’s part of the ‘ODA Family’ now as you can see with Chea jokingly sitting with him on his wheelchair. His parents are very proud of his having a job!!

#### PCHUMB BEN FESTIVAL & ODA’S INVOLVEMENT

The ODA children danced their traditional Khmer Cultural dances for the villagers at 2 of the Pagodas near the ODA schools for the Pchum Ben festival – much to the delight of all the villagers. They are so professional now & really enjoy the opportunity to perform their cultural dances.







Many villagers haven't ever seen their Traditional Apsara Dance so from tiny tots to old people they are quite spellbound & explode into chuckles when they perform the flirty 'Fishing Dance'. So wonderful for the ODA kids to bring such happiness to their fellow people.

Three of our ODA children still have 2 tiny sisters still living with their grandmother in a tiny dilapidated palm hut – so it was a family catch up at the Run Village Pagoda festival.



Grandmother is so very proud of Leak who dances with our children & swells with pride when she is performing. This night it was so cute – a couple of Leaks little sisters friends, decided to copy Leak dancing & almost stole the show!!!



**Pchum means gathering & Chum means balls of rice. Balls of sticky rice are made the day prior & around 3am - people circulate around the pagoda throwing rice balls for 7 generations of their relatives.**



**The raising of Prayer Flags is always performed so ODA crew helped with that custom as well. Small money is tucked into the pockets of the flag then it is raised – Khmer people make an effort to visit remote Pagodas so the monks there also receive money, rice & food. No matter how poor the Khmer people have the custom of sharing with their fellow people – so wonderful to experience.**



**These gatherings form their social life & young & old alike join in. Food is pooled & cooked in huge pots & the girls & women share in the preparation & cleaning up after.**





**UNIFORM DRIVE – thanks to very kind people running fund raisers all over the world – we will be able to provide over 250 poor village kids with uniforms.**



**Thanks also to ‘Small Steps’ – a wonderful UK organization who are partnering with us - we are also able to provide sneakers & sox for these kids as well.**

**Paula of Small Steps is with us currently & in the process with us of working out how many of each size uniform & sneakers we need to purchase. It’s turning out to be more of a major exercise than we ever imagined but we will get there in the end. We can line kids of the same size up for uniform sizes but sneakers need to be the right size.**

**Apologies to you all for it taking so long to deliver!**

**Literally a sea of kids for 2 hours & that was just 1 of the 6 school districts we are helping. Poor Paula – fresh from the climate of UK – anyway she coped brilliantly & we are well on the way now – so next newsletter will have pics of the proud kids in full new sparkling uniforms!!!!**



**Sry On – Lengs wife has negotiated a wonderful deal for us on the uniforms & sneakers so we may even be able to provide more poor children to allow them start, or to stay at school.**

**No uniform – no school unfortunately here in Cambodia. It’s not only young kids, but less than 9% of children attend Secondary school due to poverty & of those, many who start, have to leave due to their parents simply not having the money to purchase another uniform when they grow out of their current one – this makes them have no alternative but to join the rice field workforce at young ages – there just isn’t any alternative. So Leng is trying to stave that off for a little longer for as many children as possible.**

**He is so very grateful for all the wonderful followers of ODA who put their own effort into supporting these children who are so keen to have an education somehow! He is very grateful you have such kind hearts & wish to help children in the Siem Reap District. Tom Tom Akun – Thank You Big Big!!!!**