

Uniform Distribution Day Wednesday 26th November 2014

WOW WOW WOW!!

What an amazing day for these village students.



What a wonderful gift you have all given to these subsistence farming children. Thanks to the generosity of yourself & people from all over the world – today we were able to hand out.....

A grand total of 659 Uniform sets!

That's all totally due to your generosity in assisting these poor village children to be able to continue their education, through the gift of a uniform set!

In a lot of cases, despite their parents not seeing the need for school! At our last teachers meeting there was discussion on what to say to parents when their kids want to go to school & parents want them to work on their fields – how to try to help parents understand the changing face of Cambodia & the critical need now for their children to attend school as opposed to when they themselves were young. Sophan the schools Manager advised the teachers to first try to inform parents of the competition the Economic Community will make for jobs & then speak to the Village Chief & give him their names, asking him to have a follow up talk with them.



Some of the bundles of uniforms Secondary School Girl Captain welcomes everyone to her school, sneakers are in front of her

(Uniform Sets - 2 shirts, skirts/pants, undies, socks, sneakers & a mosquito net). Huge bags full of all these goods were heaved into trailers pulled by motos & transported to the Wat Village Secondary School who very kindly again allowed ODA to use their grounds for the huge number of students & parents to congregate for the distribution. Rain was forecast but thankfully didn't arrive until a couple of hours after we finished – luckily as it was a huge deluge – most unusual for this time of year.



The Assistant District Governor attended in his official capacity & told the parents they were very lucky. Banteay Srey Province has 6 communes in all - & only these 3 communes (& the government schools in these communes) were receiving these uniforms. He reminded parents of the necessity to not be tempted to put their children to work rather than send them to school. He stressed the changing face of life in Cambodia from next year with the Asian Economic Community - & unless Cambodian children had an education then all jobs in future would go to young people from neighboring countries flooding into the employment market. He encouraged them to study hard for as long as they could. He also talked about the new policy of non corruption

in education & said it was all a new opportunity for this new generation to change their lives from what has been accepted in the past.



Leng followed on that theme & explained to parents & students that the common language would be English next year in the Asian Economic Community - so it was increasingly important that children attended the ODA Free English Schools & become more skilled. It is to be taught in government primary schools now from grade 4, but very few teachers have any training or English skills themselves, & even less the teachers in Primary schools. He also urged parents to make the most of these uniforms that are so generously given for their children to have more opportunities for a full government school education.



With Sophan, the ODA English Schools Manager translating for her, Shirley told everyone of the all the kind people from many countries all over the world. All of whom understand the importance of education, & how all are wanting to assist the children with these gifts of uniforms, so they are able to attend school. She reminded them that in the past Cambodia has only had to think of itself alone. However, from next year with 10 other Asian countries in competition, it will be a very different working scene & young people will have to attend school to have any chance at all, of any employment.

Huge sacks of uniforms & shoes were then taken by teachers, & school groups were set up dotted around the school grounds & the serious task of trying on uniforms begun! Many giggles when boys unwrapped their



shirt to find frills down the front & girls found boys undies in their packs! Boys & Girls share the same names here & packers must have become a little tired (no wonder with some 1318 uniforms to pack) & guessed the sex rather than reading from the list. Shoe sizes are always a nightmare so there were many changes of sneakers before all were finally sorted.



Leng had negotiated an average price for sneakers & 2 pairs of socks of \$5.5 ea set, but when he came to pay, the shoe seller gave him a price of \$5.3 per set as she didn't have to pay 'commission' to Leng! The uniform seller has already done the same with her prices for the same reason. So we have a little left in store if we come across others in need that missed this distribution time (as always happens)



Looking around a whole school yard of gleaming white shirts & crisp new skirts or pants with cherished new sneakers on their feet – it was a great sight to see. Girls & boys shyly smiling & so happy to be so lucky to have these new uniform sets.



Then trying to herd 659 kids into an area so we could get them all in a photo proved almost impossible, so we took quick shots catching as many as possible then they were all on their way back to their schools – bursting out & talking excitedly.



Leng said he wished you could all have been there to see them all looking so very smart & proud – he just hopes that the pics will give you a glimpse of what it was like for us on the ground to see. A wonderful day!!

He is so grateful that you all share & support his vision & assist so many children to obtain an education - at least for a few years - & he just hopes that over the next few years more & more of them will have the same chances as the ODA headquarters children, to attend until year 12 & beyond. If they have the encouragement of parents he believes they will – like him so many years ago – find the way to achieve this.

Tom Tom Akun to you all! (Thank You Big Big!)