

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH AND ALL DUE TO YOUR SUPPORT!



Thanks a zillion for supporting ODA to help 703kids to attend school for another year!

What a great day – we arrive to see huge bags full of packs of uniforms , sneakers and 703 bright eager youngsters – all gathering happily around – it’s a day to meet friends and socialize for them all, as well as collecting their school uniform!





Symbolic handing over of sneakers from the invited dignitaries to the ODA teachers

On distribution, hysterical giggles erupted as some girls opened their uniform pack to find boys undies there (they don't often have undies which means that girls can't bend over very easily or do cartwheels etc!) – and boys found they had been allocated a frilled front, girls school shirt and a skirt! OK but - with 703 uniform packs and only one week to pack them all up with names and guestimated sizes on either last years set or an estimate based on age – combined with the fact that girls and boys names are often the same here – so there are bound to be a few mistakes - but easily solved. The market lady brings out more uniforms to cope with mistakes or incorrect sizes. Thrilled girls to have their very favourite colour *pink* or even fancy aqua, tartan sneakers, and boys having groovy cartoon fashion ones that made them feel they were VERY Cool or Prosen haart (handsome!) as they say here.



Success – almost everyone in this class kitted out and fitting! - a big sigh of relief from the teacher Piet Po! Apologies for pic quality – unbeknown to me one of the kids got food on my lens and it wasn't discovered until the next day! What do they say about not working with animals and children.....? Ah well – all teachers will nod their heads I'm sure!

It's so very exciting for them to have brand new uniforms and especially sneakers – We see over the year that they scrub them and keep them very clean – they are really treasured. Leng and I originally discussed supplying flip flops but as they break so quickly (especially if you play soccer in them!) so it was decided that it was better to go the extra \$3 per student and get something that would last. We've seen some actually survive to be passed on to younger siblings or neighbours! Quite amazing as they get a hard work out in the village conditions. We come back from village trips and ourselves and cars are covered in fine iron based dust - and somehow they manage to keep things white – except in the heavy iron areas where, without a filter or some kind - the shirts are very soon tinged with a yellow/iron residue. Leng (always the inventor!) has made filters at all the schools – these have rocks, charcoal and sand and the water comes out crystal clear and much safer for the kids to drink. We occasionally arrive early to a school to find a neighbour washing their clothes using the ODA lovely clean clear water.



So lovely to see parents accompanying them and helping them try on the bits and bobs for size – great to see several dads this year (last year there was only 1 dad)



Previous years we have had government school teachers compile the lists of names of needy children. Last year Sophan our schools manager visited some 16 schools twice – both morning and afternoon classes to help them get the names together.

Often with this arrangement the ODA school students missed the cut! It also means that we have to wait until they are back at school and get organized before they start collecting names. So this year we asked our own teachers to make the lists from our classes – which was what we had intended in the first place. We also included the Principal of the Secondary school who gathered a list – even more critical for these older students, because often their fathers don't see the need for education and would rather have them working alongside them in the fields - and lack of money to buy a uniform gives them the excuse they need to say they have to leave school to start work.

We would love to have you actually share their excitement and hope that this report can convey to you some of their gratitude and simple happiness you have helped ODA to bring to them.

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE is such an overused statement but your support of
this yearly fund - truly delivers that to these subsistence farming children!**

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If we can help keep them at school for even one more year, it keeps them from child labour for that year round. Many students miss school for a few weeks at planting and harvest time – that’s a necessity to ensure they all can feed their families over the year, but far better that they can spend the rest of the year gaining an education. Food is understandably the primary requirement - but It’s interesting in the west - we educate our children so they can enjoy higher incomes and the lifestyle that brings to them. Here the focus for youngsters is on being able to contribute to provide for their parents and other siblings. An education will allow them to earn more, and so support them far better in the long run.



Every Year I’m worried we won’t be able to keep all the students from last year in a new uniform and at school for their next year - and every year over the last month’s fund raising suddenly you all make last minute extraordinary efforts and all our dreams come true!

It wouldn’t be Cambodia without the speeches and I always find some interesting things I didn’t know before eg this year I learned that govt Primary teachers are just students who have completed year 12 with a satisfactory result – it appears there is no formalized training – they are invited to apply and if accepted they just follow the book! –



See a condensed version of speeches below.

Leng sends huge thanks to you – all the varied unbelievably kind and generous amounts you contributed, enabling us to hand out 703 Uniform sets last Sunday !!!

That’s such a wonderful amount and the District Governor said the Kang Tbang Commune Area (where the ODA schools are, and the locations we support with our uniform fund) have enjoyed a higher retention rate of students and more are being offered teaching positions after year 12 than any of the other communes nearby. He felt one of the contributing factors must be the yearly uniforms helping more students finish their schooling and he asked for us to pass on his great thanks to everyone who contributed and to let you know that it really is helping their students be more skilled and ready for employment and life.



Leng and the District Governor

Leng reminded all the students that the Asian Economic Community starts in earnest in January 2016 and English will be the common language so it's even more critical for them to stay at school longer and attend the ODA Free English Schools, so they are ready to meet everything that will flow on from the AEC. He expressed concern that Cambodian jobs will be taken by a flow of workers from Thailand and Vietnam who have compulsory schooling – forcing uneducated Cambodian youngsters back into the fields.



He congratulated the students who sat the ODA exams last Sunday which had a very high pass rate. Much higher marks than the last two years. He urged them to stay with their studies and not be lured away from school by the thought of an immediate salary, but a job that would lead nowhere - and make it very hard to feed and educate their own families in the future. He urged them to think and plan for their future and continue studying. The ODA English class in pic on the right had many students marks between 90-100 – no doubt thanks to Sokna their teacher who is studying to become a University lecturer. Very lucky remote village students! He's a very innovative and dedicated teacher for them. See him on the LHS of the pic



Sophan the ODA Schools Manager translated my message to them that they were at a very exciting time and are the generation who would drive changes across Cambodia. The way that their families have lived for generations will be quite different with many new opportunities as a result of the Asian Economic Community. From what I see in the ODA schools – they are intelligent and eager to learn, and I wished them very good luck on their life path, embracing these potential changed lifestyles and opportunities, and urging them to make the most of the support that ODA gives them.

AKUN TOM TOM – THANK YOU BIG BIG

Village and Commune Chiefs thank Leng, ODA and most importantly - all of you, who contribute to give their village children the chance of attending school for another year - we simply couldn't do anything like this without you!

The purchase of the mandatory School Uniforms is the all important key to breaking the cycle of poverty for this next generation of Cambodians. The more knowledge these keen intelligent students can acquire – the more they will bring to the future of Cambodia and their fellow people. Cambodians feel a strong responsibility to their poor and they tirelessly share their skills with others.

Leng asks me to give you his huge gratitude – ODA could not help these students without your amazing assistance

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