

2014 ODA WHAT AN AMAZING YEAR

So many wonderful projects unfolding in the last 6 months of 2014 to support & deliver education to so many children under the ODA Umbrellas – the 33 who live at the ODA Education Home Base & the 650+ students & teachers in the outlying villages Free English & Computer school programs.

When Leng sat down with me in 2009 & I asked him to visualize 2014 & tell me what he could see, the result was a simple 5 year plan which helped him to focus on where & what he wanted to happen thru ODA. Who would have thought he would end up assisting so many children to employment opportunities for their futures. He & his wife are such caring, lovely, happy people for students & everyone to be around. Everyone who has helped him to get to where he is today is inspired to be around them both, & all the children making the most of the opportunity for improved education. They are all very special people & certainly teach us all a thing or two about what is important in life!

NEWSLETTER CONTENTS:

ANKLE BITERS BATH TIME WITH Leng's wife, Sry On
VOLUNTEERS & PROJECTS – tireless ODA supporters
FESTIVALS – so many amazing experiences
NURSING SUCCESS FOR OUTLYING VILLAGE STUDENTS!!
MOUNTAIN GIRLS EDUCATION – solving remote schooling issues
COMPUTER CLASSES AT OUTLYING ODA SCHOOLS – bringing technology to the villages
SADNESS AT ODA – & coping with scary bad spirits
AMBULANCE TUK TUK – saving lives
CAMBODIAN EDUCATION - & why secondary students are dropping out.
ACCOUNTANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (AfID) – wonderful service for ODA
CLEAN UP THE WORLD! – enabling our students become aware
ODA FARM & FISH FARM – hydroponics, fish & ducks (& lots of mud!)
FIELD TRIP TO BATTAMBANG & THE THAI BORDER – discovering their country & culture
UNIFORM DRIVE 2014 – 659 students can now start or continue school thanks to wonderful ODA supporters.
MR SINAT WINS PRESTIGIOUS PLACE in USA sponsored education workshop in Thailand
ODA ENGLISH EXAMS exam rooms bursting at the seams.
UNIVERSITY & FURTHER EDUCATION STUDENTS – Wonderful to see these 15 students able to pursue their education goals.



ODA - The kids at ODA home base have a very good family upbringing with the things they should observe in the course of their Khmer life, learning to follow Leng & Sry On's example in care & respect for other members of their home & people around them, respect & help for monks & pagodas, a full education, how to cook & grow vegetables, care for ducks, chickens & fish, & share the responsibility of keeping their home clean & tidy. Leng feels these values will prepare them well for life outside ODA when they have finished their education, have secured good employment & leave the protection of ODA. He & Sry On are also committed to having a happy environment for children to grow up in - free from cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, gambling & violence.

ANKLE BITERS BATH TIME WITH LENG'S WIFE, SRY ON



Sry On (Leng's wife & ODA Mum to all) is really enjoying these two little mites. Such great friends & play mates – Liza – Leng & Sry On's daughter almost 2 now, & SoMita around 18 months – almost like twins as SoMita is very outgoing so both love the same activities. We have had to stop the bubbles water play as So Mita thinks it looks so yummy she tries to drink it. Liza was a quiet little tot - but now she has learnt a few tricks from her friend! However with so many older brothers & sisters around there is always someone keeping a watchful eye to keep them both safe & out of trouble. So lovely to see boys as well as girls mothering them – it's a beautiful culture for them to grow up in.

VOLUNTEERS & PROJECTS

ODA is very careful in its volunteer & projects selections. The first & only criteria is that the subjects & volunteers must bring value to the ODA children. Applications are vetted & when accepted must produce a Working with Children Card or a Police Clearance from their country. Pedophilia is huge in Asia & all care must be taken. Also a sea of changing faces is disruptive for the children so a minimum period of 1 month is enforced. We are very lucky now to have qualified returnee volunteers for a great part of the year.



June 2014 saw Alvin & Lucas (from Hong Kong & USA) teaching all aged children the 'Principles of Flying'. A heavy subject but one the kids leapt into with great enthusiasm. They stirred the children's imagination & had them doing experiments & understanding about the ratio of air flow under & over the wings to enable flight to occur. In a fun simple way they covered from the first flights to hot air balloons to space flight – a great project for the kids – they thirst for knowledge on so many fronts.

Exhausting business this flying!!! Plumb

Tuckered out!!!



JULY 2014 RICHIE & HIS MERRY CREW FROM AUSTRALIA



In previous years he staged Sok Puppets, Cinderella, then Mad Hatters tea party & this year 'Things With a Twist' – Mastering the art of doing the twist proved quite a challenge for the ODA kids – they can climb up a coconut tree in a second - but attempting twisting knees & body in different directions was an absolute hoot!!! Then the fine art of learning how to make Kaleidoscopes. Richie & his crew defy the luggage limits each year & transport such 'Bling' that the kids freak out with delight – Asians love 'Bling!' First they all try all the jewelry on (boys & girls alike)

then into the business of the year theme. This year all was skillfully turned into Art Kaleidoscopes & transported back to Australia for Richies yearly fund raiser for ODA.

Rosanna Broadway Spectacular.



Richie & his crew always bring funds to take the kids on a special outing – this year they took everyone to this amazing show. Tiered seating & a wonderful theatre was almost special enough but when the show started Leng, Sry On & all the kids were spellbound.

SEX & DRUG EDUCATION.

I've been talking Leng into sex education over a couple of years now – a subject not discussed in this culture until marriage (& probably not even then)! He reluctantly agreed - then was overjoyed when the organization I had heard of doing a wonderful job – NEVER RETURNED ANY OF MY EMAILS!

So enter returnee volunteer Frank – who is head of Nursing at an Adelaide Hospital in Australia. In chatting I mentioned about this & he said 'I do that' & sourced material from the internet & posters! So we broached the subject with Leng again who could see he was cornered, as he really respects Frank's judgment on many issues.

I sat in on the girls lesson & they really trusted Frank & loved discussing & finding out more about their bodies – asking a multitude of questions which Frank with experience of a wife & 2 grown up daughters could answer in such an easy acceptable way for them.. Sex isn't new to them as they regularly see it 1st hand on show with the dogs at ODA!! (in graphic detail I might add!!) but thinking of it in terms of their own bodies was quite different for them.

Leng was shocked to think HE then had to sit in on the boys class & tried to avoid it with many feeble excuses - but eventually agreed & turned out he participated as much or more than the boys in the end - Frank said he was a great catalyst!

Frank then went on to conduct a drug education class for all the kids. Leng is very worried as there are families dealing in drugs nearby to ODA now - so he was very happy to have Frank do this & willingly sat

in on it as well. Cambodia is in the traffic path for the Golden Triangle & with relaxed ports is a major player in the distribution. It's becoming a great concern with drugs imitating brightly coloured smarties sweets.



Mary & her daughter from Australia visit regularly with great art & craft ideas – included this year was making skittles from drink bottles. The children were covered in paint, glitter & feathers & just loved skittling them down. It also gave them another lesson involving recycling materials as well.

Singapore based Kids Matter's yearly visits –along with great activities, this year they enthralled the kids with their performance of a *funny/scary but alright in the end* story. All then 'fed up' with an amazing Pizza dinner so a great project as usual with them all.



FESTIVALS

Part of volunteering means being included in all the Festival & cultural events throughout the year. Yearly purifying at the Pagoda means - YEP – bucketing heaps of water over everyone to cleanse them –



group after group until all dripping – Leng & Sry On & some smart kids brought changes of dry clothing – as usual they didn't think to warn the volunteers!! I escaped under the excuse of being the official photographer - Leng was very concerned I wouldn't be cleansed but I assured him there wasn't enough water in the world to wash away everything in my long life! He was still very concerned so I think he said some prayers for me to make up! Meanwhile the big boys took the kids to the top Pagoda & they were all dry by the time they returned!

NURSING SUCCESS FOR OUTLYING VILLAGE STUDENTS!

Chris & Mandy with their 2 sons from UK – finally got to meet Malis & Veary - they had provided funds for them to study 3 years of nursing! No mean feat as at that time it wasn't available in Siem Reap so the girls had to be set up in a room with food, transport & allowance etc plus all the costs involved in the nursing course in Phnom Penh. Such a big step also for 2 shy village girls to live away from their folks in such a big city! These 2 girls had been wonderful English teachers for ODA while they studied year 12 & with a chance opportunity via ODA - could fulfil their dream to study nursing They returned regularly to share their knowledge with the ODA village students – so wonderful for the kids to learn about personal & food hygiene etc etc from people they know so well. Also wonderful for these intelligent girls to have been given the chance to attain their dream!

MOUNTAIN GIRLS EDUCATION – ODA Outlying Village Education Project



Leng had been approached by chiefs from the mountains to find support for girls to study secondary level education – there is no Secondary school near the mountains & they are a days bike ride away from the nearest Secondary school. Go Philanthropic in USA agreed to support the first group of 5 girls & Leng arranged for them to board with a local widow close to the ODA English & Govt. Secondary School in Wat Village. They adapted to life in

Wat Villlage quickly & the girls on either end of this photo topped their grade in 2014 with the other 3 doing well also. Great opportunity for them.

COMPUTER CLASSES AT OUTLYING ODA SCHOOLS



Leng visits a computer class at the AMA USA funded school. They provided funds for new & also some used computers so children in the outlying villages could have the opportunity to learn how to work with computers & also study touch typing in English & Khmer. Most students had never seen or heard of computers but once seen - couldn't wait to learn on them. Leng's cousin Tola is in his 4th year of IT studies & Trai Van



from ODA in his 3rd year so between them they teach classes during the week - & at weekends for students who can't get away from school any other time.

Above, after our field trip the ODA students wrote a combined record of what they had seen & experienced -& learnt to drop photos in & use decorative borders etc – with everyone making their very own book! So lovely they can have these printed out to keep to look back on when they are older.

SADNESS AT ODA & COPING WITH BAD SPIRITS



As many of you already know our darling Sok Maly passed away late July. Always the brightest & kindest smile to greet you – everyone has been 'Mothered' or 'Cared for' by our little angel who was so sadly passed on to her 'Next Life'. Leng, his wife Sry On & the children are starting to come to terms with her passing now - but their culture has some VERY scary beliefs they have to master. They believe that everyone has a BAD spirit & Sok Maly's now is wishing great harm on ODA. The girls were scared to sleep in their bedroom for many months & everyone is very careful at night (including Leng & Sry On) We have had monks at ODA to banish the bad spirit on several occasions & it appears to be ingoing. Sok Maly is now implanted in a womb on her way to her next life.

Sry On – Lengs wife is now pregnant – hoping that she will bear the next Sok Maly (she misses her terribly!) She says Sok Maly had funny toes so she will know if it's her when it arrives!!!! Not sure what will happen if it doesn't have 'funny toes' or is a boy – but guess there is enough love at ODA to welcome a new baby & help them to forget their pain at loosing Sok Maly.

AMBULANCE TUK TUK



Leng was approached by Commune & Village Chiefs to find a way to provide an Ambulance Tuk Tuk for one of the remote village Health Centres. Limited doctors mean that any serious accidents or illnesses need to be taken to the Provincial Siem Reap Hospital. Ambulances rarely travel outside the city limits so village patients are left without more than basic nursing care. Rotary & Lions Clubs from Atherton Tablelands Queensland Australia answered Lengs call & under Kevin & Glenda's encouragement - raised \$4000 thru a raffle of ODA Art works. Kevin & Leng did the

'Mens work' of designing & supervising the vehicle building & it has completed many, many life saving trips for these outlying villagers already.

CAMBODIAN EDUCATION.

2015 & Cambodia joins the Asian Economic Community - well behind Singapore, Malaysia. Thailand & Vietnam especially in education, so attending school is critical for Cambodian children's future. Unfortunately there is not a clear path of funding for Education with funds very often not reaching their intended programs & goals as I'm sure you are all too well aware.

Cambodia delivered a 1% pass rate for Year 12 Govt school students for 2014 year. So it's apparent now to everyone that the Education System here is failing the students.

Government is promising to increase education spending, but even if that does eventuate, it will take years to retrain teachers & equip schools.

Leng is very worried for outlying village children as many of their parents can't afford uniform or school fees so would prefer they work after they are 12 years old anyway. Just when Secondary school attendance had started to increase a little, up to 14% of secondary age children! Currently students attend school for half a day which attracts a so called 'Tuition Fee' for teachers throughout Cambodia of \$3 a month Primary & \$24 a month Secondary - as teachers aren't paid enough to live on. On top of this to try to address the low pass rate - Government's solution is for students to then pay 25-50cents USD per hour for extra study from the same ill equipped teachers on their 12 curriculum subjects in the afternoons. This adds up to a huge sum monthly for large, poor Cambodian families when an average wage is around \$60-80 a month & with no guarantee they will even achieve a pass rate with this, children are currently dropping out of Secondary school in droves. It's a huge step backwards when youngsters are so keen to improve their future prospects. Hopefully when they start work they will still be able to attend the ODA English Classes & eventually obtain improved employment with those English skills. Principals are so very concerned for their former village students who have stopped school & are now seeking work. Such a step backwards for Cambodia.



Leng & the 4 older Secondary students

Being close to Siem Reap town the ODA home base school has managed to source an alternative school with better teachers & a greatly improved pass rate which will actually cost less than the govt schools tuition & extra study initiative. We have bright students here who don't need to waste these important educative years. If they are to continue further education they need better teaching & resources. ODA's year 10 (Pheary), year 11 (Channy) & (Tong Hang) & year 12 (Kimmie) students – see pic -are now attending this alternate school.

ACCOUNTANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (AfID)

2014 saw a wonderful UK Accountant 'Harbir' come to ODA & begin training Leng & Kimmie - one of the older girls. Leng had already been faithfully recording everything using simple excel spreadsheets & she is expanding these to meet formal accountancy standards & bring ODA to audit level. ODA had recorded everything - but piecemeal - so she has the job now of putting the pieces of the jig saw together. She is keen to stay with ODA in the future so has Leng & Kimmie sending weekly input to her as it all takes shape – she or a representative will follow up with more training as they are ready & she will continue to volunteer with us yearly.

As ODA is growing it's very important that the accounts are always up to date & give a complete picture at any time, for management & accountability purposes. We had heard about AfID from another NGO in Siem Reap who gave us glowing reports on the simple but comprehensive format & training that they had received 2 years ago. It's wonderful that these professional services are available to small NGO's like ODA. Unfortunately we were so busy when Harbir was with us – we forgot to take a photo of her training Leng & Kimmie. With her permission maybe after her next visit!

CLEAN UP THE WORLD!



ODA & the 7 ODA Outlying Village schools participated in this initiative in 2014. Many villagers watched with amazement to think anyone would want to come & pick up rubbish & 'cheeky' Leng called out to them saying – 'Next year maybe you help us too OK?' All the Village Chiefs joined us for some of the time & were genuinely interested. The students let by their teachers, had a fun time together – not much to do on a Sunday afternoon in these villages, so it was quite a social occasion. There were so many more full bags than we had anticipated & we hadn't thought a lot about disposal of the garbage bags so the Hospital Tuk Tuk was borrowed to collect them & bring to a central location where we had to get a truck to take them to the transit station in Siem Reap! We will know far more next year when we join 'Clean up the World' again.

Cambodians used to use lotus leaves etc to wrap food & other natural materials – all compostable so dropping them wasn't an issue - but with the advent of westernised plastic bottles & bags – as you've all seen - the rubbish problem in Cambodia is huge. It's encouraging to see some schools committing their students to projects like this, so over time things will change. Unfortunately burning is pretty much how things are still dealt with here (if at all!) – no rubbish dumps or collections in the villages - but over time that will change as well. Step by step it will happen.

ODA FARM & FISH FARM.



The fish had grown large enough to begin harvesting them but Leng changed the water first – unfortunately they were all floating on the top the next day!!! Leng now knows what percentage of water you can safely change safely at any one time!! We all learn by our mistakes dont we? The duck farm is growing now with eggs hatching out & a chicken area is planned very soon – some flood proof higher ground is needed for them.

Hydroponic vegetables are now supplying a lot of the food at ODA – the farm land is underwater in the wet season (typical rice farming area) so this was the best solution to grow vegetables all year round. It also saves weeding which is a huge bonus. Cucumbers & marrow variety vegetables plus tomatoes & salad greens (which are most often cooked!)are flooding in daily from the kids various areas.

FIELD TRIP TO BATTAMBANG & THE THAI BORDER



ODA Yearly field trip allows the children to see some of their country, & places where many of their legends & cultural stories are based. This year we visited Battambang – a pretty French city & where the old Bamboo Railway still runs (if you are lucky!)



Because there was so many of us they agreed to take the children on the bamboo platforms with a motor on the rear, which takes you over the bumpy tracks at breakneck speed – overgrown bushes brush the sides & the kids loved the experience – its reported that the tracks will soon be taken over for a real railway line linking to Thailand.

Leng managed to get everyone a day pass to visit a market in Thailand – everyone was so very exited to be visiting another country! The children had saved up their painting money & bought watches, shoes, some clothes & food..They were all amazed at there not being one speck of rubbish on the ground anywhere, & after our participation in the World Clean Up Day are much more aware of this. Great for them to see their neighbouring country able to be spottless. They were worried about language but being on the border - Khmer language & currency were no problem – so a very exciting day for them all.



Little Sok Lek had been sick in hospital when we left so wasn't on the trip – poor little darling came home to find no one there & cried - thinking he had been abandoned again & this time without his brother & sister! Sry On's mother tried to make him understand they would all be back home again tomorrow. Next day when the bus pulled in & his sibblings got off – he cried again with happiness & ran around them in circles giggling happily but with tears running down his little 3 year old face! Poor little darling – many kids have had very sad backgrounds – no wonder they feel ODA is like Paradise!

UNIFORM DRIVE 2014

Tom Tom Akun (Thank You Big Big!!) from the subsistence farming families.



Awareness of the ODA Uniform Fund is building up among our supporters & this year we were able to distribute 659 sets (2 uniform sets, undies, sneakers, socks & a mosquito net big enough for 3-4 kids.

WHAT A WONDERFUL RESULT! – the Village & Commune Chiefs are so grateful to the wonderful people from so many countries who channel the funds thru ODA – which enables so many more children to stay at school for another year. Subsistence farming families have little or no actual money & if no uniform - their children can't attend school & simply start work at very young ages. It's reported from Africa that a uniform keeps girls at school longer & so they marry later which saves them dying from childbirth when their bodies are simply not ready. So this is a project that ODA is very committed to running every year for girls & boys & we thank everyone for their generous assistance to help these students gain some much needed education – even if it's not such a great standard – it's a step in the right direction for improved lives for them.

It's a big undertaking & we make it happen this end but without all your wonderful support with funds we would be unable to deliver to these keen students.

MR SINAT WINS PRESTIGIOUS PLACE IN USA SPONSORED EDUCATION WORKSHOP IN THAILAND



Mr Sinath works at another NGO full time & teaches English for 2 hours each night at ODA home base for the children & some local village students. He is an excellent teacher & recently applied for a training course in Chang Mai Thailand – all expenses paid by the American Embassy. He was one of only 8 teachers from Cambodia to win a place. All the children are very excited for him & we are so happy to have confirmed to us just how skilled a teacher he is! Good Luck Mr Sinath – have a wonderful course & hurry back to us at ODA!

ODA ENGLISH EXAMS



Students lined up outside the Wat Village Secondary school for exams.

In conjunction with the District Education Authority – ODA again held exams for 2 levels in December. So many students participated that we ran out of desks & classrooms at the Wat Village Secondary school. Next year we plan to hold separate exam times for the 2 levels to be able to manage the numbers. The resulting certificates will bear the ODA & District Education Logos –not many English classes are linked with the department so making this a valuable document for these students when applying for jobs –

UNIVERSITY & FURTHER EDUCATION STUDENTS.

Current enrollments under ODA support:

2015 ODA has 2 girls graduating from Nursing University & internship after 3 years study.

IT & Computer science - one in 3rd & another in 4th year

Bachelor of English degree students – 3 in their 4th year & 3 started this current year.

MBA – one in 3rd year

Tourism Degree – one in 4th year

Civil Engineering –one in his 3rd year & another started this year

Commercial Electrician diploma – one started this year

UNIVERSITY TRANSPORT SOLUTION



Transport to & from Uni is difficult with Village students living 40-50kms out of Siem Reap which results in a round trip of 90kms daily - so sponsors have provided funds for an ODA tuk tuk which students will drive themselves, picking each other up along the way.

Leng is very grateful to the wonderful sponsors who make all this possible. None of these students would have been able to attend without this wonderful generous help from Canada, Australia & a wonderful USA family who is sponsoring several students.

Leng & Sry On ask me to thank you all so very much for the part you have played in helping them to support education for so many needy children. You are all very kind, without your help, support & encouragement, it simply wouldn't happen & they are all very grateful.