

worldrenew.net/cambodia

Rick De Graaf
 Country Consultant
 rickdegraaf@worldrenew.net

Rachel Brink
 Program Advisor
 rbrink@worldrenew.net

Ho Vorleak (Vireak)
 Constituency Bridger
 vho@world-renew.net

World Renew Canada
 3475 Mainway
 PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
 Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
 1-800-730-3490
 Fax: 905-336-8344

World Renew US
 2850 Kalamazoo Ave SE
 Grand Rapids, MI 49560
 1-800-552-7972
 Fax: 616-224-8060

Election Year!



by **Rachel Brink**
 Program Advisor
 Cambodia Team

2013 is an election year in Cambodia. The vote is scheduled for July 28 and, with the big day looming closer and closer, things are getting interesting. Each day we hear news of various parties gaining or losing percentages in the polls, sometimes with opposing reports coming out on the same day. Infrastructure projects such as road paving, which seemed to have been put on the back burner, are suddenly moving forward full-steam-ahead as the various parties try to win the favor of their constituents. I recently joked to one of my coworkers that maybe every year should be an election year if this is the kind of progress we can expect.



Casting a vote

However, the election has a serious effect on our work as well. We have already been warned that we should not plan any community meetings for most of June or July because the local authorities that we normally try our best to cooperate with will be busy donning their political hats, and any activity we hold could be construed as for or against a particular party. The leadership of Cambodia, like that of any country, has a huge effect on how its citizens are treated and how its resources are

used. We hope and pray that the election will be free and fair and that, no matter who is elected, they will take their responsibility as the voice of the Cambodian peo-

ple seriously and will advocate for their best interests.

Thinking about the upcoming national election reminds me of another election that I participated in this past November. It was a time for the people to vote for those who would be

best equipped to lead them toward a brighter future. No, this election wasn't for the President of the United States (although I participated in that one too), it was for the Community-based Organization (CBO) in Veal Tbal village. World Renew's partner OREDA has been working in Veal Tbal since 2008. The last CBO election was three years ago, and the leaders elected at that time did a good job of serving their community in organizing development activities. However, the best sign of good community leadership is when leaders don't cling to control but are willing to let others take their turn serving. That is why 17 people were willing to put their names on the ballot in Veal Tbal. Oy Sopha, one of the older men in the village, said, "I hope a new generation will join the CBO to bring something new to the village. The former CBO members are getting older, and they should transfer their knowledge to the next generation."

One of the candidates, Oun Sok, spoke about her reasons for running. She said, "The former CBO leaders have inspired me with their work, and I want to get involved. They have helped a lot of families in the village and motivated people to build



Filling out the ballot

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latrines, use water filters, and form a cow bank and a savings group. I want to learn more about development and share my learning with others in my village.”

Another candidate, Hoy Lida, also wants to learn more about development and mobilizing resources to meet community needs. She said, “Savings groups are the key to bringing about community change.” Although Oun Sok and Hoy Lida were willing to serve their village as CBO members, both women also said they would not be sad if they were not elected because it was up to the villagers to elect those they thought would do the best job.

OREDA went to great lengths to ensure that the election was conducted in a transparent manner. The village was informed in advance and those who wanted to put their names on the ballot were able to do so. Then, on election day, the villagers came and registered family by family. Each family got one vote so large families would not be able to dominate. Family representatives gave their thumbprint to prove that they were there. Then their names were called out and the ballots were distributed one by one. Each family came forward and voted for seven people. If they were not able to read, there was someone there to

help them complete their ballot. Each candidate wore a tag their number and name so people could be sure who they were voting for. When they were finished, the voters put their ballots in a box that was being watched by the whole village. After all of the ballots were in, the votes were tallied in front of everyone to ensure transparency.

When the votes were counted, the new CBO members were asked to come forward and say a few words. Two of the seven were members of the previous CBO, so while there will be change in Veal Tbal, there will also be some continuity. The community seemed satisfied with the results and glad to have participated. Oy Sopha summed it up well when he said, “I think it is important that people participate in the CBO election process. It is important that they are able to elect those they can rely on.”

The new CBO members



Transitions



by Rick DeGraaf
Country Consultant
Cambodia Team

As many of you know from our previous newsletters, Edith and I are leaving Cambodia this September. This is confirmed as Ms. Kathleen Lauder has been appointed as my successor, and she is now here in Cambodia as we work together to transfer responsibility and help her settle in. We thank the Lord for calling her to Cambodia to be the coach/leader to a wonderful team of national and international coworkers.

In many ways, Edith and I feel we are leaving a family of colleagues in ministry that we have come to love. I'll miss travelling with them, debating with them, co-facilitating training, and welcoming participants to our workshops. I'll miss our 'deep' times when we were spiritually engaged in prayer and digging in God's word together. Edith and I really believe the time is right for us to return to our own family and coworkers in Canada - even though we do not know what God is calling for us to do next. But we know and trust that the Lord is leading as we prepare to leave Cambodia.

Rachel Brink, our coworker in Cambodia, is also leaving at this time. Rachel provided advisor support to our national program team, including Program Team Leader Rev. Sar Paulerk and Program Manager Neth Sovann. We have experienced much progress in the competency of our staff to the point where we felt it was possible now to make this change. When Rachel wraps up in August, she we will have assisted the team in completing all the reporting submissions for the year to our funding partners.

Though it means changes in our and Rachel's lives, we are prepared to step aside so that Kathleen and the national team can regroup and grow together. In the meantime, we are committed to work with the Asia Team Leader to provide ongoing support beyond the face-to-face transition.

It has been a blessing for us to have your support over the years, and it has been a blessing for us to be used by God to be a blessing. I know that goes for all of us. Our colleagues—whether at East-West School where Edith taught this past year, or our Cambodian colleagues at World Renew in Cambodia—have been generous in their positive feedback. It is our hope that we will stay in touch, remembering that God is using us wherever He may take us! To Him be the glory!

Prayer items

Thanksgiving:

- Kathleen's safe arrival.
- Continued focus and many things to still do (No "lame duck" time!).
- The monsoons are here and many hectares of land are being planted with rice.

Supplication:

- Campaign efforts in the national elections here are becoming messy, peppered with insults and innuendo. Pray that it will not escalate into tragedy.
- For the leadership of Cambodia and for a free and fair election process.
- For the leadership of World Renew in Cambodia as we prepare for the departure of Rick & Edith and Rachel and for the installation of Kathleen in the coming months. Pray that this will go smoothly and that all will be able to adapt to the changes in the next three months.
- For our team as we continue to make plans for the next phase of our work with some of our partners.
- For a nephew of Rick and Edith's who is having surgery to remove a kidney that has a cancerous tumor.
- For a safe and restful visit for Rachel with her friends and family in the US from late June to early July

Norwegian Youth from a Suburban Church



by Vireak Ho
Constituency Bridger
Cambodia Team

February 18 to February 25, 2013

The purpose of this visit was to see the work that they support and to be inspired for future involvement, to understand about Christian development work, and to experience another culture.

On the first day of their arrival, Rick De Graaf introduced our work, partnerships, our desire to be “Jesus’ hands and feet,” as well as how their contribution fits into the big picture of World Renew’s ministry through their support of a well project. Paulerk, our program team leader, shared about the Church in Cambodia from Khmer rouge and the underground church as it is today.

This Norwegian youth group is independent and some of the group’s members have not travelled outside Scandinavia before.

They had a lot of new experiences during their visit with us. They are the youngest group to have visited the work in Cambodia so far. They wanted to contribute

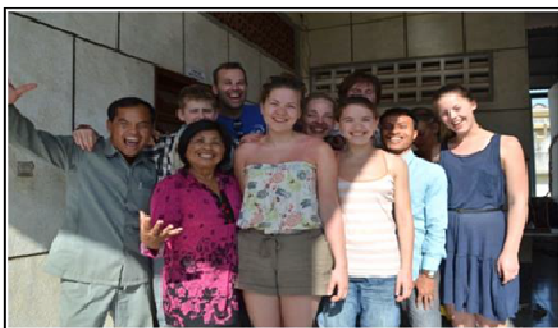
with singing and worship in New Life Church in the afternoons. The Suburban Church focuses on music in their services. The group consisted of five youth and two adult group leaders.

On the second day of the trip, February 19, we took a field trip to World Renew’s partner OREDA in Compote Province. We were traveling with two other colleagues, World Renew staff people, and Knut, to visit a Kindergarten and Angtul secondary school. Next we traveled to New Life Church (NLC) one of our partners in Takeo. We took another field trip with them the next day. We divided

into two groups, and I went with one group to visit a community rice bank.

The Norwegian youth asked lots of questions related to how the rice bank process works in the community. They were concerned about what people do when they are short of food during the last three or four months before harvest as they were told that rice yields are not enough for the whole year.

It is important for them to understand how our people live, especially the lives of our farmers in Cambodia. The youth learned how different people can survive and how they work together to make a living with self-reliance and our support. It’s about God’s love for his people. We love the poor because it is God’s command for all of us to serve the poor and care about them. Also, we visited a farmers’ vegetable garden where they asked several questions related to the vegetables and when they should be harvested.



One of the youth took a few pictures of a pig when we visited our pig bank at a farmer’s house. They were so excited to see and hear some of our projects

that work well in the community. We heard about one village which was totally dry and people found it hard to find water sources and clean water to drink. One man we interviewed told our group that he had to dig a well almost 20 meters deep to get water, but that he cannot drink the water from the well because it has arsenic in it from the ground, which is not healthy to drink. We were told that in their community there was a big pond where the villagers keep water during the rainy season. Once dry season comes, they use water from the pond. We were still a little concerned for their health. They definitely need to boil or filter the water



before they can drink it. A man showed us his water filter and told us that people in this community are aware of sanitation and hygiene since they learned through the health education program.

They also learned that God is good, and they found that people need to experience his love. “Sometimes we don’t understand the love of God and how deep his love for us is. We can just dig and dig and then one day we find water as we dig the well [of God’s love]” said Mr. Stolla, a youth leader.

In the afternoon, the group visited a family in another village. We made a “ball cake” or “little fish cake” (Num Kon Trey in the villager’s dialect). We made it together. Three of the youth asked to help make the cake and one asked the lady to show them how to make ball cake. I think it was fun for them. This Norwegian youth group was nice and friendly. They also noticed that Cambodians are friendly, nice and beautiful. God has put me in a position that I’ve never thought that I could step into, in a new environment working with such nice people who are his beautiful and awesome creatures even if we didn’t speak the same language and come from different cultures. We have hearts of love, care and support for each other. We can say that we are God’s people, and we are equal in his eyes no matter what our background and nationality. GOD LOVES US ALL SO THAT WE CAN LOVE OTHER PEOPLE JUST LIKE WE LOVE OURSELVES.

Living, Learning, Loving



by Vireak Ho
Constituency Bridger
Cambodia Team

On the 21st of November 2012 I took my first trip to the field with World Renew to host Mr. Gordon and Mrs. Pauline McKechnie from Tear Fund UK during their trip to KPC (Kampong Phnum Church), one of our partners in Kandal. I found that it was exciting for me to get to know this couple on my first day as the Bridger for World Renew Cambodia. Rick DeGraaf, World Renew's Cambodia Country Consultant, drove us to KPC, and we had a great talk with Pastor Soy Thoun, Mrs. Mom Trop, his wife, and several other people. I translated for Mr. and Mrs. Goroom. We had a delicious rural Khmer lunch prepared by the pastor's family, and we ate barbecued frog that was raised by the family, with other Khmer dishes in the Cambodian style.

Arrival of Stacey Brandsma

After one month with World Renew, I was informed during a staff meeting about the upcoming arrival of a volunteer. Stacey would arrive in Phnom Penh on January 5, 2013. Stacey was warmly welcomed by our staff, had a brief orientation the following day, and took some initial language training. I understood that she would encounter some homesickness during her first few days in Cambodia.

The following days of her fourteen weeks in Cambodia, we had a wonderful volunteer to help us with many different tasks. Stacey was involved in conducting a livelihoods survey, which I gave her some help with. Stacey and I visited OREDA in Chhouk, Kompot Prov-



ince, where we met with Sopheak, the CNCBN coordinator, to visit our new experimental crop planting project. Stacey wanted to help the farmers plant the beans out in the sun with us. I am proud to say that she worked hard, just like a real model farmer in this community. Stacey loves agriculture and adapted well to our Asian culture, as well as enjoying our food. I taught her how to eat coconut by using a spoon to get the meat after drinking the juice. Once again, I had a great time with Stacey in the villages, interviewing people from one village to another by walking across dry rice fields in the hot weather—sunny, windy, and raining for her Cambodian economic studies.

Debriefing with Stacey

On her last day, April 12, 2013, Stacey met with Rick, our Country Consultant. They debriefed her visit and discussed all that she observed, lived, learned, and loved about Cambodia.

Giving Idea



Transforming Communities through Leadership. World Renew provides training to leaders in rural villages to help communities identify their needs, plan responses, and mobilize resources (inside and outside of the community) to carry out the plans. \$42

Global Volunteer Program

You too can volunteer in Cambodia!

There is a need for an English Language Facilitator to facilitate individual and group English language learning for partner staff, building on their existing knowledge, so they gain more confidence.

And as always, discovery tours and learning groups from supporting churches are always welcome, or there may be something that can be crafted to suit your skill set. Find out more at worldrenew.net/globalvolunteerprogram.