



## SEPTEMBER UPDATE

June to August was a busy period at Mekhala House with many Directors visiting and the arrival of Khim, our volunteer from Australia. Khim is staying for a period of four months and will be working closely with the staff and children. Also, since August and September are school holidays, we have taken the opportunity to engage two local volunteers to teach the children English. They have enthusiastically embraced the lessons and are more confident in practicing with the visiting Australians. We are looking forward to conversations that progress beyond "Hello, how are you?" On the subject of education, the children received their end of school year results. We are very pleased to report that three children were graded "perfect" and seven "very good"! Finally, FDCC Directors Melani and Carlee joined the children and staff in a trip to the beach at Sihanoukville - we will provide all the entertainment from this trip in our next newsletter.

## A trip to the Dentist...

*Carlee and Simon (directors of Australian FDCC board) accompanied 32 children to the local dentist during their recent trip to Prey Veng. Rady Sok, our local CEO at Mekhala House, negotiated with the town dental clinic and eventually agreed on a fee of USD 3.75 per child for a check-up & clean. Who would have thought that the tradition of 'haggling' could extend to services such as basic health care!*

Over the next four days, groups of children leapt eagerly into our donated Mitsubishi Pajero for the trip into the town centre (thanks again to donor 'Brambles'). We were astounded to see FDCC 'house mother' Sinath receiving hordes of volunteers - the excited children were all pleading to be in the next car-load! What a contrast to the trepidation with which dentist visits are usually received!

Carlee and Sinath accompanied the children to the dentist. We

are pleased to report a clean dental clinic with all the usual instruments and procedures keenly observed. The dentist was highly professional with a wonderful chair-side manner, treating each child with detailed care. All in all, the dentists trip was a big success and one that we will endeavor to repeat on an annual basis. In accordance with FDCC objectives, good health is of fundamental importance. In addition to the physiological benefits, we believe it to be important for attributing dignity and fostering positive self esteem in our children.

## School Shelter completed

FDCC was approached earlier this year to build a shelter at the school our children attend. We subsequently put out a call for help to raise the money we needed to build the shelter. We were lucky enough to raise exactly the \$1000 required and the shelter (as shown below) was officially opened in June 2007.

The formal ceremony was attended by the regional head of the school district, the principal, the head teachers and the chair of the parents association. A plaque was mounted on the shelter as a public acknowledgement to the donors. Thanks again to everyone who contributed to the shelter and assisted FDCC in supporting the local community.



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FDCC Director
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## At the market in Prey Veng

*Carlee and Simon Baxter, directors on the Australian FDCC board, recently spent 10 days at Mekhala house in Prey Veng. During their visit, they took a daytrip to the market to buy some much-needed supplies for the children. Simon wrote about their market experience.*

The Prey Veng market is held beneath a wide iron V-roof and girders. The packed dirt and muddy uneven paths are lined with tables where an array of goods are displayed. Everything from fresh produce, meat, fish, fabrics, household and grocery items are available here. The meat section nearly overwhelmed our 'western' sensibilities as we entered the labyrinth of stalls, but thankfully our Khmer speaking colleagues knew their way around. House Mother *Sinath*, volunteer *Sopanha*, and translator *Mei* had accompanied Carlee and I on our excursion. Once we had overcome the shock to our senses, we continued in search of our supplies.

Carlee and I were warmly greeted by the stallholders - stools and fans promptly appeared each time we stopped. Bargaining is a critical part of daily trade in Prey Veng, so once again we were thankful for the assistance of our Khmer speaking colleagues. We looked on with interest as our skilful aides bargained through our list of requirements: school uniforms and exercise books, hats, blankets, mattress protectors, shampoo, soap, toothbrushes and mosquito nets. Following 20-30 minutes of animated 'haggling' at each stall, our purchases were receipted on a detailed Khmer-written bill and we gladly paid cash for our goods.



The following day at Mekhala House, the children were each presented with the items they had needed. Even the most basic goods (such as health products) were received with a great deal of excitement, appreciative eyes and huge smiles. Witnessing such wonderful outcomes first hand, Carlee and I feel grateful for the experience. It is truly heart warming to see that even the simplest things can make a big difference to the lives of these children



### Meet our Staff – Phlong Sinath

Phlong Sinath is the house mother at Mekhala. She enjoys her work because she loves the children and believes they are important in the future of Cambodia. Sinath was born in Prey Veng on 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 1974. She likes to read in her spare time as well as listening to music, watching the news and gardening. Sinath holds a diploma of secondary physiotherapy and has worked as a physiotherapist manager at Veteran's International. She lives with her husband and has completed training courses in medical care, cerebral palsy management and pain management in physically disabled persons.

### FDCC fundraising in UK

The Cabaret Carnival, in association with Lonely Planet UK, held a fundraising event on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> August. £514.87 was raised in support of Mekhala House.

The host of the evening, Alchemist Aaron, introduced the event with an overview of FDCC and Di's contributions as founder. This was followed by entertaining cabaret performances, a raffle of Lonely Planet books, some old 1940s tunes and plenty of dancing – a lot of fun was had by all! A big thanks to all performers, contributors, friends, audience members and supporters on the night.

**All donations can be forwarded to:**

The Foundation for Developing Cambodian Communities Trust, ANZ Banking  
Group: BSB 013 423 Account No: 4961-05454