



## HFH CAMBODIA AND NETHERLANDS STIHO RELAY BUILD IN SIEM REAP

**The 17th June marked the end of HFH Cambodia's first relay build, which was held in Siem Reap, in partnership with Habitat Netherlands and the Dutch DIY and building company De Stihogroep.**

The 4 week relay build in total saw 206 Dutch volunteers working across 4 sites to build 20 houses and 24 toilets, in partnership with 44 vulnerable families in Siem Reap, Cambodia's third poorest province; where multiple-indices of poverty stand at 51 percent. In addition the volunteers took part in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) events in local primary schools.

The build made a concrete difference to 44 families and provided them with a base to build their life. Bells Regino-Borja (Head of Development and Engagement Department) at the final dedication ceremony of the build thanked the Dutch volunteers on behalf of HFH Cambodia for coming to the Kingdom and "building where they are needed." Over the 4 weeks Habitat Cambodia was also joined by staff from our sister Dutch organization. Karen, a staff fundraiser from Habitat Netherlands, was one of the team leads on site. For her the strength of the partnership is about giving something of yourself to the build;

"when you give something to someone else you will be happy."

Bart Dekker (Stiho Group Director) who has been on many builds with Habitat, commented on the superb organization by HFHC and what a great way it was to build teams, with colleagues who normally do not work together working side by side on the build. Summing up the week he declared that for some people "it will be life changing and an experience that touches you personally. You are part of the family for a few days and the joy you experience is good for you, good for the people and good for the team." Addressing the home partners he declared his hope that the new homes would mean "a new start, a prosperous life and better health" and offered "hope for the future."

This is a sentiment shared by Li Hin (71, skilled worker) who, along with his wife talked animatedly about the build process, to a Habitat team, visiting to quality check the build. Hin lives in his house with 8 family members, his wife, son, daughter in law and 4 children. He described how the volunteers ate during their breaks together with him and how, despite a lack of common language, they shared stories and told jokes using body language. The only challenge was to get the volunteers to take a break, as the famous Dutch work-ethic drove them to work through rain and blistering heat. For Li Hin the week

has been inspiring and he stated that, it has driven him on to keep the new house in perfect condition. In the future he said "I dream that Habitat can support other villages, just like mine."

Further reflecting on the week Mahno (21 Student) and Clemens (70, Architect) explained how proud they were to work on the site and work in a team making other people happy. Thinking about the future of the home partners, Mahno could see great things "Give them a good home and the rest will follow."

Working with people they would never have otherwise met and across a potential cultural divide was highlight for many of the volunteers on site as well. Alexandra 27 a Material Architecture Advisor commented on how welcoming and friendly the home partners were. Their enthusiasm made her want to give "100% and not give up until the task was completed." Peter, a Stihogroep supplier (55, CEO) agreed that and added that it was working together with colleagues and the families that made the week special. Stihogroep volunteer Bertjan felt the week was the start of something big "a chain reaction" one which, "if everyone took part, would make a better world."

# SPOTLIGHT ON PARTNERS

## HFH AUSTRALIA

**HFH Cambodia can only do its work thanks to support from partner Habitat for Humanity chapters across the globe. This month we would like to highlight and thank HFH Australia for their ongoing support.**

As well a domestic programme, supporting low income families, internationally HFH Australia works in partnership with communities across the Asia-Pacific region to address housing poverty and to support integrated community development. HFH Australia and its partners are currently working in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Vanuatu and Vietnam.

Sophie Cooke; Regional Program Manager at HFH Australia said: "Habitat of Humanity Australia is excited to be able to support the work of our Cambodian colleagues and their local partners. Together our projects reach some of the most vulnerable people and communities in Cambodia with housing, land, increased disaster resilience, and water and sanitation. It is our hope that with increased support of our donors and others HFH Cambodia can make an even greater impact on eradicating poverty housing."

HFH Australia both funds directly and leverages funding from agencies such as the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade. In Cambodia our sister organization currently supports two programmes aimed at ending poverty housing.

### **Building Homes Building Positive Lives**

The building homes building positive lives programme, supported by Habitat for Humanity Australia, aims to provide secure land and disaster resilient housing to 120 families affected by HIV/AIDs or to orphans and vulnerable children. The



programme takes a holistic approach providing medical support through partner NGOs. In addition it aims to increase to adequate water and sanitation for the families and provides livelihood training to increases life opportunities. The programmes also actively advocates for awareness amongst government and non-government stakeholders on enhancing care for those affected by HIV/AIDs, through housing solutions

### **Case Study**

Support from HFH Australia through the BHBPL project has enabled HFH Cambodia to support families such as Yun Sim a 36 year old widow in Kandal Province. Yun Sim lives with her 1 year old daughter and older sister Yun Kim. Until recently the family did not have a home of their own, and lived, for the past 9 years, with Yum Sim's mother in a small wooden house.

Sim's mother gave her small plot of land next to the house. Here Sim and her husband hoped that one day they could build a house of their own. But this dream fell apart in 2012 when her husband died from AIDS related illness. Sim decided to get her blood tested too and found that she is also infected.

With her husband gone Sim became the family's main breadwinner. Understandably this is very hard for her. Commenting on her living situation Sim said: "Since I am not able to spend more than 15\$ on rent I lived in a poor quality house in bad conditions. In the rainy season, the water brings sewage into the house that affects my health a lot. And I get sick often."

Sim has had hard time for many years since she became widowed especially when she found that she has been infected by HIV. However, she never gives up. She works hard every day to support her family and has confidence that her daughter (Sreynit) can have a better future when she grows up. She said "Sreynit is my hope."

And things have begun to change for Sim. Working in collaboration HFH Cambodia and ARV Users Association (AUA) has now provided grant support for a new home for Sim. Sim will have a place that she can call home. As Sim says: "Home is hope and brings a brighter future."

Almost 3 months since moving into her new brick house supported by the project,



Sim and her family are happy and in good health. They enjoy their life and are pleased by the sense of community in their new home.

Sims rental costs are now greatly reduced and electricity and water costs have also been reduced. Sim now earns around \$180 a month and is now able to support her family without worrying anymore. Her daughter is going to study in kindergarten school to prepare for that bright future. Sim's family now have a chance to move on step by step. "Thank you deeply Habitat Cambodia that have provided me a home. Without Habitat, I wouldn't have today."

### **Strengthening Civil Society- Government Engagement for Land Tenure Security**

Access to secure land tenure is a daily problem in Cambodia, with illegal development and mass eviction commonplace. Often this is driven by a lack of accountability on the part of the government. Government land concession grants have often lacked transparency, threatened environmental and economic interests, and compromised the rights of poor landholders and local communities. (Source: Respect for Housing Land and Property Rights in Cambodia, November 2008).

The strengthening civil society-government engagement for land tenure security programme aims to address the issue if non-secure land tenure through engagement with stakeholders, at a non-state and sub-national levels, to advocate for and ensure secure land tenure. The project is focused on Battambang province. To do this the project uses a range of interventions including: i) awareness raising and land rights advocacy, ii) support for tenure security iii) strengthen partnerships in Social Land Concession, and iv) provision of housing.





## CASE STUDY: ARN SOKHAI

**Family History:** Arn Sokhai in common with many poorer Cambodians did not have the right to land in which she lived for twenty years. Instead she was forced to occupy unsecure land along the unused Battambang railway and canal system. Living in such a precarious situation was difficult. Sokhai could get some income from working as a labourer in Battambang and collecting cassava by the Thai border. She could earn around \$3 a day, just enough to support her sons to go to primary school and pay for water and electricity at her small settlement.

This story of unsecured land rights is a familiar one amongst Cambodian's rural poor, but, for Arn Sokhai, at least, things began to change in 2012. It was then that she was selected to be granted a small land concession by the municipality of Battambang, through a social land concession project supported by HFH Cambodia. The plot was to be 4.5m x 8m and was one of 82 plots at O-Kchheay Village. In 2015 the plot itself was finally secured with land plots selected by ballot in conjunction with the local municipality. Along with the land Sokhai received a housing kit and a toilet. HFH Cambodia pledged to support Sokhai in building her new home, including clearing land and ensuring the installation of proper drainage.

With land rights secured the next step for Sokhai was to secure funds to build a new home. HFH Cambodia helped

Sokhai with a 75 percent subsidy meaning she was eligible for a housing loan of \$600 from micro finance initiative Kredit MFI and so finally Sokhai and her family had a chance to get a home of their own.

Through the hard work Sokhai's dream of a secure home for her and her family has been achieved. Sokhai herself is proud to be the first of many in her community to have a house made from eco-friendly compressed earth bricks (CEB). Each day volunteer manager Pauline would ask Sokhai what do you think?" The answer would come with the biggest smile "sa art, sa art", "beautiful, beautiful."





# GLOBAL VILLAGE UPDATES

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22 – 30 MAY 16

## LOCATION OF BUILD: KOK VEAL VILLAGE, ROERL COMMUNE, POUK DISTRICT, SIEM REAP

A nine strong Canadian team took part in a global village build in Kok Veal village, Siem Reap to complete the renovation of one wooden house and two toilets. The house was dedicated through dance and celebration on the 30th May.



23 APRIL 16 – 01 MAY 16

## LOCATION OF BUILD: BATTAMBANG PROVINCE

Eighteen Canadian volunteers came to Battambang province to work with home partners on the building of two homes alongside local home partners. The team dug foundations and erected columns along with reinforcing steel bars. The homes will be completed using eco-friendly compressed earth bricks made by the volunteers over the week. After a visit to the local tourist attraction the Bamboo train, the team celebrated the week with dance Khmer games alongside skilled workers and home partners.



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## HFHC TEAMS UP WITH EWB TO PILOT BIO-DIGESTER PROGRAMME

HFH Cambodia have teamed up with Engineers Without Borders Australia (EWB) to pilot innovative, environmentally friendly technology, aimed at reducing the cost of power and improving health in Siem Reap province.

The programme has installed bio digester units in four houses in the province, in the homes of Habitat for Humanity home partners. The scheme has the dual benefit of reducing the costs of power supplies (Cambodia has one of the highest per unit cost of on grid powered in the world) as well as reducing the health risks of indoor cooking charcoal fires. The units are powered with dung from cows, pigs or buffaloes, which are mixed with water and digested anaerobically, to produce biogas. This is then used for cooking and the waste used as fertilizer for crops.

Mr Lay Mao (pictured) is one of the beneficiaries of the pilot. A farmer, he lives with his wife and two children. He earns around US\$4 on top of his subsistence farm as a local animal carer. Before receiving the bio-digester, the family would cook using wood, collected from the surrounding bush and cook on open fires. This method of cooking would take a long time and was bad for the families health, with smoke stinging their eyes and causing respiratory problems.

Now, Lay Mao, explained to a visiting HFH Cambodia team, the process is easy; "We collect manure from our animals and mix with water. Then we pour this into the bio-digester. Once this is done, I am able to proceed to my regular work, using the bio-digester is faster and easier. We are able to cook our meal of just an hour or less and we are able to save on the fertilizer that we use for our vegetable garden." Using the waste from the bio-digester on the family vegetable patch also increases productivity and excess food can be sold to neighbours, increasing the families income.



The digester itself is scheduled to last for 15 years and the family receives regular follow up support from EWB. With its two stove-tops in operation Chanthy, Lay Mao's wife, says "The bio-digester is easy to maintain and she is able to cook more easily now. I now only use wood when we want to grill". Lay Mao thinks the bio-digesters are a great idea and has told his neighbours about the family's experience and the positive results, so they can also reap the benefits of having one.

If the pilot is successful HFH Cambodia hope to expand the project across other poor families in the region.

## PROMOTING MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Following initial pilot testing HFH Cambodia has now partnered with three micro finance institutions here in the kingdom; LOLC Microfinance, First Finance Plc and Hatha Kasekar Limited. HFHC has provided training to all three organizations and along with \$2.5 million loan programme support recipients with our construction technical assistance programme. This programme provides technical support to loan recipients including:

- Design 2D&3D
- Budget estimate/Bills of Quantities (BoQ)
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Material & labor consultation

The development of a robust Housing



Finance sector is a crucial part of future programmes at HFH Cambodia. There are 39 officially recognised Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) in Cambodia serving 2 million clients (as of September 2014) and they have strong urban and rural branch networks and regularly provide access to credit and savings vehicles for low and middle income households. Some low income households are able to secure MFI credit, however penetration rates among very poor and very rural households remains low. Instead these families turn to other private or informal lenders at significantly higher rates.

NGOs have been the main source of housing

support (i.e. loans subsidized lower than market rates) for the poor, low-income households and vulnerable groups in Cambodia and evidence shows their impacts as positive but limited in scale. By partnering with MFIs and seeking to actively develop a well regulated and efficient housing credit market in Cambodia, HFH Cambodia are ensuring that these vulnerable groups have access to the types of housing support many in the developed world take for granted.

The market development programme is always looking for new ways to improve the housing market. For instance HFH Cambodia are currently working with LOLC microfinance to extend the housing loan scheme to include WASH loans for toilets and bathrooms. Supporting HFH Cambodia's wider goals of ensuring adequate sanitation in Cambodia. In addition we are working with a group of consultants to improve marketing design and communication materials. In doing so we can support the development of a modern housing market and promote pro-poor housing policy across the country.

## BATTAMBANG PREPARES THE GROUND

Land preparation, decent roads and drainage are often forgotten parts of providing decent housing to vulnerable families. The provision of all three is a major challenge in the continued development of Cambodia. However, at HFH Cambodia we know that they are essential to the provision of the long term health and prospects of home partners.

This month at HFH Cambodia Battambang's office ongoing housing programme on 82 land plots in Okcheay Village, 5,406 m<sup>3</sup> of soil was used to prepare the ground and make the roads good across the whole site. In addition the team, in partnership with local contractors, installed 372 m of large drainage pipes. Ensuring future good drainage and the consequent health benefits for the future residents.

Building the drainage is part of the social land concession project carried out by HFH Cambodia in partnership with the Battambang provincial and municipal governments with support from HFH Australia, Clifford Chance and HFH Canada.



# THANK YOU FOR BUILDING HOMES, COMMUNITIES & HOPE

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- First Finance Plc.
- Hattha Kaksekar Limited
- Kredit Microfinance Institution
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