

# PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN CAMBODIA

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## CREATING GLOBAL CITIZENS THROUGH STRUCTURED UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Jo Ann Burkhardt

The McMaster School for Advancing Humanity Scholars and Fellows Program, a signature program at Defiance College, has as one of its goals to create global citizens through academic research and study. An approach to meeting this goal has been the implementation of undergraduate research within the constructs of learning communities.

Within these learning communities, faculty and students partner to engage in research in an environment that Merkel (2003) defines as the culture of undergraduate research. She states that this environment often emerges as a result of the mission and characteristics or constructs of the institution. In a discussion of the elements of a culture of undergraduate research, Merkel includes these: buy-in and participation by administration, faculty, and students; inclusion of undergraduate research in the mission and strategic plan; and presence of undergraduate research in the vision for the institution. These elements describe the culture of undergraduate research within Defiance College and the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity.

Within this culture of undergraduate research, undergraduate students learn by doing while partnered with faculty mentors in specific disciplines. Students begin to learn the professional language of the discipline, explore primary literature, devise and articulate cogent research questions, develop and implement a research plan, analyze data, and develop sound conclusions (Elgren and Hensel 2006). In addition, students working in undergraduate learning communities within the McMaster School are trained in and have the opportunity to engage in professional reflection, learn to write for a professional journal, and have the opportunity to present and disseminate new knowledge within a symposium structure.

Undergraduate research is an integral component of the McMaster School. It is generally conceptualized as an experience that includes original research while working with a faculty member (Lopatto 2006) in either a domestic or international environment. Undergraduate research in this setting is usually defined broadly and may include, as defined by Kinkead (2003), scientific inquiry, creative activity, and applied scholarship. The research is often community based and is a type of applied research that provides a benefit to the community and an opportunity for the undergraduate researcher to apply a specific discipline's content knowledge. An undergraduate research project in the McMaster School might result in a analysis of soil of watermelon fields (Guatemala 2004), a published primer for early readers (Guatemala 2004), a portfolio of pencil drawings depicting human suffering (Cambodia 2005), lesson plans for under-trained teachers (Cambodia 2006), or construction of soccer fields (Cambodia 2006).

The undergraduate model designed and utilized at Defiance College within the McMaster School is, as Elgren and Hensel would describe it, an "engaged pedagogy" (2006, 4). Nagda, Gurin, and Lopez define constructs

of engaged learning as “applying concepts and ideas from the classroom to out-of-class cognition and action” (2003, 165).

Undergraduates using this particular model follow the basic four-step inquiry-based approach. The students pose a question or formulate a hypothesis, develop a research plan that includes a review of the professional literature, implement the plan and carry out an actual project, and reflect and share discoveries and results with peers and faculty. The inquiry-based approach is also informed by Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (1984). Using Kolb’s approach, undergraduate researchers ask a question or questions based on concrete experiences, gather data, implement a solution, and then reflect on the results. The process often results in a return to the “asking” stage to begin the cycle once again. Throughout the process undergraduate students are mentored by and collaborate with faculty to determine appropriate action and evaluate project results.

According to the professional literature, (Elgren and Hensel 2006; Rodrick and Dickmeyer 2002; Perlman and McCann 2005), this process promises benefits for students that include increased academic achievement, acquisition of communication and presentation skills, development of analytical thinking, and an increased understanding of the importance of collaborative practices in today’s world. In addition, Lopatto (2006) has determined undergraduate research benefits to students to include gains in hypothesis formation, data collection, information literacy, professional advancement, and the development of relationships with mentors and other professionals.

Undergraduate researchers within the McMaster school have engaged in the inquiry process to begin the journey of becoming global citizens. Their work and practice have been informed by the professional literature, the observation of professional practice modeled by their mentors, and the opportunity to engage in meaningful, purposeful work in order to advance humanity.

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## TRAINING CAMBODIA'S TEACHERS

Jennifer Slow

I chose to apply to be a McMaster scholar in Cambodia because of the country's great need in education. During the Khmer Rouge regime, teachers living in Cambodia were a target of genocide. As a result, an entire generation of Cambodians went uneducated and grew up illiterate. While education in Cambodia is experiencing a renaissance, a great amount of help and support is needed.

The purpose of my project was to assist Professor Jo Ann Burkhardt in her work with the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund in Phnom Penh, developing and implementing a teacher-training model for individuals with limited backgrounds. Through the McMaster-sponsored scholarship, I was able to do my part to improve human conditions in Cambodia by helping to train teachers to be more effective.

Through my research, I learned that while education was largely restricted to royalty many years ago, "Cambodia's educational infrastructure was, by the end of the 1960s, the envy of many of its counterparts in the developing world" (Ayres 1999, 206). This is definitely not the case now as many teachers remain untrained and few children receive a full basic education. In "Education, Teacher Training and Prospects for Economic Recovery in Cambodia," Stephen Duggan stresses the importance of "teacher training and in particular in-service training" in Cambodia because "unqualified teachers constitute some 85% of the active teaching force," including some with no training at all (Duggan 1996, 362).

My work, in collaboration with other education students, focused on improving teacher training. By developing a teacher's resource booklet, we aimed to help Cambodian teachers learn more about educational theory and different teaching strategies. We included articles about teaching strategies and various lessons utilizing direct instruction.

Burkhardt and I worked directly in one of the official government schools. Our first day there we were greeted with a joyous welcome ceremony in which we were introduced to the faculty of that particular school and others. But when a government official who saw no problems with current teaching practices arrived, the atmosphere quickly grew somber. Fortunately, with the help of our interpreter Sophal Leng Stagg, we were able to win him over and were allowed to do the training.

While we had planned on having six to ten teachers in attendance at each session, we were surprised to discover that we would be training a total of sixty-four teachers in each of the two sessions. Despite the complications of having to copy more booklets and being unable to use the manipulatives that we had brought, the sessions were a success. Even the manipulatives found welcome homes with individual teachers.

While in Cambodia, my eyes were opened to the challenges and complexities in education for teachers and students alike. Talking with teachers, I discovered their greatest obstacle was getting the students, many of whom have responsibilities at home, to attend school or, if they did attend, to find time to do their homework. Teachers tried to solve this problem by selling the day's lesson to a student for a small fee, but this was often hard for the student since food—not school—is the number one family priority. I saw many young children selling things on the streets to make extra money so they could attend school. The desire is there; however, the resources are not.

In addition, teachers in Cambodia are extremely underpaid, making a mere \$30 a month and often going unpaid by the government. Many struggle to live on what the students pay them to attend school, but if a teacher knows a particular student cannot pay all the time, that teacher will not collect from the student, cutting back even more on his or her income. From the teachers I worked with, I saw a passion for their students to learn, a universal concern among teachers. They told me their goal is for each student to know what the other students know before going on to another grade, and they do not pass students on to the next level if they do not understand.

Having been to Cambodia and seen firsthand the environment and the resources that are available, I now have a deeper understanding of their educational system. Beyond simple understanding, I was deeply moved and felt a strong desire to be part of the process in improving their system. Therefore, after returning home I applied and was given a job teaching fourth grade in Cambodia next year. I will be teaching at a Christian school that is linked with an orphanage. The school serves children of missionaries and local preachers and gives out forty-five scholarships a year to children from the orphanage. I am extremely grateful to the McMaster School and the scholarship I received to travel to Cambodia. Without it I would never have had the experience I did.

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## SOCCKER FIELDS FOR CAMBODIAN SCHOOLS

Mathew Hahn

Throughout my first three years here, I have sought to live out the ideals of Defiance College and to seek not only an education but a worldwide service experience. This overall desire to serve the world community brought me to the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity.

As a McMaster scholar in 2004–2005, I traveled to Cambodia for the first time and witnessed children hungry for sports yet lacking in basic resources. While at the schools, I watched children play soccer with a ball made of reeds and play a game like dodge ball in which they threw a badminton shuttlecock. Outside of school, the youth simply played in the streets with whatever they could find.

Then over the summer I went to Kenya on a mission trip and helped build a soccer field for a children’s home. This experience impressed on me the benefits of building sports equipment around the world and the joy that athletics can bring to children. In Kenya, I simply fell in love with bringing enjoyment and comfort to children through sports and wanted to do the same for Cambodian children.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

To guide my work, I focused on the following research questions:

- ◆ Are both athletics and academics important?
- ◆ What is the best way to explain soccer field planting and the rules of soccer?
- ◆ What are the implications making soccer a part of the international community in schools?
- ◆ What is currently being done to make other sports a part of Cambodian culture?

In response to the question of athletics and academics, Dawn Podulka Coe speaks to the interrelated nature of the two, moving individuals to work harder in both areas. Their research found a “significant association . . . between vigorous activity and academic achievement” (2006, 1518). According to Kathleen Vail, sport has overwhelmingly positive implications for academic achievement. Vail reports the findings of numerous studies that link learning and athletics and argues that “exercise and fitness might actually affect brain function” (2006, 15).

It could be said that soccer will be and has been easily transferable to Cambodia as, according to the Fédération Khmère de Football Association, international soccer competitions in Cambodia first began in the year 1953. Since then, however, there has been an unsteady progression toward soccer in the country, something that could be changed by further introduction of the sport into schools.

On a broader scale, several organizations are seeking to introduce sports into Cambodia. According to International Olympic Committee (IOC) in "Bringing Sport to Rural and Under-Privileged Communities," the Olympic committee has joined with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization "to provide increased opportunities for rural communities to have access to sports practice, where there is no infrastructure and support available." The goal is to provide "basic sports equipment and light facilities" so that communities can enjoy sports, "promote healthy lifestyles," "consolidate the community structure," and "moderate the exodus from the countryside to the cities" (2007).

However, much remains to be done. In addition to IOC efforts, Cambodia Baseball, a nonprofit organization, seeks to bring the joy and learning of baseball to the young people of Cambodia. They have started baseball clinics and have built the country's first two baseball fields outside of Phnom Penh.

## **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

After researching the presence of international sports within Cambodia, yet seeing little structured play in the schools, I searched through the International Soccer Association guidelines to find field measurements. Finding that regulations emphasized an overall ratio of width to length made it easy to understand how to make a field, regardless of an area's dimensions.

I also began to study and consider the size of the goal posts. Because I did not know exactly where we would be building the fields or how we would find welders to make metal goals, I had to find the overall measurements used for the goals, but I also had to scale down the size of the goal posts. In this way, rather than creating a full-size soccer field that would be utilized for high school teams, I sought to make soccer fields that could be used by all students without overexertion.

Before traveling to Cambodia, I had to prepare to make soccer fields a reality. First, I talked to the youth of a local church, St. Patrick's Catholic

Church, and asked them to help raise money for the purchase of soccer balls and other necessary equipment. Second, I sought to find the best places to purchase soccer equipment at the lowest prices. Third, I began to compile all of my information on the soccer fields into a small notebook to bring to Cambodia. Fourth and finally, I used the money raised by the St. Patrick's youth to buy soccer balls and pumps.

### ACTIVITIES IN CAMBODIA

When I arrived in Cambodia, I spoke with Om Tom, a local who assists the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund, and turned over my measurements to him. We quickly realized that I had mistakenly made standard measurements while Cambodia uses the metric system, but we worked through the necessary conversions. While I had thought we would only complete one soccer field, it turned out that ten schools wanted one, so we decided to start with five, and if those were completed easily, we could then do more. The Bonner leaders and I then worked on the fields. We dug the holes, mixed and laid the cement, then placed the soccer goals into the holes. Finally, we gave the balls to the school principals and took time to play with children.





## REFLECTION

With their laughter, joy, and sometimes even their pain, there is something beautiful in the hearts of children, no matter where they might be. I truly desire to bring joy to children and am actively seeking to apply this same project throughout the world. Perhaps I, along with the McMaster School, will inspire others to advance humanity and end suffering. In so doing, joy is simply unavoidable.

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## HIV/AIDS AWARENESS PROGRAMS IN CAMBODIA

Megan Ashbacher, Nathan Fitton, and Tim Rickabaugh

The primary goal of this project was to determine the current impact of HIV/AIDS in Cambodia and to explore what is being done to control the current epidemic. The authors were attracted to this project due to their common interest in health care and preventative medicine and their interest in learning more about chronic communicable disease prevention. Additionally, participation in this project provided the opportunity to work within a very different health risk environment than that of the U.S.

### PROJECT PURPOSE

The initial goals were as follows:

- ◆ To determine the current impact of HIV/AIDS in Cambodia as compared to the U.S., the whole Southeast Asia region, and the world.
- ◆ To determine the primary health risk factors responsible for the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Cambodia.
- ◆ To determine what non-government agencies (NGOs) and the federal government (especially the Ministry of Education) were doing to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Cambodia.
- ◆ To determine the social and cultural factors that influence the transmission of HIV/AIDS and the effectiveness of health risk intervention programs.
- ◆ To determine future directions for addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Cambodia, especially regarding education programs for Cambodian youth.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Cambodia, a land that was once rich with culture and life, and home to one of the wonders of the world (Angkor Wat), has been ravaged time and again by war and lawlessness. In 2005, after some years of peace, Cambodians are fighting a new battle, a battle with HIV/AIDS.

How HIV/AIDS actually got to Cambodia is tragically ironic. According to Rada Nong, in 1992 the United Nations recognized that Cambodia was struggling to recover from the effects of the ongoing conflict instigated by the Khmer Rouge and decided to step in and help. As a result the United Nations Transitional Authorities, armed with \$2 billion, came to the aid of the country. Once the economic and governmental situation was deemed stable, the United Nations pulled out of Cambodia leaving behind what

they thought would become a flourishing and growing culture. HIV-infected United Nations workers had arrived in Cambodia to help establish a stable economy but instead initiated the spread of HIV/AIDS with which Cambodia has been struggling ever since. The outbreak of the HIV/AIDS epidemic was a new challenge for Cambodia (2004).

At the end of 2002, it was projected that there were about 42 million people worldwide living with HIV/AIDS, with 1.6 million of those in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam (UNESCO Bangkok n.d.). An estimated 300,000 Cambodians, both adults and children, are living with HIV/AIDS, which is up from 125,000 in 1996, Andrew Nette reports. He states that this equates to 2.1% of 14 million Cambodians currently living with HIV/AIDS. According to Nette, with a newly formed economic system and hospitals having to deal with the problem of land mines, Cambodia was ill equipped to deal with such a devastating epidemic (1996). Also at that time – and still today – awareness of HIV/AIDS is lacking among the people of Cambodia. There have even been reports of Cambodian newspaper ads claiming to have a cure for this disease (Nette 1996), along with reports of a young girl who was raped and killed because the men who raped her thought virgins could cure them of AIDS (Coates 2005, 165). As can clearly be seen, there is a need for HIV/AIDS education in order to help Cambodians further understand and protect themselves.

### **PRIMARY MEANS OF DISEASE TRANSMISSION**

There are several disease transmission mechanisms for HIV/AIDS in Cambodia, and one of the primary modes of transmission is intravenous drug use (UNESCO Bangkok n.d.). This is a problem largely because needles are not readily available in Cambodia so people use the same needle over and over. Unfortunately, controlling intravenous drug use in Cambodia does not appear to be a primary concern of the government and Cambodia plays a large role in drug trafficking, located as it is in what UNESCO Bangkok reports to be the “‘Golden Triangle,’ encompassing parts of Burma, China, Lao PDR, and Thailand.” This geographic region is the world’s leading supplier of heroin (n.d.), so drugs are readily available.

Human trafficking is another leading contributor to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Cambodia, according to Humantrafficking.org. This information site reports that sex traffickers bring individuals into Cambodia and never check to see if they have HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases. Because of human trafficking, an estimated 2,000–3,000 people have been brought into the country yearly, 40–60% of whom are Vietnamese (2001–2006).

The major contributor to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Cambodia is the sex trade. This industry is rampant in Cambodia. It has been reported that approximately 22% of travelers arriving in Cambodia do so to be active participants in the sex industry (Coates 2005, 166). The “ordering” of sex in Cambodia has become routine in many restaurants and karaoke bars, according to Karen J. Coates. She says that sex or sexual acts can be ordered as easily as a Cambodian beer (166). The drive for virgins more than likely HIV/AIDS free has gotten so bad that after a girl has lost her virginity her value decreases tremendously (“Cambodia: Child sex trade booming” 1996, 48).

The heterosexual sex trade of women to men is not the only means of sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS. The homosexual community is growing within both the population and the sex trade. An extensive study undertaken in 1999 to better understand the homosexual community found that for over half the bisexual and homosexual men interviewed in a survey of 206 persons, money was their highest motivation for having sex with another man and desire was one of the lowest motivations (Girault 2004, 35–36). Of these bisexual and heterosexual men nearly all of them reported having sex with a female within the previous 6 months (Girault 35), hence potentially furthering the spread of HIV/AIDS. Although condom use is around 73.7% for anal sex with a male partner and 69% for vaginal sex with a sex worker (Girault, 38), these numbers need to increase in order to stop the further spread of this terrible disease. These figures need to be at or around 100%, and the only way to get them there is to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS.

### **HIV/AIDS INTERVENTION IN THAILAND**

The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in Thailand has mirrored the epidemic transmission of these diseases in Cambodia over the past twenty-five years. In 2003, the prevalence of HIV in Thailand was measured at 1.2% and it was projected that by the end of 2004 over 1,070,00 children and adults would have been infected since the start of the epidemic in 1985 (Punpanich, Ungchusak, and Detels 2004, 127). The primary agents of HIV transmission in Thailand have been identified as intravenous drug users, heterosexual males utilizing the sex industry, and “vertical transmission” from pregnant HIV-infected women to their unborn children (Punpanich, Ungchusak, and Detels, 122–125; Sringernyuang, Thaweessit, and Nakapiew 2005, 165–166).

Despite the great public health challenges posed by their HIV/AIDS epidemic, Thailand has led the way in Asia by researching and implementing effective disease intervention programs. Sources indicate that in 1989—less than five years after the first confirmed HIV case in

Thailand—the Thailand Ministry of Public Health initiated the National HIV Serosurveillance Program to track disease transmission and study potential methods of disease control (Farrell 1990, 817; Punpanich, Ungchusak, and Detels 2004, 121). The initial HIV risk intervention programs in Thailand focused on three primary outcomes: to incorporate a comprehensive HIV/AIDS education program in primary and secondary schools; to encourage universal condom use to prevent HIV transmission, with a primary focus on commercial sex settings; and to reduce vertical transmission (mother to unborn child) of HIV by providing free AZT medication to HIV-infected pregnant women (Punpanich, Ungchusak, and Detels, 122; Sringernyuang, Thaweessit, and Nakapiew 2005).

These health risk intervention programs have been proven to be especially effective in reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS in Thailand, and the annual incidence rate of HIV has drastically declined from 143,000 newly diagnosed cases in 1991 to 29,000 new cases in 2001 (Sringernyuang, Thaweessit, and Nakapiew 2005, 165). The most notable success has been associated with the 100% Condom Program started in 1989, which has distributed almost 60 million free condoms each year. In addition to reducing the transmission of HIV/AIDS, there has been a 90% reduction in the rate of all STDs in Thailand (Punpanich, Ungchusak, and Detels 2004, 122; Sringernyuang, Thaweessit, and Nakapiew). The pharmaceutical interventions have also resulted in a high degree of success. There has been a 50% reduction in vertical transmission of HIV that can be directly attributed to AZT treatment programs for HIV-infected pregnant women (Punpanich, Ungchusak, and Detels, 123).

There are still many limitations to program effectiveness in Thailand. One of the most notable limitations is the apparent unwillingness of adolescents and young adults to comply with condom usage. It has been reported that only 24.5% of these individuals reported condom use during their first sexual encounter (Punpanich, Ungchusak, and Detels 2004, 124). Additionally, Sringernyuang, Thaweessit, and Nakapiew reported that despite government policies, there has been widespread discrimination against “people living with HIV/AIDS” or PLWHA and that new legislation may be needed to protect the rights of this group (2005, 165).

It appears that HIV/AIDS risk intervention programs in Thailand have been very effective in reducing disease transmission and providing a base for dealing with the existing epidemic. There is little doubt that Cambodia could use these programs as a model for dealing with their HIV/AIDS epidemic.

## ACTIVITIES IN CAMBODIA

### *Khmer HIV/AIDS NGO Alliance*

Prior to leaving for Cambodia our group established contacts in Phnom Penh whom we could interview during our visit. One of those contacts was a nongovernmental organization (NGO) known as the Khmer HIV/AIDS NGO Alliance (KHANA). We were able to set up an interview with Oum Sopheap, a program administrator, and gain valuable insight not only for our project but also on the disease intervention roles of KHANA in general.

KHANA was one of the first NGOs on the scene in 1995, alongside their international supporter alliance, a worldwide organization that helps fund programs supporting community action against HIV/AIDS. Some of the steps KHANA took to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS were these: First, identify “at risk” persons and work to educate them on HIV/AIDS and the means to prevent its transmission. Second, set up a comprehensive peer education program that targets young adults, providing information centers and community awareness programs. Instead of trying to educate the masses of young people, KHANA has found it more productive to educate a few and allow them to spread the word.

KHANA’s information centers don’t concentrate on students but factory workers, particularly female workers. They have found that these teenaged girls who have dropped out of school to make money for their families by working in the factories are very susceptible to misconceptions associated with HIV/AIDS and the temptations of being a “secondary sex worker,”



which is accepting money for sex to supplement their income. By setting up information centers close to major factories, KHANA is able to become visible and improve its effectiveness in informing this vulnerable population.

Through peer educator programs and information centers KHANA stresses the importance of HIV/AIDS knowledge to young adults. KHANA staff does not provide free condoms because in this conservative culture that would be taboo and seen as an intrusion on traditional values. Instead, KHANA stresses knowledge and education as a prevention route. Their educational programs focus on the following three questions: How can HIV/AIDS be contracted? What does it do to your body? What can you do if you become infected?

KHANA's third approach to reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS is to establish community awareness programs. KHANA staff members regularly go out to different areas of Phnom Penh and rural areas to help spread the knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention and to encourage people not to shun those living with HIV/AIDS. KHANA is a progressive organization doing many great things that will continue to reduce the impact of this terrible disease and help Cambodians change their lifestyles to prevent future transmission of HIV/AIDS.

### *Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia*

While in Cambodia one of our meetings was with Aimee Centivany, a reproductive technical advisor with RHAC, Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia. Centivany described what RHAC was and what they were trying to do with teaching about HIV/AIDS virus.

RHAC, an NGO located in Phnom Penh, has as one of its goals the education of Cambodians about HIV/AIDS so that they may make healthy life choices. While RHAC's main focus is outside the schools, they do some work within the schools, using a peer education model to educate the youth on sexual activity, abstinence, body development, fertility cycle, drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and sexually transmitted diseases. The peer education model is run by group discussions and one-on-ones. Many of these peer education programs are run at a youth center that Centivany took us to.

While at the youth center we were able to learn common questions Cambodian Youth have about HIV/AIDS, questions much like those American children ask about transmission, protection, and symptoms of infection. While awareness of HIV/AIDS is increasing due to the media, the youth centers try to focus on educating youth and eliminating common

misconceptions that primarily concern methods of transmission. They want to know whether they can catch this virus by kissing, touching, sex, or sharing food and drinks. RHAC wants the youth to know that they can be tested for HIV/AIDS in over one hundred cities, and through youth centers RHAC provides counseling, peer education, and even birthday parties.

### ***School-based HIV/AIDS education***

While in Cambodia we were given the chance to travel to one of the schools, hoping to interview the teachers. Shortly before our scheduled time, we were told that we would not be able to interview them about what the students are taught about HIV/AIDS because it is just not something they talk about. The students are given a limited amount of information about the virus, basically being told what it is, but the Ministry of Education feels teachers are not qualified to teach about the subject and are only allowed to teach exactly what is in the ministry's textbooks. As of now, schools are given very little information to educate their students about HIV/AIDS.

### **REFLECTIONS**

#### ***Tim Rickabaugh: – “Grandmother is in Charge”***

*My most memorable insight into Cambodia's struggle with this epidemic occurred at the hospital-based program for young children in various stages of HIV/AIDS where we observed while four young children and their grandmothers completed an appointment in an ongoing treatment program with AZT. That the parents of all of these four children had died from HIV/AIDS and that each innocent child was infected had a great emotional impact on me. Also, the additional burden carried by each grandmother was heavy, but each of them handled it with grace and genuine concern for her grandchild. Being a parent of two young children, this visit made the impact of HIV/AIDS in Cambodia more of an emotional issue, not just an academic project.*

***Nathan Fitton:*** *While in Cambodia, I witnessed something so rare and special I know it will remain with me forever. While visiting a Free Hospital just outside of Phnom Penh, we were touring with Peter Mitchel, the Australian Ambassador's husband, and his friends. Now there was something special about these friends that I did not know at the time but would soon find out. After we received our tour of the grounds, including the children's ward, operating room, and recovery area, Peter's friends told everyone that they were going to do something special for them, and that's when it happened – they pulled out flutes!*

*Apparently they were very famous flutists in Australia and wanted to play for the children, and play they did. Once they started, the people started to gather around, but one child in particular had an impact on me. He came wandering out of the children's ward to see what was going on, and this wasn't just any child but a child*

*with a severe acid burn covering most of his body. He had just had his chin grafted off of his chest. But he mustered the strength to come out and see about the music. One of the flutists saw him and knelt down to play "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star"; I can still hear it today, and I can still see the smile burst onto his face. It was glorious. Here was a child who had been through so much and still had a long way to go but who could enjoy the international language of music. When the flutist finished, everybody stood in silence until the young child started to clap and everyone else joined in. In that moment, I knew I had seen something so special, so unique that it would forever be with me.*

**Megan Ashbacher:** *While in Cambodia I wanted to do something that would make a difference even after I left. When we visited Phnom Penh Hospital during the first days of our trip, we were taken to a building that permanently housed HIV/AIDS-infected children, all orphans, the majority of their parents having been killed by the same virus. Although we did not speak the same language, we were still able to interact, and they just came alive when we gave them our attention. I felt bad for them when we left because they just sat in a dirty room, some of them sitting on the very dirty floor, day in and day out with no toys or anything to do, basically waiting to die.*

*After talking with Jo Ann Burkhardt and Sophal Leng Stagg, we were able to figure out what we could do for them and a few days later went to the market. We purchased individual squares for each of the children to sit on and big square mats for the room. We also gave each child a stuffed animal, something that belonged to them and them alone, and purchased pillows and nursery sets for the cribs. It made me feel good to know that I had done something for those children that would last even after I had departed.*



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## PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CAMBODIAN WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTER

Jeff Weaner

Regardless of the level of modernization or economic development within a given society, the consequences of gender inequality erupt in the form of violent acts directed toward women. Because the subservient role of women tends to be culturally reinforced by tradition, religion, or other cultural forms structuring economic and social dependency, options for escape and personal empowerment are rare. This general problem is much more acute in societies lacking a consistent and coherent legal and formal social support system. One such society is Cambodia. Faced with problems of basic survival in a society emerging from chaos, coupled with a population where half of the people are under the age of 19 (CIA 2007), the problems of human trafficking, rape, and violence against women and children have increased dramatically.

In the aftermath of the Pol Pot regime, which was overthrown in 1979, Cambodian society has experienced years of internal turmoil as a result both of the sheer number of lives lost and the social positions of those targeted by the regime. The educated, the literate, and the professionals were specifically targeted for extermination, leaving those who remained to rebuild since the removal of that regime. The changes occurring over that span of years displaced much of the population and disrupted family structure, education, and the economy.

Sociologist Alex Inkeles identifies five traits that characterize the modern individual, all of which pose particular challenges for Cambodia. The first is openness to new experiences and new ways of doing things. This value was incompatible with the societal goals of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge as they were attempting to purge all Western influences and return to a pre-modern agricultural society. The second is an independence from traditional authority figures, such as parents or priest. While the Pol Pot regime did seek to destroy the traditional family and remove children from parents, its purpose was to replace family authority with blind obedience to *Angkar*, as Pol Pot's governmental organization was called. The third characteristic of the modern individual is an increased belief in science. The wholesale destruction of intellectuals and academics expressed the Khmer Rouge rejection of science and reason. The fourth characteristic is personal and familial ambition. Under the Pol Pot regime, one's ambitions could be nothing beyond serving *Angkar*. Finally, the fifth characteristic is that

moderns cultivate interests beyond the local level to include national and international affairs (1983, 78–83). The Khmer Rouge sought to insulate the country from the world and its “corrupting” influences. The challenge of rebuilding a society is always formidable, but is made even more so when the very segment of the population eliminated through the genocidal actions of Pol Pot were the most modern people, those best positioned to effect the move from largely traditional agricultural society into a postmodern world.

As one of the poorest countries in Asia, Cambodia struggles with widespread poverty: approximately 37% of Cambodians live below the poverty line and on less than \$1 U.S. per day. The per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is \$2,100, and the Gini index (measure of income inequality) is estimated to be 40 (CIA 2007). Poverty creates the need to work at an early age or, in the case of young girls especially, results in being sold by the family into prostitution or other indentured positions for the sake of family survival. Over half of Cambodians state that poverty is the leading problem confronting women (The Asia Foundation 2003, 82). WomenWarPeace.org reports that while nearly 25% of households are headed by women, they continue to face discrimination, particularly in employment. Women earn 30–40% less in the same profession (n.d.). There is significant educational disparity as well: by age 15 school enrollment for females is less than 50% of that for males. Women are also frequent victims of violence, with one in four women experiencing violence in her own home (Ministry of Women’s Affairs 2005).

The Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center (CWCC), a non-profit NGO, was founded in March of 1997 in Phnom Penh by three local women, Chanthol Oung, Nop Sreyroth, and Sin Lypao, to provide services to women and children who have been the victims of violence, trafficking, and rape. In answer to a severe social problem that had no prior institutional response, the CWCC developed a comprehensive array of services to help empower the victims of gender-based abuse. Services include a confidential crisis shelter that supplies shelter, support, and follow-up services; counseling for clients, either individually or in group sessions; vocational training, medical assistance, legal consultation, a reintegration program, specialized services for children and youth, community advocacy, and a referral system for other basic client needs. This comprehensive service model in place in Cambodia is similar in scope to the Family Justice Center concept in place in Defiance and the immediate surrounding counties in northwest Ohio. The similarity in comprehensive approach creates a natural fit between our

experiences and theirs. It further allows for an opportunity to share resources and expertise.

During the first trip to Cambodia when this relationship was established, there was an opportunity to become active in the sheltering of a young woman who had been beaten unconscious by her husband and needed protection. We interviewed her through our translator, Sophal Leng Staggs of the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund, and subsequently connected her with the CWCC. The not surprising yet remarkable fact is the similarity in the dynamics of family violence. Her story was like so many lived out in northwest Ohio.

My original intention for the research project was to conduct follow-up interviews with women who had completed the shelter program and transitioned back into the community. I was interested in the question of how successful the shelter program was in meeting the economic, psychological, and social needs of women as they returned to the community. Were the various trainings in life and job skills adequate for a successful community reintegration and independent life? This data could then be used to inform program practice at the shelter, validating what program components were effective and identifying areas for improvement or development.



Upon arrival in December 2005 as a McMaster fellow to Cambodia, I needed to reformulate my project at the request of Chanthol Oung, Executive Director of the CWCC. Together with other program directors, we identified and agreed to meet a more immediate agency need. The need was to provide introductory program evaluation training to twenty-eight project directors from three different agency sites and to assist them in preparing for an upcoming external evaluation by an international granting organization. The agency is dependent on external funding for its operations and expressed the desire to have an improved understanding of the process of both evaluation and working with external evaluators. As the internationally accepted currency of accountability is efficiency, quantification, predictability, and control, this request for capacity building among the staff became my charge.

I was able to rely on not only my academic preparation but also my experiences and responsibilities with outside evaluations (North Central Association; Council on Social Work Education) and my position as Assessment Coordinator of Defiance College to make the necessary adjustments. And so for five days, we learned together.

The final product was the presentation of thirty hours of training in the building of logic models lining up goals, objectives, activities, and evaluation approaches for each of the eight programs. A complete day was devoted to how to prepare an evaluation report and host visiting evaluation teams. We also spent time on how to respond to or contest evaluators' findings.

The format of the training was standard with the customary basic technology of white board, markers, and flip charts. It was an attentive group with many excellent questions and concerns that echoed the questions and concerns of staff in local agencies dealing with program evaluation. Similar organizational forms pose the same class of problems and questions. However on a more human note, I observed a practice that could be useful in our culture. If one were late arriving after a break or lunch, that person had to sing a short song or display some other talent. After day one, everyone was on time!

During the debriefing at the end of the training, the need for further training in program monitoring and report writing was identified. Also expressed was a hope for the continued involvement of the McMaster program with the agency. At the end, I was presented with a complete set of minutes of the workshop, which I am now expanding and will have

translated into Khmer and returned to the CWCC. The agency is also interested in having me return to work with the programs individually and refining their outcome measures. This was requested by nearly every program in the debriefing. In the future my hope is to travel to the branch offices at three separate sites in the country and work with individual offices.

### **FACILITATING THE WORK OF SCHOLARS**

CWCC's response to the student activities this year was very positive, and they were impressed with both the quality and quantity of work conducted by the students. Two pre-law students worked on three projects, including editing an English translation of a police training manual of the new domestic violence law and creating two separate PowerPoint presentations, one on gender inequality and the other on police protocols. Their research after being chosen as McMaster scholars enabled them to make effective use of their time to significantly assist the agency in fulfilling the education and training part of their mission. The two social work students worked in the shelter for violence victims and engaged children and mothers in esteem-enhancing activities as well as data collection for their projects. CWCC is very interested in having additional students next year work in the areas of grant writing, community education, client follow-up, and legal services assistance. Additionally, there are opportunities for students in other disciplines to work on marketing and human resource issues.

The students learned how strong their preparation was, not only from our learning community but their disciplinary studies as well. Through their strength in education, they were able to adjust and adapt to changes in the opportunities afforded by the agency. I too, was very much reminded of the importance of both knowledge and skills in managing a changing environment.

A significant result of the 2005–2006 project was to establish and solidify an important host NGO in Phnom Penh for the opportunities for future McMaster scholars and fellows. As a final note, I am struck by the reaction of staff members whom I met the previous year upon my return and the possibilities of yet another trip. Returning makes such a difference in their eyes.

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## STUDY OF MOTHER-CHILD ATTACHMENT AT THE CAMBODIAN WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTER

Deborah Dalke

I was a member of the team that worked at the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center, a nonprofit organization that operates several shelters for female victims of violence. Abused women and their children live at the shelters while receiving psychological counseling, education, and vocational training. In 2003 the majority of the people living at the shelters were under the age of 18. (Cambodian Women's Crisis Center 2003).

The shelter where we worked was in Phnom Penh. A caretaker at the shelter, Tith Malay, told us that eighteen women and more than forty children were currently living there. The majority of the women were victims of domestic violence. Some of their children had also been abused or had witnessed violence in the home. One four-year-old was living at the shelter because her mother, who had abused her, was in prison.

As a developmental psychologist I was particularly interested in the well-being of the children. Mothers who are abused are often unable to respond to the needs of their children, which can lead to an insecure mother-child attachment (Vondra and Barnett 1999). Children who are insecurely attached have an increased risk of developing depression and other psychological problems later in life (Campos et al. 1983).

My project at the shelter was to assess the quality of the mother-child attachment. I brought crayons and paper with me to provide an opportunity for the mothers and children to interact. As they drew I could look for behaviors that would indicate a secure attachment. For example, young children who are securely attached often look toward, smile at, and talk to their mothers (Ainsworth et al. 1978). These children use their parents as a *secure base*: The presence of the attachment figure gives the child the confidence to interact with strangers and explore new environments (Vondra and Barnett 1999). A secure attachment is believed to develop when children perceive their caregiver to be responsive to their needs (Vondra and Barnett 1999). The art project would also allow me to look for displays of the mother's affection toward her child.

I chose an art project because it would minimize the impact of the language barrier. In addition, the artwork itself can provide an avenue for resolving conflicts and fostering personal growth (Feder and Feder 1981).

Communication problems still affected our work. For example, I wanted to observe a mother interacting with only one child, which is the standard procedure for assessing attachment (Ainsworth et al. 1978). I asked if I could work with a mother and her four-year-old child but was given a mother and four children. I tried rephrasing the question but was always given more than one child to work with. It occurred to me that excluding some of the children from the drawing session might be perceived as impolite, so I settled for group sessions even though this would make it difficult to accurately assess a particular parent-child relationship.

After the family had assembled, each person was given a piece of paper and asked to create a drawing. Allison Fitzenrider and Renee Chafee helped record the observations. We witnessed many healthy interactions between the mothers and their children. The younger children willingly participated in the project but frequently looked toward their mothers, an indication of a secure attachment. The children often smiled and appeared happy. Mothers were very attentive to their children, smiling at them when the session began. Some mothers would move the crayons toward the children and lean over to talk to them. The mothers would also point to their child's drawing while talking. After one young boy turned his paper over, his mother encouraged the child to continue drawing. One mother lifted the shirt of her nine-year-old daughter to reveal the child's indented chest. The mother told us that the child had heart problems that prevented her from engaging in strenuous activity.

Some of the mothers and children were asked to draw a picture of their family. The family members were drawn in a line that stretched across the page. The mother, not the father, was typically the first in the line. One child drew her father on a separate part of the page. She told us that she hated her father, who had abused them.

The drawing exercise worked so well that we used it throughout our stay at the shelter. We were often told that the women and children did not want to talk about their experiences because they were too painful, but they were willing to express the trauma in their drawings. In one drawing session many of the children drew pictures of their fathers beating their mothers or of the father destroying the home.

We wanted to leave the children with a positive experience, so in the final drawing session we asked the children to draw a picture of something that made them happy. They were told that they could keep the picture and look

at it whenever they felt sad. Many children drew a picture of a house. We were told that they missed their homes and wanted to go back to them.

One of the most powerful moments for me occurred as we were about to leave and wanted to give a gift to the shelter. I was not sure what they needed so I asked them: Do you need sewing supplies for the vocational training? Do you need books for your literacy program? Do you need office supplies? The answer I was given was “we need all of those things but what we really need is food.” Our hosts had been so generous and so gracious to us, giving us tea and bottled water. The depth of their need had not been apparent. We decided to give them a donation that they could use as needed.

The people who worked at the shelter had a higher standard of living than the average Cambodian. In Cambodia, 38% of the children under the age of five are malnourished and 87% of the population does not have access to safe drinking water (Dennis 1999). According to Dennis, one person in 236 is an amputee (1999), many of whom were disfigured by the landmines planted during the Vietnam War. These statistics indicate that many Cambodians struggle to satisfy basic needs. Maslow (1970) argued that when survival needs are unmet, humans cannot set their sights on higher goals such as psychological growth and building community bonds. Democracy, the elimination of sex slavery, and freedom of speech are not the most pressing concerns of many Cambodians.

Even though some of my experiences in Cambodia were heart wrenching, I am deeply grateful to the McMaster family and the McMaster School for giving me the opportunity to work there. I hope that our presence in the country will move the nation a little further down the road to recovery.

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## DEVELOPING THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES WITH THE CAMBODIAN WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTER

Allison Fitzenrider

I applied for the McMaster scholarship in 2005 because using my skills globally, not just locally, appealed to me, and I have always felt my place in life is working to improve the human condition. I wanted to pass on some of my knowledge and in return gain a sense of global community. As a social worker, I feel there is nothing greater than the partnerships between people because they cultivate peace, equality, and social justice. I chose to work in the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) because I had been working at House of Ruth, a local domestic violence shelter, for nearly three years. I had experience in crisis intervention and a special knowledge about the dynamics of domestic violence. I felt that working with the CWCC was a great opportunity to share my experiences with women across the globe and help educate ourselves about the global crisis due to domestic violence. My work in Cambodia allowed me to gain so much more than I gave, surprising me with new insights about domestic violence in other cultures and diverse approaches to therapy.

The purpose of this project was to observe the therapy and counseling used at the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center and help staff improve them. My research question was this: How does the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center's Shelter, with virtually no therapists and very limited resources, foster an environment of growth and change for survivors of violence and sex trafficking? Most staff working with survivors of domestic violence or the sex trade in Cambodia are not licensed in the same way as practitioners in the U.S. There are no licensing credentials to be a social worker in Cambodia and no test one must take to prove that he or she has had counseling, ethics, or crisis intervention training. My purpose, then, was to study why and how the lives of women at the CWCC were improved through programs and staff, and how the CWCC's planned change process works.

The CWCC 2003 Global Report states the following: "Counseling is provided in both individual and support group sessions with the aim of exploring options, reducing physical trauma, mental distress, feelings of shame, isolation, fear, distrust, powerlessness, depression, and improving self-sufficiency and self-esteem. Creative counseling methods include therapy through drama and dance" (17). The possibilities of dance as therapy intrigued me, especially as dance has been used successfully in

countries such as India to heal “survivors of sex trafficking . . . from the mental and physical violence they have experienced” (Berger and Betz 2005, 12). Because most Americans do not share a common culture with traditional dance, dance therapy has only recently become acceptable in the U.S. as a way for clients to express their pain. I wanted to learn how dance therapy was used in a culture where dance was more integral, where it was used to celebrate and mourn.

Among other things, I hoped my project would result in a wealth of knowledge about dance therapy, yet when I arrived at the CWCC shelter and described my project to the staff through the translator, something was lost. I could not communicate my intention. While I wanted to set up a program for the children to tell their stories through dance and wanted to teach the staff about nonverbal communication and interpretive dance, I had to adapt and modify my project. I decided to focus on facilitating educational groups so the women and children could understand the planned change process at the shelter.

The first day, December 30, 2005, was used to get acquainted with staff and clients. We met with Shelter Coordinator Sin Lypao, and Administrative Director Suos Ramo, who introduced us to a young victim of the sex trade: Sophie, only sixteen years old, had been kidnapped by a neighbor to be sold. She lived in one of the provinces of Phnom Penh where the police do not regularly enforce laws about domestic violence and sex trafficking. It is unclear how Sophie came to the CWCC shelter, but we know that her offender is in prison now.

January 2, 2006, was the day I had planned for teaching dance. I spent a great deal of time attempting to explain my intentions and the benefits I thought the women and children would experience. I felt that telling one’s story of trauma and survival would be empowering—but this was Cambodia. Women do not become “empowered” in this culture and had great difficulty even understanding the concept. One woman, however, did understand when I asked if anyone wanted to try “dancing” their story for us. She physically showed us exactly how her husband beat her as she screamed and cried, but did not use words. Though we spoke different languages, I understood her.

After this horribly detailed dance story, we all needed a break, so the women turned on a video CD of some traditional music and taught us to dance. We danced all afternoon, and I was able to see how they already used dance as therapy. The dance didn’t have to tell a story through movements the observer was supposed to understand. The dance, as

therapy, was only for the dancer to see. No teaching was needed, and my structured plan was obsolete. The women danced together in a large circle, using complicated, repetitive hand movements and steps. Their dance was a meditation.

In the next few days, I continued to learn that therapy as I knew it did not take place at the shelter. So I devised a plan to facilitate educational groups about the domestic violence cycle, which was knowledge I had gained from three years at House of Ruth.

Survivors of domestic violence in the U.S. often experience a three-phase cycle of behaviors in their families. The cycle begins when tension starts to build in a family. Relationships are strained, and everyone in the family feels as if something horrible is about to happen. Often, survivors report they are “walking on eggshells.” In the next phase the offender “snaps” and becomes violent with one or more of the family members. This is the battering phase. When the battering ends, the family enters into the honeymoon phase in which the batterer is apologetic, begging forgiveness and stating he or she will never become violent again. Often, the family is forgiving, hoping the cycle will end here and the family will remain intact. I expected to see this same cycle with the Cambodian families in the shelter.



In Tuesday's group I talked about grief, loss, and the cycle of violence. I actually drew out the cycle of violence as a circle divided into three parts but became stuck when explaining the honeymoon phase and saw confusion on many of their faces. Through our translator I was able to learn of a big difference between survivors in the U.S. and survivors in Cambodia. Women in Cambodia don't take part in the honeymoon phase, though their batterers do. These women, as I was told, never believe that their husbands are going to change or that they will never hurt them again. They don't believe their husbands are telling the truth and they don't forgive them, in contrast to many American women who forgive their batterers over and over again.

Next, when I had the women and children do a drawing activity, something interesting happened. The children drew their family members standing in straight lines, and all of the children drew their mothers first in the succession. This seemed contrary to the literature I had studied about family dynamics. But mothers are so revered by children, especially if one considers who is the main caretaker of a family.

Wednesday's group, I decided, needed to be a little more uplifting. I chose a project I had done at House of Ruth to build self-esteem. I asked every woman in the group to take a piece of paper and tape it to the back of her shirt. Everyone then took a crayon and spent time writing positive comments on each other's back. One by one we took turns taking the papers off our backs and reading aloud what nice things others had to say about us. The women were smiling and laughing through this whole activity. According to staff, they had never done anything like this before.

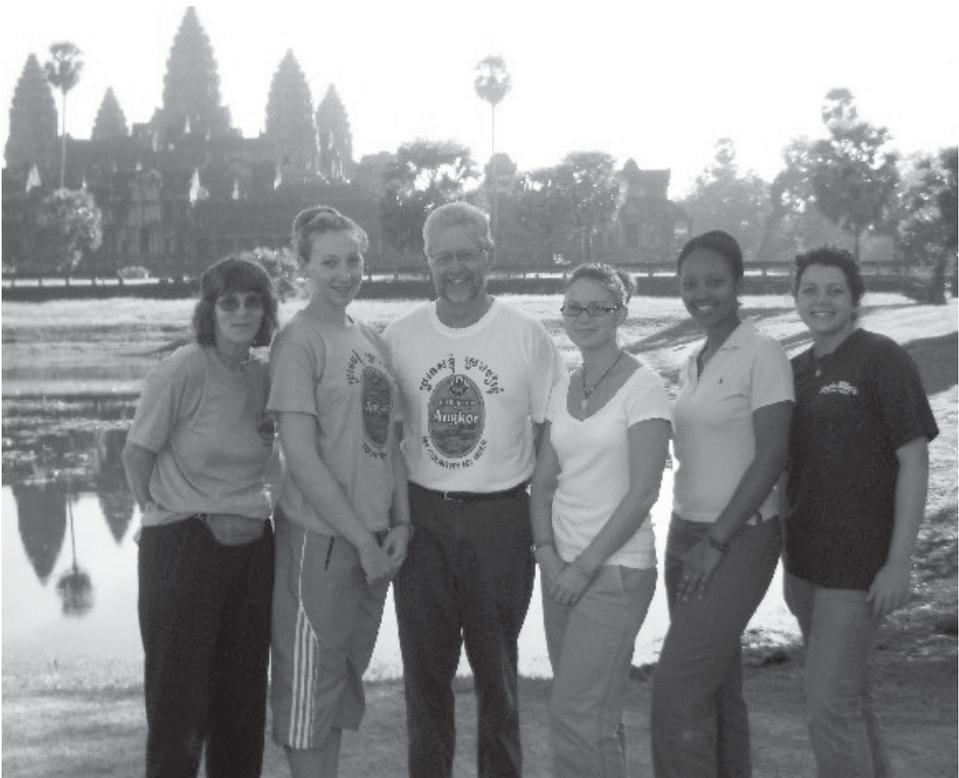
Thursday's group was for the children. Part of my heart remains in Cambodia with them, especially the four-year-old girl who was sexually abused by her mother, now in prison for the crime. I met with thirteen children, three of whom had experienced sexual violence. At House of Ruth I often encountered children who were angry with their mothers for taking them out of their homes, even blaming them for the violence they experienced, but these Cambodian children were different. When asked, none expressed anger toward their mothers, only their fathers, and seemed to have a better understanding of what had happened to their families and why.

From my time at the CWCC shelter, I was able to learn about family dynamics and the similarities and differences of the dynamics of family violence between the two nations. In addition, I was forced to critically

analyze my prejudices about therapy, to question my assumptions about what “therapy” means and who can be a “therapist.” I learned that a planned change process doesn’t have to be structured, as long as those in the helping positions genuinely care. After returning home, I spent much time processing what I had experienced, and I grieved for the women and children at the Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center Shelter.

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## STRUCTURE AND PROGRAMMING OF THE CAMBODIAN WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTER

Renee Chaffee

For the past few years, I have been trying to live as Mahatma Gandhi instructed: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." I know that a small gesture may have a huge impact on someone's life and believe that even I can make a difference in the world. I became a McMaster scholar because I believed my services could improve the human condition. To achieve the McMaster School goals to critically examine the root causes of human suffering and to promote individual liberties, I addressed domestic violence as it relates to women and children. My purpose was to compare program styles of the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) and a local American domestic violence shelter.

My project consisted of interviewing CWCC clients of varying lengths of stay in order to assess whether the shelter was providing adequate services and to compare the CWCC with the local American shelter. My interview questions sought to discover the following: (1) Client's current length of stay; (2) Precipitating events for the stay; (3) Client's shelter activities and types of counseling; (4) Client's difficulties in talking about her past; (5) Client's knowledge of sewing or cooking prior to shelter stay; (6) Most personally helpful aspects of CWCC; (7) Changes or additions client would like to see made about the shelter or the (CWCC) program; (8) Client's desired length of stay; (9) Client's plans upon leaving the shelter.

In Cambodia I met with colleagues from the CWCC's main office to receive a tour and get an overview of the intake process. Clients and their children, if any, first go to the main office and stay in the rooms provided while receiving orientation guidelines and shelter expectations. Clients must sign contracts stating that they will comply with the rules and go to counseling, and if they violate any rules, their stay will be terminated. At the CWCC, if clients want to stay for a longer time period, they go to the actual shelter, the location of which is concealed from the public. During their stay clients may take cooking or sewing classes, learn how to read and write in Khmer and/or English, have childcare, and receive counseling. The sewing, cooking, and reading classes are to help provide clients with skills that will increase their employment opportunities.

Like the American domestic violence shelter, the staff has links with educational resources if clients need to take classes to get the equivalent of a G.E.D. While at the shelter, workers also may help with setting up resumes, job interviews, and housing options for when clients leave the shelter. At the American shelter, clients may only stay for up to ninety days, whereas at the CWCC there is no set length of stay. The CWCC strongly encourages clients to go to group counseling every Friday and children to attend their group session every Thursday. While individual counseling is provided through another agency, it is not required. This contrasts with the local American domestic shelter, where attendance at weekly group meetings is mandatory. Once clients feel safe enough to leave the CWCC shelter, they remain in contact for the first year to make sure they have needed resources to feel safe and so the staff can follow their progress.

While in Cambodia, I had the privilege to play, talk, and work with the women and children individually and in group settings. I joined the children in their play therapy and the women in their group session conversations. After establishing some familiarity with the women, I asked to speak to five of them on a more personal level one at a time. The clients and I, accompanied by a counselor and translator, discussed what brought them to the shelter and how long they had been there. I asked the questions



of women who have stayed at the shelter for one month, three months, four months, seven months, and a year. From my conversations it was clear that the staff was the most helpful aspect of the shelter because they made the women feel safe and welcomed. Statements about what was needed at the shelter were focused more on the sewing equipment. Only some of the women went to individual counseling; however, they did attend group sessions if they were able to manage their time.

Having been at the shelter with the staff, women, and children, I felt blessed by each and every one. Their personal stories touched my heart, and when they talked to me, their tears flowed freely. To hear of a four-year-old being raped by her mother then sold on the weekend to random men ripped my heart apart. Then to find out that her mother was imprisoned and the child left at the CWCC shelter since she had no other family left me in awe. Yet her shelter family, victims themselves, both young and old, bonded together to take care of this girl.

Another story that sticks with me is that of a woman who had left an abusive husband to come to the shelter seven months prior to my arrival. At the time, she had left her three children but later returned for them, only to find her husband remarried, his second wife pregnant, and both unwilling to give up the children. She rescued one child, but a two- and four-year-old remain. Threatened with death should she try to return, this woman, through uncontrollable tears, spoke of having chronic headaches and outbursts of tears since the day she left her other two children. She feels like she will always be at the shelter because she is scared of leaving. Stories like these haunt my conscience, knowing these women and girls could be better helped to cope with their experiences and emotions through more structured counseling.

## DEVELOPING CURRICULA FOR DOMESTIC-VIOLENCE AWARENESS

Sarah Shuff and Camile Tucker

The purpose of this project was to collaborate with the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) to prepare presentations and revise curricula dedicated to improving domestic violence awareness among the Cambodian police, authorities, and citizens during training sessions in February through March 2006. To prepare for our work in Cambodia, we designed the following research questions:

- ◆ What is the structure of the family in Cambodia?
- ◆ How prevalent is domestic violence in Cambodia?
- ◆ Do the Cambodian people see domestic violence as a problem?
- ◆ Is there a law currently in place regarding domestic violence?
- ◆ Currently, what is Cambodia's protocol on domestic violence?
- ◆ What does domestic violence entail, and what are the possible penalties for someone convicted?
- ◆ What assistance does the CWCC need in their attempt to reduce domestic violence?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The family in Western societies is in many ways different from the family in Asian societies, and Cambodia is no exception. Evelyn Lee explains the importance of the family over individuals and the value of roles within the Asian family hierarchic structure, which includes gender, social class, and age distinctions (2005). This indicates the inequality and the importance of family structure in terms of restraints placed on individual members. Lee goes on to talk about the role of arranged marriages for continuance of the husband's family and the husband's authority and role as the family provider. The wife also has the traditional role of homemaker, according to Lee.

In Cambodia, violence against women is vicious, prevalent, and largely ignored. According to United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), "one out of every four (23 percent of) Cambodian women in the age range of 15-49 who have been married has experienced physical violence. The most common form of violence is violence by current or previous husbands. Seventy-five percent of those women reported violence by a husband" (2005, 2).

Robin S. Levi claims that “traditional Cambodian culture encourages a wife to subordinate herself to her husband” and a victim of domestic violence has “little chance of receiving justice or protection from the government or her community” (1998). She reports a survey conducted during 1994 that supports this claim through documented interviews in which women explained their perception of their role in the household. One respondent stated that “if your husband wants to have sex, you must give it to him. If you don’t, he will hit you.” Levi also reports that traditional Cambodian law focuses on reconciliation instead of divorce, and during the reconciliation process it is often implied that “although the beatings were wrong, the woman had somehow provoked it.” In addition, “even many women’s organizations see preserving marriage as their main priority and discourage divorce” (Levi 1998).

A proposed draft law (bill) against domestic violence was recently passed by the Cambodian National Assembly, and it is hoped that this law will be executed efficiently and by the book. Prior to this, there may have been a domestic violence law, but women’s rights were not considered of utmost importance. A survey conducted in two villages in Poipet commune, Banteay Meanchey province, found that “only 12 percent . . . of the women surveyed reported that their husbands had been arrested and put in jail because of the violence committed against them” (Cooperation Committee for Cambodia 2005, 27). In fact, even if a woman reports abuse in an attempt to escape her spouse, “at every turn she will be pressured to go back by family and officials who are almost always minimizing the violence and do not believe in families being apart for any reason” (Levi 1998). There is profound corruption in the Cambodian government, and this is a main hindrance to positive change for the victimized Cambodian women.

Prior to the new domestic violence law, a woman had to be severely injured or killed before criminal penalties were even considered. The current law may help Cambodia turn from this tradition, and its advocates hope to find escape for abused women. According to the new law, which was drafted in 1997, domestic violence is violence that can happen to husband, wife, children and others living in a household. The law requires authorities to intervene urgently in all reported domestic violence cases, make clear records, and immediately report to prosecutors. Victims have a right to file complaints to the court, asking for protection. The court makes decisions regarding child custody and is required to remove the victim in an effort to promote the victim’s security and well-being. The perpetrator is required to provide financial support after separation, based on his or her income. All violators of the domestic violence law will be penalized (Kingdom of

Cambodia 1997). This revised law bears much resemblance to domestic violence laws in America, but Cambodia's enforcement of laws remains a greater issue due to political corruption and overall underdevelopment. It is hoped that this new law will be followed and, along with increased awareness, will be a major step toward the reduction and eventual eradication of domestic violence.

The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC), a nonprofit organization that stands against violence toward women and children, is in the group of NGOs dedicated to reducing domestic violence in Cambodia. The organization provides a shelter as an escape from the violent situations so many Cambodian women endure. The Community Organizing department of the CWCC is responsible for organizing members of the community, police, and civil authority toward greater sensitivity and understanding of domestic violence. This CWCC department is particularly interested in receiving assistance toward its efforts of efficient and effective education and public awareness. It uses all available resources to help in the alleviation of domestic violence.

### **PREPARATION FOR WORK AT THE CWCC**

Sarah Shuff was able to bring to the table experiences from internships at Legal Services of Northwest Ohio, which deals with domestic violence and other aspects of the legal system. While she was not originally drawn to domestic law, the internships and service learning experiences pulled her toward it. With the passage of Cambodia's new domestic violence law, there is much need of enforcement. Shuff focused on how hard it is for government officials to talk about domestic violence because it is deemed a family issue.

As a criminal justice major in the pre-law program of Defiance College, Camile Tucker had a certain level of expertise going into this project. Through a series of internships she had opportunities to be in contact with women who experienced domestic violence. While working with the Defiance County prosecutors, she was struck by the prevalence of domestic violence in the Defiance County area. Through her work with Victim's Advocates she sought to interview victims to understand what penalties for their perpetrators they would consider justifiable. In contrast, in Cambodia there are few organizations that work to advocate for the rights of victims. Tucker used the Defiance County protocol on domestic violence as a reference while working with the CWCC.

## ACTIVITIES IN CAMBODIA

The project consisted of working at CWCC every day for a week alongside Puthicheath Lomg, Director of Community Organizing, and Sonary Chor, an intern. Throughout the week, we developed four curricula: one for capacity building to networks and others for police, new network training, and authority (community chief and council). We also completed three slide show presentations to be used in the training and education of government officials and citizens of Cambodia. The slide shows focused on gender views; the impact of domestic violence on children, spouses, extended families and community; and an evaluation of the survey conducted in the Poipet commune, Banteay Meanchey province.

While in Cambodia, we learned about CWCC's approach to handling domestic violence and on one occasion were able to visit a Cambodian court and observe daily legal proceedings. In addition, we observed how a warrant is issued and were surprised to find the procedure much like that in the U.S., including the presentation of the case to the judge and the signature allowing legal personnel to be granted a warrant for the person in question. While in Cambodia we also visited the Cambodian Crisis Shelter and met with the staff and women and children who were victims of domestic violence. The information that we obtained was pertinent to our research. In return, we hope that our curriculum work and slide shows contribute to the CWCC and Cambodian society.

## REFLECTIONS

***Camile:** I have always had a passion for service, and the McMaster School immediately sparked my interest because I saw it as an opportunity to make a difference. In my freshman year as a service leader, I listened in amazement to the experiences of fellow service leaders who had gone to Guatemala through the McMaster School. I chose Cambodia and my project because as a Pre-law major I am particularly moved by the abuse of women in our global village and am a firm advocate of equality among genders, races, and ethnicities.*

***Sarah:** Initially, the thought of going to a third world country scared me since I had never been outside the U.S. But Professor Weaner shared with me how during the previous year they had helped a woman who had been severely beaten by her husband. She was unable to relocate due to monetary issues, and Cambodian laws on domestic violence were not really enforced to protect her. Professor Weaner showed me pictures and information about the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center, where women and children gained help and protection from domestic violence. By the next week, knowing I wanted to help make a difference, I had sent in an application.*

*Through our research and work at CWCC, we gained an in-depth look at how Cambodian culture views and deals with domestic violence. Most importantly, we were able to work for an advocacy program. Great good can be done in the world, and I now have a better understanding of how I can have an impact. This experience has permitted me, in some small way, to promote social justice for women and children affected by domestic violence.*

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## ORATURE AND CAMBODIAN CULTURE

Mary Catherine Harper

During the twentieth century, a number of oral-based societies became the focus of cultural restoration and preservation projects. For example, in the 1920s and 1930s Milman Perry recorded the narrative songs of Yugoslavian enclaves, transcribed them, and translated them into English. (*Milman Perry collection* 2006). Another such orature-preservation project was undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz (1984). They collected, transcribed, and translated the myths and legends of a number of Indigenous American tribes, especially of the American Southwest. Besides providing cultural information for scholars, students, and the general American public, this orature preservation project has brought stories *back* to a number of tribal groups that had been losing touch with their oral traditions.

Based on the idea of preserving and studying the orature of a society that has few economic and educational resources to devote to its cultural restoration, Gary Mattingly, a McMaster scholar, and I traveled to the McMaster School contact site in Cambodia to study and record folktales and other orature (mythology, fairy tales, riddles, proverbs, personal stories) for the purposes of developing a fuller understanding of the traditional ways of the Khmer people and aiding in cultural restoration after the Cambodian genocide.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Developed as an Indic language, Khmer draws heavily on Indian culture for its religious practices, art, and stories. Indeed, the Khmer name for a famous Indian epic, *Ramayana*, has existed only since the seventeenth century. Vittorio Roveda reports that the story of the central god character, Rama (or Ream in Khmer culture), “crosses the boundaries of caste, religion, cultural settings, and language, similarly to Buddhist principles” (1997, 11). Indian Hinduism and Buddhist roots permeate Khmer literature. There are a few differences between the Indian *Ramayana* and the Khmer *Reamker* version, however, and those differences circulate in folktale form within Cambodia.

Cambodian stories, either in literature or orature form, whether considered part of Khmer mythology or the folktale genre, are not widely available. *Grandmother's Path, Grandfather's Way* (1990) by Vang Lue and Judy Lewis is one of few texts that explore the oral tradition of a specific, distinct Southeast Asian culture, the Hmong. Other Cambodian tales that circulate

through the oral tradition have been collected by Tony Shapiro (2005): tales related to marriage practices (“The Trial”), community values (“The Tiger”), and gender conflict and social roles, (“Hanuman and Sovann Macha”), to name a few. These and other cultural mythologic and folk figures are catalogued in Michael D. Coe’s *Angkor and the Khmer Civilization* (2003), which includes among others the following major cultural figures: *Kala*, a monster with the head of a lion found in doorway lintels; *Naga*, the cobra god common to a number of Hindu myths and the most common sculptural figure in Khmer culture; and *Garuda*, another Hindu figure, sporting eagle features and often functioning as the steed of Vishnu (160).

Coe reports the importance of Cambodian sculpture, which preserves representations of these mythological and folkloric figures, but he says little of the language-based arts. He makes note of inscriptions at Angkor Wat and indicates the presence of court poets who served royalty during the post-classic period of Cambodia beginning after 1327 CE (2003, 222). Coe also indicates the composition period of the Cambodian *Reamker* variation of the *Ramayana*, specifically between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries CE, and notes that in court inscriptions the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and other Indian texts were mentioned as gifts in manuscript form to Cambodian royalty in the seventh century CE (222).

David P. Chandler’s *A History of Cambodia* (2000) is also relevant for its details of the period during which mythologic and folkloric narratives were first recorded. According to Chandler, an Indian-based alphabet was introduced to Cambodia in the third century CE and was part of the general Indianization of Cambodia that began in the common era. Mon-Khmer languages were spoken in the region, one of which developed into modern Khmer. The Khmer language, agriculture-based folk ways, and religious rituals involving ancestral spirits and local water spirits were maintained through the Indianization process that blended Sanskrit, centralized courtly ways, Hinduism, and Buddhism with Khmer cultural attributes (11–12).

The blended mythologic and folk attributes of Khmer culture are detailed by Roveda, who reports that inscriptions were set in stone throughout the region using both Sanskrit and ancient Khmer, with Sanskrit as the political and court language and Khmer as the language for recording material possessions (1997, 9). In addition to inscriptions, stories of mythologic figures are told in visual form on the intricately carved relief panels of monuments and temples. Roveda tells us that these visual displays draw heavily on Hindu and Buddhist formal features and often integrate the ordeals and achievements of historical figures, such as the Khmer king



Jayavarman VII, with stories of mythologic figures like the Hindu god Indra (66).

Besides the blended historic and mythologic events, folk practices and scenes of daily Khmer life are blended in temple and monument relief panels, reports Roveda. Stories of hunting boar and deer, stories of cockfighting, and stories of selling goods at market and caring for the sick are also present (1997, 66–67). The synthesis of mythologic, legendary, and everyday figures indicates a culture for whom the boundaries between the mythologic realm and the here-and-now world are blurred. The clan and agricultural folk ways of the Khmer people are blended with an Indianized politics caught between fluid clan-based power and monarchic centralization. Added to these are collectivist socialist politics as well as the Hindu/Buddhist cultural foundations. The result of this “clash” of societal features is literature and orature following narrative patterns that tend to be nonrealist.

Besides the general cultural influences on the narrative patterns of Khmer, two key elements in the history of Cambodia have influenced Khmer discourse: the French colonization and the Khmer Rouge’s forced collectivism and return to traditional Khmer ways. The French colonization period beginning in the 1860s and finishing in the early 1950s brought

Western education, literary genres, and discourse patterns that tended to favor literacy over orality. The second historical influence is *Angka*, which in 1975–1979 set about eliminating all elements of Western influence from Khmer life, including Western-based literacy and literary narrative.

Much has been written on the trauma brought by the Khmer Rouge and the *angkar* discourse of Pol Pot, as well as the struggle for control over the political and social discourse of Cambodia since 1979. But as David Chandler candidly acknowledges, “any attempt to make sense of Cambodia’s history since 1979 suffers because the period is open-ended” (2000, 227). This open-endedness may be as true for the narrative patterns of Cambodia as its political and economic patterns. Now still in a reconstruction phase, the members of Khmer culture will struggle as they sort through and choose which of the generally worldwide, Western, and distinctly Khmer narrative patterns and themes will continue to circulate in Cambodia even as stories of surviving the Pol Pot years will surely become part of the national narrative.

Besides the cultural and historic influences on Khmer narrative, the language arts-based terminology of Cambodia is important to the orature-preservation project. Genre names and identifying characteristics of the orature of Cambodia have had a strong impact on the literary genres of Cambodia, as is true for the orature/literature relationship of other cultures of the world. Generally, because of the fluidity between oral and literacy-based genres, the orature of Khmer culture can be classified using terminology focused on literature. In *The Traditional Literature of Cambodia: A Preliminary Guide* (1996) Judith M. Jacob details the major literary genres circulating in Cambodian orature and literature. According to Jacob, before the sixth-to-seventh centuries CE, the orality-based legend genre circulated (2). Other orality-based genres of Cambodia named by Jacob are folktale, song, riddle, and proverb (8).

*Rîoenj brenj* are Khmer folktales and legends. According to Jacob, Khmer folktales focus on the daily lives of peasants and contain stock characters, including the peasant “husband and wife” and the “rich man.” In those tales developed under the early Indian influence, such stock characters as “king,” “minister,” “judge,” “soothsayer,” and “monk” may also be present (1996, 15). The central characters of Khmer folktales, like the tales of other societies of the world, often rise from lowly circumstances to become rich, famous, or politically powerful. Sometimes the path to wealth, fame, or power includes deception and trickery, sometimes innovation and cleverness, sometimes verbal skill and wit, and often the element of magic.

Another type of folktale common to Khmer culture is the fable or animal tale, which is known throughout the world. For example, Jacob reports that the rabbit character *Subhâ Dansây* is essentially Brer Rabbit (16). Other animals that show up in the stories are the tiger, crocodile, monkey, and serpent (19). The final type of common Khmer folktale is a group of Buddhist stories that are told in the folktale manner as well as in “verse-novel” form, according to Jacob. As an example she cites the text of *Khyañ Sānj kh*, which exists in folktale form, verse-novel form, and folk drama form. (20).

The second common genre is the song. Emotionally expressive and often sad when focused on love, the *Dam?nuk cam?rienj* of Cambodia express themes common to the traditional songs of worldwide cultures, according to Jacobs (1996, 22). The song genre has a corollary literacy-based genre in Cambodia, namely the lyric or *kamnj âby*, which presents the emotional state of the poet, usually separated from a loved one (8). Besides love songs, two types of song that are common to Cambodia (and Southeast Asia in general) involve work and festival time. Festival “alternating songs” are usually flirtatious and are sometimes accompanied by dance or mime (22–23). The blending of song, dance, and mime is common to the folk music of world societies.

A third genre is common to world societies that still enjoy the verbal playfulness rooted in orality. The riddles and puzzles or *bâky pan?t?au* and *pañhâ* of Khmer culture indicate a society that is characterized by a “facility in rhyming, punning, or using rapidly formed Spoonerisms” (Jacob 1996, 27). The desire to develop verbal skill and playful wit is so strong in Cambodia, according to Jacob, that as of 1968 riddles were part of the school curriculum of Cambodia (28). Jacob also reports that the riddles and verbal puzzles, while playful in terms of punning, rhyming, and other language-structure play, are often philosophic in idea, perhaps owing to Buddhist influences but probably part of Khmer culture before the introduction of Buddhist ideas (28).

Finally, *subhâsit* and *bhâsit* are short oral “texts” of Cambodian society. The numerous “good sayings, proverbs, [and] maxims” (*subhâsit*) and the “sayings” (*bhâsit*) that have been collected and published indicate a society that is traditionally interested in both moral behavior and “cleverly composed discourse,” according the Jacob (1996, 25). Proverbs are often composed in rhymed form, and after 1945 a practice of writing complex rhymed poems designed to explain proverbs developed (26), again indicating a society interested in both idea and expressive form.

Jacob notes the “religious element in most of the literature” (8), a pervasive feature of Khmer culture. She refers to the humorous Buddhist moral poetry, called *Cpâp’*, and the verse-novels, or *Sâtrâ Lpaenĵ*, which tell of the lives of Bodhisattvas, holy individuals dedicated to guiding others to the Enlightenment of Buddha before entering the final “oversoul” state (8). The synthesis of humor, verbal skill, and profound idea marks the orature (and literature) of Khmer society.

## METHODOLOGY

Mindful of this complex language arts synthesis, Mattingly and I prepared to interview a variety of Khmer individuals living in Phnom Penh to discern which types of stories were a normal part of family discourse. We planned to interview people of both genders and cover a range of educational backgrounds, social classes, and ages.

We chose a variety of terms to represent the genres of orature. This was especially important for the genre-cluster of “folktale” and the “legend” and “fable” genres. Working through a translator, we referred to “stories of the near past and distant past,” “stories about real people and events,” “stories of cleverness and trickery,” “stories with a moral lesson or sacred message,” etc. For the term “riddle,” we also used “joke including a question for the listener” and “brief story leading to a question for the listener.” To the terms “proverb” and “maxim” we added descriptors like “short clever saying” and “statement of wisdom.”

Concerning interview methods, we consulted one of the few texts that specifically address the issue of ethnographic methods to be used among Khmer individuals. This is Paula Uimonen’s “Responses to Revolutionary Change: A Study of Social Memory in a Khmer Village” (1996). Uimonen presents information on Khmer village life and oral traditions in the context of the revolution in Cambodia. Using Uimonen as a guide for the interviews and taking care with genre descriptors, our interview style was developed with an understanding that Cambodia is in a reconstruction period following the years of Pol Pot’s regime. This period disrupted the patterns of social life to such an extreme that family leisure time available for storytelling was greatly reduced from the normal levels of a stable society. Thus, we made provisions for accepting fragments of folktales, tales mixed with family lifestories focused on survival, and even accepting and analyzing interviews that produced no Khmer orature whatsoever.

In addition to following Uimonen’s guidelines, Mattingly and I consulted Marjut Huuskonen’s “Indigenous Genre Terms as Signposts of

Interpretation" (2001), a study of terminology and ethnographic methods. Huuskonen covers ethnographer manners with attention to using the acknowledged "genres" of behavior and categorizing statements that a given culture employs. Another rich source of information on ethnographic methodology came from Alex Stewart's guidelines in *The Ethnographer's Method* (1998). Concerning the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, Stewart poses a number of questions for the ethnographer to address, including the following: "How well did the ethnographer's involvement in role relationships generate opportunities for unfettered inquiry? . . . Did the role involvement generate access to backstage interactions and performances? Did they lead to a wide, or to [a] relatively skewed, range of perspectives and groupings that could be accessed? . . . How actively did the ethnographer participate in role relationships at the site? . . . Were speech and other activities observed in multiple contexts? . . . recorded in multiple contexts? . . . Does the ethnographer clarify his or her own role in eliciting actors' utterances or other activities? . . . Does the ethnographer demonstrate sensitivity to the contexts of activities that are reported?" (69-71).

Mindful of the need to facilitate openness with interviewees and aware of the limitations of mere field notes, Mattingly and I chose a small, unobtrusive digital recorder to be used unless an interviewee objected.

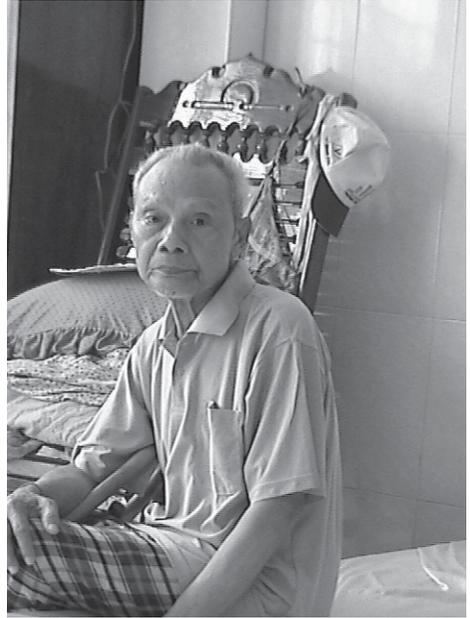
Besides offering guidelines for interaction, Stewart advises anyone gathering information for analysis of cultural patterns to use the "thick description" method of presenting observable details, as developed by Clifford Geertz (1973). At the same time, Stewart cautions against mere data description as a substitute for analysis. Instead, he suggests that in ethnography "those interesting findings that transcend the merely descriptive—are very loosely coupled with procedure" and the procedure must include creative exploration and comparison of possible taxonomic categories (or themes) and theories (1998, 62). In the course of fine tuning an analysis, the "theorized details" begin to matter, with a "focus on theories that best help to determine where a certain insight can travel," according to Stewart (62-63). At the same time, any insight-to-theory relationship needs to be commensurate with the culture under scrutiny. Put in Stewart's ethnographic language, any "theme" that the researcher "has crafted and selected as particularly important" is to be developed out of a process that involves "recontextualization" (54).

The analysis procedure followed Stewart's guidelines. Before going to Cambodia Mattingly and I developed a very short list of possible themes to look for in interviews: first, form-based themes of the folktale genre-cluster, riddle genre, and proverb genre; next, content-based themes of the concern for personal and familial security, economic stability, Buddhist values, and patriarchal values. We had kept this list short with the understanding that as we began our "thick description" of interviews and the analysis, we would need to be open to the emergence of a number of other themes relevant to the features of the society we were encountering.

## THE INTERVIEWS

While in Cambodia, Gary Mattingly and I conducted nine interviews of Khmer people, including individual interviews, group interviews, and follow-up interviews. We were able to interview people of both genders, including a range of ages and diversity in educational backgrounds. The following subjects ranged from poor to what would be considered the upper-middle class of Cambodia.

- ◆ Phat Pheakkdey, our translator for the orature project, was born to a middle class family just as the Khmer Rouge seized power in 1975.
- ◆ Hem Hoa and Phat Noch, the parents of Phat, raised a large family in the midst of the civil war and Pol Pot era and are now dependent on Phat's resources.
- ◆ They ChanTo, a project manager for traditional Cambodian publications funded by the nonprofit organization called CamboKids, takes as his mission the development of a strong Khmer identity among the next generation of Cambodians.
- ◆ Sun Sovichea, or "Veech" as he is known to English-speaking friends, is a university student of traditional age.
- ◆ Khan Sok Kuorn, an upper-middle class newspaper editor who was educated under the French system, has raised a family and is near retirement age.
- ◆ Four Garment Industry Workers, who asked to remain anonymous, work to send money to their families and try to avoid victimization within the Western-owned garment factory system.
- ◆ Hin Kaingch, an aging blind woman living in abject poverty, lost her husband, sons, and daughter and now struggles to provide food and shelter for her four orphaned grandchildren.



### ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Our most significant finding was that interviewees tended not to have folktales on the tip of their tongues as we had hoped. While most EuroAmerican individuals can list a string of fairy tales, fables, trickster tales and other tales from their childhoods, the interviewees struggled to recall what if any stories circulated in their childhood homes, neighborhoods, and schools. When they did, their pleasure was clearly evident.

It was striking how the interviewees struggled to recall traditional folk stories. Most of them were noticeably uncomfortable when the interview moved in this direction. Only Phat (or Pheakkdey as he wanted to be called) and Sun (or Veech) seemed completely comfortable with questions about traditional tales, but they also struggled to remember. This discomfort or struggle to remember may have a partial explanation in the history of Cambodia and current attitudes toward that past and the present. They ChanTo alluded to the significance of the 1970s when he declared that Cambodians are suspicious of traditional Khmer story forms. While Khmer people enjoy stories in general, they may possibly associate the traditional stories of their culture group with the forced back-to-traditions approach of Pol Pot's *Angka* movement of the late 1970s, a movement that coordinated an ideology of traditional folk agriculturalism with acts of torture, forced labor, and the Killing Fields.

To add to the negative association between narrative and Khmer Rouge methods, the worth of narrative itself was questioned in the late 1970s. Not all traditional narrative patterns were valued by *Angka*. For example, traditional stories based on Buddhist philosophy were forbidden in the general attack on religious expression. In Cambodia today the suspicion of *Angka* toward narrative may still be having an effect. Add to this situation the current general economic and cultural globalization process that is reintroducing Western narratives—indeed, Western “master narratives”—of modernization and the importance of electronic media, and the result may be a sense of ambivalence over traditional genres. Either that or at least a sense of being overwhelmed by emotion at the mention of traditional folk-based genres.

It is possible that some of the initial tension over the concept of traditional narrative was actually tension over the concept of “tradition.” In the midst of the reconstruction of Cambodia, the pressure on Cambodia to join the global economy, and the desire to embrace Westernized cultural style, there may be a sense of ambivalence over the idea of “tradition.”

One interviewee, however, was very open about the concept of “traditions” from the beginning of his interview to its conclusion. That was They ChanTo, who expressed a strong desire to bring traditional Cambodian genres and art forms into the lives of children. The Room to Read books (2002–2007), many of which are produced in conjunction with his organization CamboKids (n.d.), complement Cambodian traditional style. Whether a folk story or a story treating a contemporary problem, the Room to Read books include illustrations that depict Khmer people in traditional dress. They ChanTo praised the books published by Room to Read because of how they impress on young people positive attitudes about their cultural traditions.

However difficult the issues of “traditions” and “story” seemed to be for most of the other interviewees, they were eager to express themselves and share their knowledge and understanding about Khmer life. One of the elements of life for which all interviewees clearly showed appreciation was education. Whether it was Khan Sok Kuorn discussing his children’s choice of English over French, Hin Kaingch worrying over her granddaughter not getting to attend school, Pheakkdey expressing frustration that his nephew and niece don’t take their education seriously, Hem showing relief that all of her children got at least some education, Veech worrying about upcoming exams, Garment Industry Workers analyzing the problem of families not being able to read loan contracts, or They ChanTo theorizing on

the need for well written books in schools, education is important to these individuals.

Another theme that emerged was the value of a work ethic. Pheakkdey, Veech, Khan, and Hin all expressed how good it was to be able to work. In the case of Hin, it was more an expression of desire that her grandsons be able to secure good jobs as they enter adulthood. For Khan and Veech, it was an expression of the need to instill a strong work ethic in the youth of Cambodia. As for Pheakkdey, he was happy to be able to work for good wages to support his father and mother. Hard work was seen by interviewees as a necessary component of general economic and social security. The Garment Industry Workers especially articulated this theme of security. Perhaps because their own lives are so economically and socially insecure, these women worried that their society was ever on the edge, about to fail, unable to recover, unable to compete with the outside world. Of course there was also some humor expressed in regard to work. Hem declared a clever saying about freedom after Pol Pot being the freedom to work . . . and work . . . and work . . . .

Work was not discussed in terms of fulfillment, only in terms of practical matters. The focus on practicality was also evident in the manner that interviewees told their lifestories. As Pheakkdey, Hem Hoa, and Hin Kaingch told of the deprivations of the 1970s and 1980s, they exhibited a matter-of-factness in their storytelling. This is not to say they were without emotion, for all three became very emotional during parts of the telling. But the overall matter-of-factness was as if to say “this is how it was, and I accept and face it.”

Perhaps this acceptance was a practical way of coping with societal conditions over which interviewees felt they had little control. But it is just as plausible that the theme of acceptance was due to the influence of Buddhism. The major religion of the generally devout society of Cambodia, Buddhism teaches acceptance of the condition of suffering and emphasizes a process of putting aside the desire for earthly satisfactions. In the course of the interviews, I was struck by the generally accepting, trustful manner of the interviewees. I would attribute this to the influence of Buddhism.

At the same time, the open, trusting manner of interviewees as they discussed their personal lives may have been due in part to the example of Phat Pheakkdey, our guide and wise companion. Pheakkdey seemed free to share his beliefs and values with us from the moment we met him, and he modeled openness about personal matters during interviews.

Pheakdey was also able to clarify subtle points about Cambodian culture and how it has changed. For example, when we were interviewing his parents and Hem explained that during the Pol Pot years her husband hid indoors while she worked in the fields, Pheakkdey noted that the Cambodian patriarchal society was even more so in the 1970s. His mother, he explained, was trying to say that she was forced into the man's work role. She felt stripped her of her womanliness, and her husband was forced into the woman's role, emasculating him. This role reversal was demeaning to the couple because they were raised with deeply traditional patriarchal values.

I was able to get a complex sense of cultural issues in Cambodia, in part through the interviews and also through continual conversation with Pheakkdey in a variety of settings. He frankly discussed politics, his business aspirations, and his religious views. I was especially moved by Pheakkdey's Buddhist belief when he articulated a strong sense of acceptance of other religions besides his own. He philosophized on this matter as he and I walked through one of the temples in the Angkor Wat complex together. He declared that he felt at one spiritually with people who belonged to other religions. He said he could sense the divine at work in all of us, whatever our religious beliefs, and wished for a world where commonalities became more important than religious differences.

He also showed a yearning for the type of education that so many have been fortunate to experience here in the U.S. As Pheakkdey, Sun Sovichea, and others sat around a coffee shop table together eating Cambodian snack foods, he expressed his sadness that there was so little time and energy for the language arts when he grew up. This just after Veech had told the story of the *Reamker*. It struck me that these two men, although growing up in about the same socioeconomic class and in the same city, had vastly different experiences in childhood. Veech, only about ten years younger than Pheakkdey, had been able to enjoy a wide range of literature, probably because by the time he started to school, even though Cambodia was still struggling to develop its educational curricula, the society had a sense of urgency about the need to formally educate its youth. On the other hand, Pheakkdey would have begun his formal education just after the collapse of the Pol Pot regime. Not only were there no curriculum standards in schools at that time, there were no fully functioning schools, and there was a general sense of confusion over the value of formal education. To make matters worse, many families, including Pheakkdey's, faced periods of near starvation during the 1980s.

During Cambodia's extreme political, economic, social, and educational problems in the late 1970s, 1980s, and into the 1990s, children like Pheakkdey grew up yearning for a life rich with cultural opportunities. The opportunities valued most—life-sustaining work and education—indicate a society in need of long-term support by the global community. Support of the development of Cambodian culture is finally the issue. The economic, education, and cultural projects by McMaster fellows and scholars continue in Cambodia because they must, because we are compelled to provide long-term support that makes a difference within a developing society.

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## ESTABLISHING THE CAMBODIAN STOCK MARKET

Devon Palk

In the spring of 2005 while attending the McMaster Symposium, I was impressed by fellow students presenting self-designed research and wanted to become involved in the McMaster School goal of improving the human condition. Because of my accounting major and interest in international business and investment, I was intrigued by the idea of the proposed Cambodian stock market and designed a project around it.

The purpose of my project was to study the legal and economic issues pertaining to the establishment of a Cambodian stock market. The economic issues included needs in infrastructure, business, and capital. The legal/governmental issues included rampant corruption, a substandard legal and judicial system, lack of government regulation, and donor-government corruption. The project involved developing contacts in Cambodia, directly observing the available infrastructure, and observing the types of businesses in Cambodia and how people conduct business.

### INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

While in Cambodia I was able to interview three individuals involved in the creation of a stock market in Cambodia. The first interviewee was Chea Garuda, an advisor to the Cambodian Ministry of Finance who works on the stock market project. Chea said that the government has a timetable to have the stock market up and running by 2007, adding that Cambodia is working with Singapore, Malaysia, and Japan to learn the necessary structure, laws, and regulations.

When asked what areas will need improvement before the stock market can be started, Chea addressed the serious infrastructure problems, which are the lack of modern roads, reliable electricity and telecommunications, and human capital in both the Ministry of Finance and many Cambodian industries. As to which entities will be listed and who will invest in this market, Chea said that it was too early to tell. However, he did suggest that initial investors will be Cambodian. He explained that as the market grows, investors from such countries as Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and China will enter the market. He clearly felt that the Cambodian stock market would be too small for investment by most Westerners. In his concluding remarks, Chea informed me that it took the Vietnamese ten or more years of observation before they started their stock market.

The second in-country interview was with Lucy Tupaz, a senior manager in the auditing division of the international accounting and auditing firm Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG 2006) formed in 1987. When asked for a description of KPMG's clientele and services, Tupaz explained that, like most other international accounting firms in Cambodia, KPMG deals almost entirely with foreign clients and NGOs that need accounting and auditing for their Cambodian business interests. She explained that accounting laws in Cambodia are unstructured and premature compared to most Western laws and regulations. Cambodian accounting law is either not implemented or not enforced. Because of this, KPMG uses standards set forth by the IAASB (International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board) and by the IFAC (International Federation of Accountants). When asked if KPMG would work with Cambodian-run firms, Tupaz said that KPMG would not, due to the corruption present in Cambodian business. When asked whether the huge amount of government corruption played a role in KPMG's stance of not working with Cambodian firms, Tupaz declined to comment.

The third interview was with Paul F. Randolph, Democracy and Governance Division Chief in the Office of General Development for USAID: Cambodia. USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) is an independent agency of the U.S. government, with the mission of "assistance to countries recovering from disaster, trying to escape poverty, and engaging in democratic reforms" (2006). Addressing corruption's impact on Cambodia, Randolph declared it to be the root of all Cambodia's economic, legal, and judicial problems. According to Randolph, USAID and other donor governments have exerted pressure on the Cambodian government to address the problems, demanding the passage of an anti-corruption law if Cambodia is to continue receiving donor money. He also described USAID's Clean Hands Campaign, a project designed to strengthen the ability of Cambodian citizens to hold public officials accountable for the use of public resources. Randolph's interview corroborated the information about the anti-corruption campaign reported in USAID's *Cambodia: Anti-Corruption* (2005).

In addition to interviews, direct observation of infrastructure and business was used. The state of infrastructure as a whole indicates that Cambodia is, indeed, a third world country. Roads are substandard with only a few paved roads in the country, the best being the asphalt road from Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville. However, infrastructure has improved over the past five years. Electricity is somewhat reliable even though blackouts are still common, sometimes for extended periods. Telecommunications in

Cambodia is improving with many internet cafes and cell-card kiosks in the cities. New housing and building construction is evident, especially in Phnom Penh.

In the area of business, Cambodia's greatest business sector seems to be the small business. Many of the shops that line the streets are family-owned with the owner and his or her family living above. The barter system is still the main means of buying and selling products in Cambodia, from the large open-air markets to the small street shops. Finally, Cambodian business loves the U.S. dollar, the majority of business owners preferring the dollar to their own currency.

### **ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION**

When I began my study of the Cambodian stock market, I thought it could be accomplished. Perhaps the government's timetable of having the market ready by 2007 was a bit optimistic, but Cambodia seemed headed in the right direction. There certainly seemed to be enough international help to make this undertaking feasible. I viewed the stock market's problems as logistical, including addressing the lack of experience in how to operate a stock market. However, given that the Ministry of Finance is still in a consulting and learning phase, having the stock market up and running in just under a year seems overly optimistic.

In Cambodia I grew to understand economics through observation and interview and was able to see the country's two different business worlds. The world of the proposed stock market and international business, politics, and economics affects a small fraction of Cambodians. The other world – that of small business owners, farmers, and other service workers – is focused on day-to-day survival and support of families. For Cambodia to progress, these two business worlds need to interact and focus on the needs of smaller Cambodian businesses while building a foundation for a stock market.

The infrastructure of Cambodia seems the most promising area of improvement in Cambodia in preparation for a stock market. The Cambodian government needs to continue improving infrastructure, building modern roads, strengthening telecommunications equipment, and improving water and sanitation. Such improvements will make it easier for businesses to communicate and transport goods while improving the lives of Cambodians.

The Cambodian government also needs to improve its economic policy to stimulate growth and encourage foreign investment. The foreign-investment focus of KPMG's website suggests the potential for growth in this sector (2007). And small business growth in Cambodia would create more jobs and expand the middle class, thus developing a tax base on which to increase revenue and lead to more growth. In addition, revamping the educational system would increase human capital and improve business output.

To attract foreign investors and international assistance, the government needs to pass and enforce laws that would make business and government actions more transparent. The interview with Tupaz showed the need for major improvement in Cambodian financial law for the success of the planned stock market. Corruption must be dealt with and enforced from the top down. The Cambodian government needs to bring transparency and legality to its government and businesses, and it needs to foster proper conduct in business transactions. The Cambodian government must run a transparent and truthful market so the Cambodian people may benefit from this market.

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## BEHIND THE SCENES OF CAMBODIA'S GARMENT INDUSTRY

Renee Steffen and Elizabeth Grafing

Cambodia's garment industry is growing, employing a large number of people, especially young women. Nearly 85–90% of garment factory workers are young women 18–25 years old (Better Factories Cambodia 2005a, "Facts and figures"). Work in the garment industry is especially hard on women's bodies due to strenuous labor, long hours, and life away from families for months, even sometimes years. In relation to work in the agricultural and service sectors, garment work is harder but generally provides a greater income. Because of the growth of this industry and potential for corruption within an industry that employs so many women, we developed a McMaster School project focused on management issues, corruption problems, and the conditions that female workers face. We were especially motivated to learn about the personal struggles many of the women in the factories face on a daily basis and to find a way to help these women.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Our research focused on the following issues: (1) what effect the Multifibre Arrangement has had on Cambodia's garment industry; (2) what countries pose threats to the industry as competitors; (3) what constraints and problems the garment industry faces; and (4) how constraints and problems influence the buyers' sourcing plans.

Concerning the effect of the Multifibre Arrangement (MFA) on the garment industry, the MFA of 1974–1994 "was a major departure from the basic GATT rules and particularly the principle of non-discrimination," according to World Trade Organization (2007). It was replaced in 1995 by the WTO Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) as a ten-year transition agreement designed to align the industry to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). According to Better Factories Cambodia, the 1995 revision—which is routinely called the 1995 MFA instead of ATC—gave developed countries ten years to adjust to the changes in the textile and garment industry. Better Factories Cambodia reports that this time period was created to help prepare countries for open global competition and argues that rich countries, like China and India, benefited from the revised agreement the most. Better Factories says that Cambodia benefited from this by chance. As a result of import limits, companies in industrialized nations began to buy from countries excluded from the quota rules.

Cambodia was one such country from which the developed countries decided to buy. The European Union and the U.S. bought extensively in Cambodia. In 1998, the Cambodia garment industry flourished at such a rapid pace that by 1998, the U.S. government brought the country under the quota system. They developed an agreement under which the U.S. permitted bonus quotas in Cambodia for its compliance with worker-rights guidelines (2005c, "International trade agreements").

With the end of the revised Multifiber Agreement on December 31, 2004, all countries now face global competition. Cambodia was only one of several countries that fared well under the agreement, but it is most likely to suffer the most from increasing global competition. According to International Labour Organization (ILO), countries that are most likely to benefit from the phase out of the MFA are China, Pakistan, and India. These countries endured the most setbacks while the MFA was in place (2005). However, Cambodia hopes to remain competitive against China, India, and Pakistan by promoting high labor standards. Better Factories Cambodia reports that top global buyers ranked Cambodia number one for having high labor standards. This is positive for Cambodia since buyers are becoming more aware of the working conditions that garment workers face (2005d, "World bank survey").

The reliance on high labor standards will allow Cambodia to compete with China in the short term, but Cambodia must come up with ways to sustain a competitive advantage in the long term. Cambodia is faced with other challenges related to the industry. According to "Constraints Faced by the Garment Industry," bribery is a major problem that results in excessive overpayments, which account for 7% of sales. Examples include unofficial payments for export documents and hidden costs for transporting garments from the factory and loading garment containers onto ships at the Sihanoukville port. The complexity of import-export procedures also poses a problem: the bureaucracy involved often results in significant delays, deterring buyers and investors alike. Garment companies will pay 200-1400% in extra unofficial charges to obtain export goods (2006, 18).

Labor law also produces difficulties. Conflicts often arise because of the ambiguity in the phrasing of the Cambodian Labor Law. According to Better Factories Cambodia, factories are required to pay the Cambodian minimum wage of \$45 U.S. a month. A \$5 monthly bonus is to be given to workers who show up every day. The labor law includes a forty-eight-hour work week and very minimal overtime each day, at rates of 150-200% of regular pay. The law also provides for compensation in the case of work-

related injury (2005b, "Guide to the Cambodian labour law"). However, our experience talking with ex-garment workers would show that there are numerous complaints about long hours and lack of compensation.

Lack of motivation and low productivity are also problems in the workplace, as reported by "Constraints Faced by the Garment Industry" (2006). Cambodian productivity seems to be lower than in other Asian countries for several reasons, according to this article. Some examples include inadequate "training methods," lack of communication between employees and managers, undeveloped technology, and health issues (18). To deal with the problem of undeveloped technology, a "world-first" information management system (IMS) was implemented for reporting and monitoring working conditions. This official IMS system for the garment industry compiles information electronically and automatically generates reports for individual factories, showing how well they are doing and what changes need to be made to make factories more efficient. According to Better Factories Cambodia, factories, buyers, vendors, employer organizations, unions, and the public benefit from the IMS because it provides online access to user-friendly information (2005e, "World-first information management system").

Another issue is the cost of power. Electricity in Cambodia (\$0.15 per kilowatt hour) is well above the international average of \$0.06. ("Constraints Faced" 2006, 18). Added to such operational problems are structural problems. The major structural problem concerns the issue of lead time. According to "Constraints Faced by the Garment Industry," Cambodian lead times for woven garments are 90-120 days whereas the lead times in China are 40-60 days (20). Usually, other countries in Asia are able to rely on their own raw materials. But Cambodia has to rely on other countries for raw materials.

What happens if Cambodia does not address these inefficiencies within the garment industry? If the government does not adopt a growth strategy of sound economic and legal reforms, the negative impact will be significant. "A Quantitative Analysis of Critical Challenges in the Garment Industry" reports a potential "loss per year of 1.5%" of the gross domestic product (GDP) beginning in 2010 and a loss of "up to 252,000 jobs." Women and the poor would be the ones most affected. They would be thrown into an employment market of few opportunities (2006, 24).

## INTERVIEWS

Information about the garment industry led to our work in Cambodia, which consisted of interviewing officials and workers with substantial knowledge about the inner workings of the garment industry. Prior to departing for the trip, appointments were arranged to meet the following people: Chea Sophal, national program assistant of the International Labour Organization's "Better Factories Cambodia" project; Sim Socheata and Ros Sokunthy, junior program officers of Womyn's Agenda for Change; Ingrid Fitzgerald from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); Charlotte Harrison, founder of *Precious Girl Magazine*, which targets female garment workers; and the owner of City New Garment Factory.

On our second day in Cambodia, we interviewed Chea Sophal, who gave us details of his job responsibilities as the national program assistant for International Labour Organization's "Better Factories Cambodia" project. We discovered that Chea's primary responsibility was to coordinate the twelve teams of monitors that go into the factories to inspect the buildings and working conditions. The visits are unannounced and the teams usually consist of two monitors, one of whom has made a prior trip to the factory so that he or she can see the level of progress since the last visit. Once a visit has been made to a specific factory, a six-month period has to pass until the monitors can go back again. The discouraging part about the visits is that the monitors can make improvement suggestions but the ILO has no authority to enforce these suggestions.

We wanted to know if a lot of factories have closed since the expiration of the MFA. This was a critical question since we were in Cambodia exactly one year after the MFA expired. Chea said that some of the smaller factories have closed, but the bigger factories have expanded their workforce. The number of factories employing more than 5,000 workers has more than doubled, while there has been a decline in the number of factories with smaller workforces. This increasingly puts smaller factories under pressure, and female workers fear that they will lose their jobs. If more of the smaller factories continue to close, there is no guarantee that they will secure employment in the remaining large factories.

Chea identified major problems facing the garment industry, including remediation problems, the lack of ILO authority to enforce its suggestions, and the size of mandated daycare centers. The Cambodian labor law does not specify how large a daycare center must be, only that one must be built for factories that employ over one hundred women. Excessive overtime,

informal methods of payment, high transportation costs, and increased competition with China and India were also cited as problems plaguing the industry. However, Chea was optimistic that safeguards against China would protect Cambodia's garment industry for the next several years.

Our next meeting was with Sim Socheata and Ros Sokunthy, junior program officers at Womyn's Agenda for Change, a grassroots organization that focuses on empowering Cambodian women to speak out against the discrimination they face. Also participating in the interview were two young women who were unemployed because their factory had closed down. They asked to remain anonymous out of fear.



From this interview, we learned that 90% of the women who work in the garment factories come from the rural areas. They leave their families to work in the city and send the bulk of their paychecks back home. Workers often have trouble with the two to three unions that can be found in any given factory – amounting to approximately 616 unions total – because of the conflicting interests of those unions. Testimony during the interview indicated that union representatives do not always represent workers well. One of the young women, unemployed as a result of her GAP factory closing down, said that the union representatives and employers often have secret meetings. The collective bargaining agreements (CBA) that are made between the unions and employers are not seen by the workers, so they do not know if they are being discriminated against. Workers are often forced to accept the compensation provided by the CBA or else they won't receive anything at all. Since the end of the MFA, Womyn's Agenda for Change has received official confirmation that twenty factories have closed down with even more suspending their operations for an indefinite amount of time. It

is hard to calculate how many workers have been displaced because of these closings or suspensions because factory closings are secretive.

Sim, Ros, and the ex-garment workers also talked about some of the injustices that are seen in the garment factories. When the ILO monitors come into a factory, select workers are often chosen so inspectors will hear positive things about the factory. One of the ex-garment workers stated that in the case of one ILO inspection, one hundred young workers had to hide in the bathroom because they were under the official employment age. Beating workers and being forced to work overtime are also problems.

There is also increasing pressure to meet larger quotas. As a result, managers want shorter production times along with high merchandise quality. Instead of one person working one machine, one person now works two or three machines. If a certain worker is not keeping up with the fast pace of production, other workers are required to help. This is a shift from individual responsibility to a team-based working structure under which a whole team is punished if one of its members does not meet the daily quota. Meeting large quota demands puts added stress on both the managers and workers. If the quotas are not met by a specified time, there is a risk of the buyer not sourcing work to that factory in the future. Women continuously fear for the stability of their jobs in this environment.

Finally, garment work is very hard on women's bodies. Women usually work in a garment factory only five to seven years partly because factories prefer young workers whose bodies are able to withstand the long, hard hours. If a woman becomes pregnant, she stops working to raise her child. Technically, if a woman works for three years in a garment factory, she receives permanent status. But because of the benefits awarded a permanent worker, almost every factory employs non-contract workers, who are not entitled to any benefits.

Our next meeting was with Ingrid Fitzgerald and a woman—known only as Kanika—from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). These women stated that there is a huge need for training in the garment industry. The Cambodian Garment Training Center only trains 300 workers a year out of the thousands of women who work in the factories. There is a need to upgrade the training methods and to provide alternative employment training and entrepreneurship training. Because women only work in the factories for a limited time, the need for alternative employment training is very high.

Safety outside of the factories is also a concern. On the days the women receive their paychecks, they are in danger of robbery, assault, and rape. The interviewees expressed the need to focus on changing men's attitudes about what it means to be a good man. Parents' attitudes about keeping women in schools also need to be addressed. Women are often viewed as subordinate to men and not as important, and they are held back from education and a number of employment opportunities. If attitudes can change, then women will benefit.

Our next meeting was with Charlotte Harrison, the founder of *Precious Girl Magazine*, which addresses critical issues relating to women's health and relationship skills. Women are able to write and publish their own articles for this magazine. Some of the writers for the magazine are former garment workers while others are students. The target market for the magazine is garment workers. According to Harrison, too often women feel that they are isolated and that the issues they face are not encountered by other women. In reality, this is not true. The majority of the articles published in the magazine are based on real life so other women can identify with them and find ways to resolve certain issues. The magazine is still in its initial stages, so its impact on Cambodian women's lives is not yet known. It may prove to be a great tool for the empowerment of women.

### **GARMENT FACTORY TOURS**

The most critical part of our trip was when we toured several garment factories in Phnom Penh. After gathering information from various interviews, we met with Peter Lam, a Chinese manager of City New Garment Factory. This factory consists of approximately 1,000 workers who mainly produce woven products, such as swimming trunks, shorts, and pajamas for Wal-Mart, K-Mart, JC Penney, and Sears. Since this was our first time ever visiting a garment factory, the experience was overwhelming. As far as we could see there were mounds of fabrics, and the buzzing of sewing machines filled the air. The women worked diligently at their machines and the speed at which they were working was impressive. Some of the women looked up and smiled at us as we walked past while others appeared emotionless. We took pictures while they worked, so they may have thought we were ILO inspectors or from some other agency. The daycare center and health clinic were extremely small and they were not currently being used. Lam said that hardly anybody used these facilities.

After taking the tour of City New Garment Factory, we interviewed Lam. We asked if the factory had ever closed down or suspended its operations,

therefore dismissing workers. Lam was hesitant and finally replied that he never wanted to suspend operations and has never done so.

Being skeptical of his answer, we later reviewed some of the literature on factories and found a document that stated that at the end of December 2004, the factory let off workers who had worked from 2001 onward. The exact number of workers let go was not specified, but information showed that the price of piecework at the factory had dramatically decreased. Prior to the ending of the MFA, piece-rate workers received \$0.03 per piece. Now they received only \$0.01 (Womyn's Agenda for Change, 2004). Lam had also stated that most of the workers wanted to work overtime. Again, we were skeptical of this assertion because we already knew that forced overtime at factories was a problem.

The second factory we toured was the Taiwanese-owned Malatak factory, recently constructed and opened for operation in 2005. It employs around 2,000 workers and supplies to Wal-Mart, Target, and Croft & Barrow. The third factory was the Merit factory, which opened in late 2005. They too are a big supplier to Wal-Mart and employ around 750 workers. We encountered the same experiences in these factories as at the first one.

## ANALYSIS

As a result of interviewing officials from key organizations related to the garment industry and touring factories, we have a clearer sense of the inner workings of the garment industry. Several features stand out. Although garment work provides a steady income if the worker can keep her job, the work takes a hard toll both physically and emotionally. Working in a garment factory means isolation from family and survival in an unfamiliar city where robbery, assault, and rape occur on a daily basis. Sometimes a worker is forced to work overtime. In an emerging country like Cambodia, a worker has to expect the unexpected and trust no one because she never knows who has hidden motives. A worker has to wonder every day if her factory will be the next to close down or suspend its operations due to lack of orders. She worries that if her factory closes down, she may not be compensated for her work. She wonders whether the money she has earned and sent back to her family will actually get there.

Information drawn from the interviews has led us to posit a possible approach to address the concerns mentioned above. Independent workers with sewing machines could work out of their homes so they would not have to leave families. With sewing machines women who have either been laid off or terminated could still make an income. We have concluded that one way to improve the human condition in Cambodia is to provide sewing

machines that will allow women with sewing skills to succeed on their own in the developing economy.

## REFLECTION

Initially, the purpose of this project was to create a marketing plan to entice new businesses to locate in Cambodia. However, during our in-country research we realized the importance of economic independence for women. Sophal Leng Stagg, director of the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund, reinforced the idea of supplying sewing machines and setting up training sessions for women, with the goal of women possibly starting up their own tailoring shops. By raising money for the purchase of sewing machines, we may provide a tool to help women empower themselves and better support their families.

Reflecting on the Cambodia trip, we find that we have benefited greatly. In a culture so different from the U.S. we were able to engage in professional research and navigate the country while communicating with people who barely spoke English. The McMaster School for Advancing Humanity gave us the opportunity to pursue both personal and professional growth while helping others.

We have learned that the people of Cambodia are struggling to survive in a way that is difficult for us as U.S. students to *understand*, but we *felt* a deep connection with the people there. We find ourselves wondering how we would handle the deep level of poverty there. Would we be garment workers fighting to help our families survive? Would we become beggars on the street like the ones we saw outside of our hotel? Would either of us have to sell her body for money?

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