

Helping to Care for Cambodia's Children

The Sharing Foundation

www.sharingfoundation.org

PO Box 600 Concord, MA 01742

Fall 2007

Roteang Students Pitch in to Stop Dengue



We were worried when in June, on the regular three monthly site visit to our Sharing Foundation projects, we saw that a huge trench between our Roteang Village elementary school and the junior high school, newly constructed behind the grade school, was filling slowly with water that had no way out. Additionally, trash from both schools was being dumped toward the pit and lots of left over rubble from the Junior High building made for many extra small pockets of standing water.

Every summer dengue fever hits Cambodia, caused by the "tiger mosquito" [as Elephant calls it], a daytime biter that breeds in stagnant water. Clearly here was a major hazard for our village children. First step was to get an estimate of how much it would cost to fill the massive trench, about 40 yards long, by 10 yards across, and 7 or 8 yards deep, with dirt.

An emergency e-mail to the TSF Board seeking to spend an unbudgeted \$4000 resulted in a unanimous go-ahead directive.

Next, we declared "all-school work day" on the following Thursday, an unheard of event. But on the appointed day, over 600 students from the two schools showed up, with rakes and shovels and bumble baskets from home. All morning old bricks, sand, stones and trash were pushed into the big dirty pool, until the two schoolyards were flat and without any small puddles. Elephant then summoned up 16 truckloads of earth, and the trench was completely filled, and the earth smoothed. An incinerator is now being

built on the covered trench, so that school debris can be burned safely.

Elephant also took the opportunity to talk with the assembled students about mosquito control, and the need to cover traditional water jars at home, and seek out and eliminate standing water.

There is no immunization for dengue, a viral disease, and hundreds of children are infected and die yearly in Cambodia. Dengue is also called "break bone fever" because of its symptoms of very high fever, and excruciating muscle and joint pains, which are worse than the worst flu. In addition, vomiting leads to fluid loss and dehydration. In the lethal cases, most often in children, a hemorrhagic rash appears, and then bleeding from nose, gums, kidneys and intestine, as platelets in the blood fall.

In 2006, 158 people died, mostly children.

As the summer has worn on, we are very glad we held "all school work day", talked about dengue prevention, and covered this potentially deadly trench. As of August 3rd, Voice of America reported 27,265 cases of dengue this year in Cambodia, with over 300 deaths. This is a 90% increase from a year ago, felt to be caused partially by the heavy monsoons which began early this year. Kandal Province, where Roteang village is located, is the second hardest hit area of the country, with over 3000 cases and 28 deaths. The Government has run out of Abate [temephos], a chemical larvicide imported to spread on some ponds, and prevention education appears to be too little too late.



Strict procedures at our Roteang Orphanage have been enforced, with no breeding spots left undrained or unemptied. On the Farm, our covered rainwater collection spheres, instead of the traditional open water pots, have protected the farm families we are sure. Standing water eradication has also been stressed to all the farmers.

The newspapers are reporting that the epidemic seems to be slowly abating. Elephant has just e-mailed "Because of TSF model, we work very hard to avoid the Dengue, and we are very lucky with no cases in the Orphanage or the village til now."

New Dental Program for Roteang Orphanage Children

The children of Roteang Orphanage don't necessarily think this is a great new program, but we are happy to announce that we have finally added a first-class dental program for the 69 children in our care.

We previously had a dentist who came periodically to the Orphanage, but his care was totally to pull out severely decayed teeth. We really wanted to salvage teeth whenever possible, and to get a good preventive program in place. On the last oversight trip, after consultation with some Australian friends, we made an appointment for one of our youngsters, Sambath, to go to the top-notch expatriate dental service in Phnom Penh to see the dental professor from New Zealand there. [Sambath's two fillings that day cost \$105.] We were able to discuss with the dentist at length how we could find a well trained, affordable, Cambodian dentist, who was skillful with children and was interested in preserving, not pulling, teeth.

Elephant and I then went to see the relatively new dentist, whom he had trained, Dr. Suon Monica, and



were delighted to find her neat, well-equipped dental clinic on a back street. Dr. Monica, a warm and friendly young woman, actually prefers children as patients, and was only too happy to begin seeing our children, brought in our Orphanage van, accompanied by their own nannies for support,

starting the following Saturday. So far we have brought 37 children to Dr. Monica and 17 children have needed 29 fillings total, with regrettably, 7 children needing extractions. The other children are all getting cleanings and dental records [with a copy for us] and Dr. Monica plans to come out and train our nannies specifically in how to take the best care of the children's teeth. Dr. Monica's charges are very reasonable, at \$5 per filling.

We are currently seeking advice on the best use of sealants, and also whether our children, obviously without access to fluoridated water, can have fluoride added to their current daily regimen of a multivitamin. Dr. Monica was very complimentary about the great condition of the teeth of the children who have been at Roteang since they were very young, and have been on a good diet, and regular brushing. [And, yes, Dr. Monica is very aware of which of our children have HIV/AIDS, and uses Western sterilization, mask and gloves, and precautions as we would do.]

Tep Vuthea, Roteang Orphanage's extraordinary young, artist painted a mural on the wall of the new dining room extension TSF has provided for Kampong Speu Orphanage. The funds to build the extension were raised by a very loyal donor group, the children and families of St. Paul Lutheran School of Lakeland, Florida. Third grader at St. Paul, Madison Tolson, made the picture that Vuthea worked to reproduce on the building.



Kampong Speu Immunizations: Several months ago, Pol Sok Ly, the Director of Kampong Speu Orphanage, a government institution about an hour from Phnom Penh, asked if the Sharing Foundation, whom she knew had immunized all the children in its Roteang orphanage and now was conducting a village-wide inoculation program, could possibly immunize all her seventy seven, mostly school age, children. None of these youngsters had ever had immunizations of any kind, despite being under the aegis of the government. We have long felt that basic protection from diphtheria and tetanus, and also hepatitis B, which is a big cause of death and disability in Cambodia, was the most basic necessity for all the children.

We contacted CamTom, an adoptive parent organization based in Seattle, and asked if they would like to help financially with this effort. They very promptly responded that they would, and we have mobilized our Roteang Orphanage Doctor, Em Samney who in turn organized a group of volunteer medical students to help him. With Elephant and Dr. Ney in charge of the project, all the children there have been tested for Hep B, and DT/DPT and hepatitis inoculations started for the appropriate children. {Three already have Hepatitis B, and 6 had antibodies} We expect the total cost of the program, including testing, supplies, and 6 shots per child, as indicated, will be about \$34 /child.



The Immunization program for children of Roteang Village continues. The second round of shots for hepatitis B and DPT and tetanus



are on schedule. Parents are happy and some participants even smile. One more set to go.

In June, the Quinobequin Quilters, who meet in Wellesley, Massachusetts, sent us about twenty more of their gorgeous, child-size, "comfort quilts". Each quilt is unique, with vivid colors and patterns made to delight young recipients.

This is the second time Roteang Orphanage has received quilts from the guild, and the youngsters were thrilled. Several headed right away for their mats, saying they were going to have naps, and snuggling with their new gifts.





Ivy & Davin say, "We Will"

Most couples say "I do" on their wedding day, but this summer, one couple also said "I will"...support The Sharing Foundation, that is. Newlyweds Ivy Tseng and Davin Hatfield-Westgate asked for some unusual wedding gifts in celebration of their recent nuptials in the Catskills. Forgoing the conventional route of signing up for china or flatware from Pottery Barn or Bloomingdales, the New York City-based couple invited their wedding guests to instead make donations to The Sharing Foundation. "Davin and I do not lack for 'stuff,'" Ivy offers. "So we wanted to find a way for our friends who really wanted to give *something* to put their money toward something really *worthwhile*." Via their wedding website, they invited friends to suggest organizations as beneficiaries of this initiative, and longtime friends of Ivy's who have a son thanks to Adopt Cambodia nominated The Sharing Foundation. On the strength of the personal connection and the current list of foundation projects described in recent newsletters, Ivy and Davin selected TSF to be their "wedding registry." Designating the TSF immunization drive as their particular area of interest, the couple described the foundation's work on their website, provided a link to sharingfoundation.org, and included pre-addressed mailing labels in their wedding invitations so that guests could send contributions targeted to the immunization project, directly to the foundation. "It's exciting and humbling," the couple posted on their website, "to think that the occasion of our wedding can represent a chance for children to be spared preventable life-threatening diseases." A fun note on the website suggests that this guarantees "good karma" for the marriage-to be sure, and it also merits hearty gratitude and best wishes for a long and happy marriage from The Sharing Foundation and the youngsters in Roteang Village!

~by **Dave Nuscher**



TSF calendar Coming in November !

Board member Lisa Dennison is hard at work on a spectacular Sharing Foundation 2008 Calendar featuring some of the best pictures travelers, volunteers and Elephant have taken this year ! Big, clear photos, all taken in Cambodia will be featured, along with good sized write-on calendar pages showing all the significant Cambodian holidays as well as American holidays. Order forms will be available in the November newsletter, and on the Web—Wait for it ! They will make great gifts for friends and relatives, as well as another boost toward meeting TSF's \$300,000 yearly budget.



Generous Donors Help TSF Improve New Junior High School

At the new Junior High School, built on land just behind the Roteang Village Elementary School, several new additions have just been finished, thanks to TSF and generous donors. We have long supported the Elementary school, where we hold our 18 sections of English School every afternoon, and where our Lochtefeld children's library is housed, but we had not anticipated the government building another school on the farmland in back. The new Junior High was built with five classrooms, but the Principal of the school decided to use one of the five as his private office and sleeping room, and for teacher meetings. Thus the overflow children were relegated to an old wooden building with a very hot tin roof in the schoolyard. We sought a donor to help us build a small building for the principal's office and bed, and **Jeanne Wadleigh** of the Wadleigh Family Fund, Swansea, Massachusetts, responded. The Principal is now moved to this airy bright building, which cost just over \$4000. When classes start this Fall, fifty or so children at a time will have classes in the now freed-up classroom, thanks to Jeanne Wadleigh! This is a good example of how a relatively easy solution, in a very complex cultural system, can markedly improve educational opportunities!



first huge rainwater collection systems we had installed, several years –It was given in honor of Tim Hult, Carlisle, Mass, as a birthday present] The problem was, the system was built for 800 students, and the added Junior High, 600+ more students, drained the water supply completely. The **Tom Meyer /Sue Stark** family of Branchville, New Jersey came to the rescue, and the Junior High now has its own rainwater collection system for drinking water, which the Stark /Meyers chose to name in honor of their adopted Cambodian daughter, Sovann. The students really appreciate it, and TSF is very glad not to be dependent on the government pump water, as we tested a sample for arsenic and found it to be 300 ppb, the top safe allowable standard being 10 [USA] or 50 [WHO]. As a cancer-causing agent, arsenic is akin to tobacco use, and these wells supply arsenic to thousands of school children in Cambodia and other developing countries! Thanks, once again, Tom and Sue, for a major health impact for many, many students!

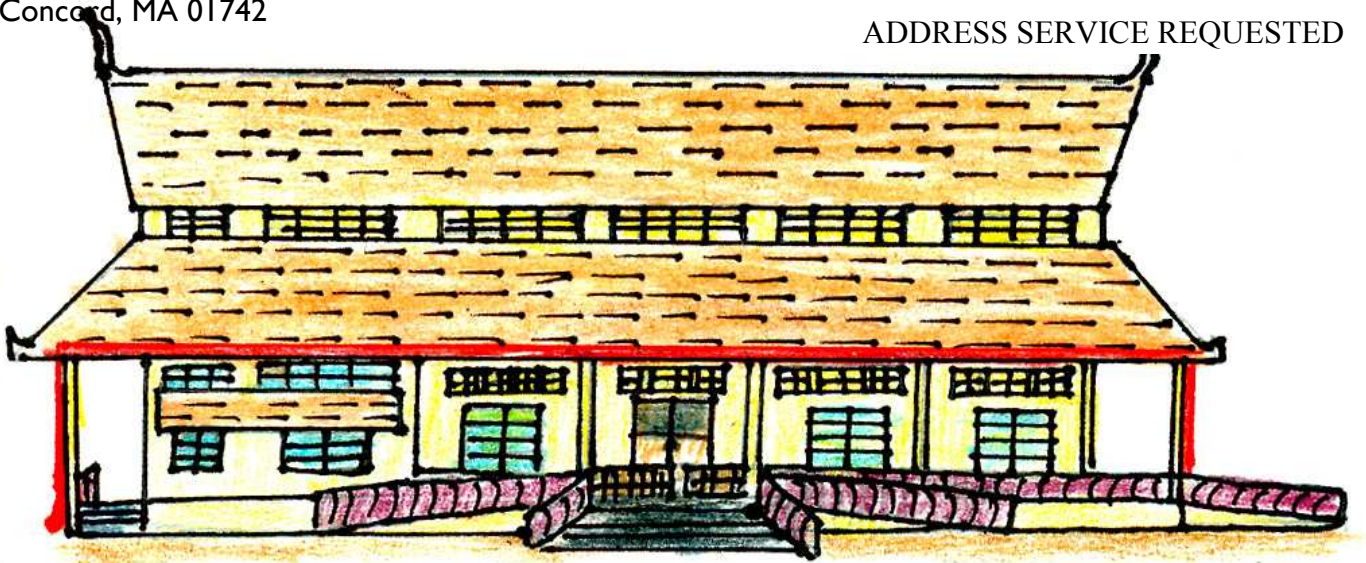


At the new Junior High, the government put in its standard well for water, and the students, knowing that the water was better and safer at Roteang Elementary School nearby, were coming there for their drinking water. [This was one of the

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Roteang Orphanage

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The purpose of The Sharing Foundation is to help meet the physical, emotional, educational and medical needs of orphaned and seriously disadvantaged children in Cambodia. Our goal is to prevent some of the problems associated with poverty by developing, in conjunction with Cambodian community leaders, programs to improve the social fabric for these children and their families.

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