Doing Good That Is Good™

The newsletter of FARMS International Formerly AGRICULTURAL EVANGELISM

New program starting in Cambodia - March 2009

Providing revolving entrepreneurial loans to poor Christian families – Galatians 6:10

Dear Friends:

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him." Ps 62:5

THERE ARE TIMES we need to speak to ourselves! We need to reassure ourselves of where our expectation lies. As the Psalmist declares, it is only in *Him.*

As a country we are facing troubling times. However, those we serve through FARMS face troubling times all the time, and we must not forget them. A FARMS's loan is more than a temporary stimulus; it is a long-term answer to prayer and a tangible display of God's love.

Pat and I had the privilege of traveling to Asia late last year. It was a very productive and exciting trip. We were able to visit four of our existing loan programs: two in Thailand, and two in the Philippines. We also made our first visit to Cambodia, where we laid the groundwork for a new program.

Cambodia has been on our heart for many years. The present open door is a real answer to the prayers of many. The Evangelical Friends Church Mission has been church planting there for several years. Because of the dire economic situation, the government of Cambodia is very open to those that offer development help.

Could a country suffer more than Cambodia has? It is almost beyond human comprehension the evil that had engulfed them. The genocide of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge has little competition for the utter cruelty they inflicted on their own people. Nearly two million lost their lives in what is now referred to as the "killing fields." The fortunate ones escaped to Thai refugee camps. It is estimated that about 700,000 fled to those camps between 1975 and 1985.

Pat and Joe Richter in local transport

After years of missionary endeavor, the Christian church in Cambodia had just begun to grow, and then the genocide started. From 1970 to 1975 the number of Christians had grown from about 700 to 9-12,000. Only 2,000 survived the slaughter of the Khmer Rouge. Those that survived escaped to the refugee camps in Thailand. God worked marvelously in those camps. Numerous ministries ministered to the needs of the refugees and many of them came to know the Lord. By the early 90's about half of the refugee camp population had been relocated to other countries, including the USA. Those that were left, about 350,000, returned home to rebuild their lives.

Joe Richter, Executive Director, training potential committee members and missionaries in FARMS program operation. Gary Colfax, missionary (L).

Thailand Refugee Camp

www.websitesrcg.com/border

Every Christian we met in Cambodia had spent a majority of their life in a camp. Some were born there; some speak perfect English! However, all have a common dilemma. After living in a camp situation for nearly 20 years they lack the normal work and survival skills so necessary to make a living in their homeland. Dependency is a severe problem; the loss of most of the educated class is another. Although Cambodia has vast agricultural potential, the traditional skills needed to utilize this resource are frequently missing. Not surprisingly, per person income

Stuffed frogs are a delicacy!

[**Cambodia,** Continued on next page]

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is reported to be about $300 per year! For many, hope is missing; the trauma of loss and suffering are very evident.

Cambodian spirit house. Spirit houses are a prominent fixture outside most homes and businesses in Cambodia. The spirits that are supposed to inhabit these shrines are appeased with offering of food, drink, incense, and flowers. This animistic practice predates Buddhism.

Even with these formidable obstacles, we are excited about the future of FARMS in Cambodia! We are excited about the vast potential for family development and local church support this new program will have. We are thrilled to see the difference Jesus is making in the lives of the Christians and how this young church is growing.

The believers we met expressed a genuine enthusiasm for our program. Some shared how a project loan would help them farm more productively; others saw a loan as a way to start a business. Real hope filled their eyes. Their infectious smiles were astonishing. The missionaries related how our program, with its tithing component, fit their vision of planting truly self-supported churches. It was their prayer that the churches would take the lead in making a FARMS program a reality and now that time has come.

Cambodian pastor and wife

Pray as the committee writes its own loan policy. Pray that the vision of self-support will become a reality. Pray for the finances for this program. Pray for the missionaries as they face many obstacles seen and unseen. Pray that the Cambodian church will use this opportunity to nurture creative thinking and stewardship in their people. God certainly will answer.

Remember, God's word says, *"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble."* Ps. 41:1

Love in Jesus,

Joseph Richter
Executive Director

SO KON — TEACHER OF LOVE

SO KON'S STORY is so typical of life in Cambodia. So and his family were forced to live in the camps in Thailand because of the civil war in Cambodia. In 1988, while living in the camp he came to Christ. Then, in 1993, their family was repatriated to Cambodia. Sadly, his spiritual growth did not continue until he met Pastor Poa in 2004. Interestingly, So had been trained as a Buddhist monk for 13 years. Now, So Kon has a great thirst for the Word of God and his background helps him relate to fellow Cambodians. He is reported to be an outstanding student in the Evangelical Friends' Theological Education by Extension program. It is hoped that he some day will become a Bible teacher.

So with his family

So Kon is fluent in English and really has a heart for his people. When we came to visit, he was just finishing an English class in his open air school room. He teaches children several subjects. It was his hope that starting this school would not only help those that could not afford regular school tuition, but would also help his family's income. However, he soon found that even the few cents a day he was charging was not affordable for many of the children in his village that needed an education. As a result, many of his students attend free! His sacrificial love was very evident.

So Kon's open air school

So and his wife Mao have some cows and chickens, but their major source of income comes from making rice noodles for the market. Preparing the rice is a tedious process using a hand driven millstone and press. It takes them about five hours each day to produce the noodles. This gives them just a couple of dollars income each day. Mao spends most of her time in this endeavor, which leaves little time for church or Bible training. Our prayer is that families like this can be helped with a FARMS loan to improve their business and allowing more time for God's work as a family. Pray for them.

So and Mao milling rice

The Faces of Cambodia

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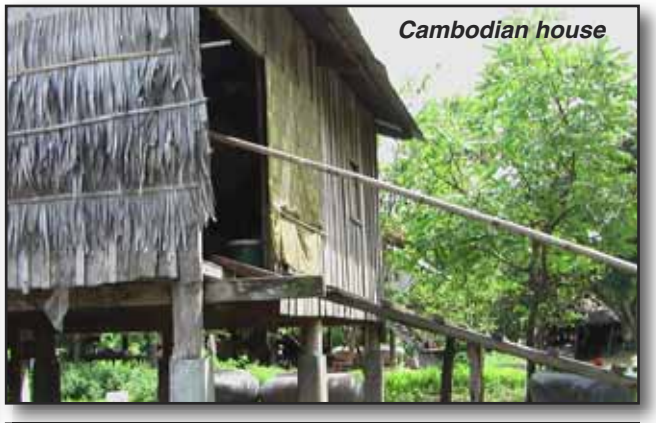

Cambodian house

Washing clothes in a river

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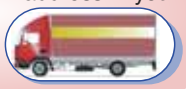

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