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THIS LIFE CAMBODIA  
A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE



 THIS HAS BEEN A LONG TIME COMING! SO MUCH HAS BEEN ACHIEVED THROUGH THIS LIFE CAMBODIA'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SINCE WE SENT OUT OUR LAST NEWSLETTER. THE HUGE SATISFYING REWARD IS THAT MORE THAN 1000 CHILDREN HAVE BENEFITED, AND THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT ACCESS TO EDUCATION IS EVER-INCREASING WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY. WITH THIS IN MIND WE THANK YOU! CAMBODIA HAS ALSO BORNE WITNESS TO SOME ENORMOUS HISTORICAL EVENTS IN RECENT MONTHS.

On 26th July 2010, the Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia finally handed down a sentence to Kaing Guek Iek, aka 'General Duch' - 19 years imprisonment for the torture and execution of more than 14,000 people at the notorious Tuol Sleng prison during the Khmer Rouge regime. What might this mean for most people here in Cambodia? One thing to consider as a result of this lengthy court battle is that the sentence was shortened by 5 years due to the illegal detention of Duch prior to the trial. This reduction in sentence, while reflective of international human rights law, is vastly different to the treatment received by the majority of prisoners in the Cambodian judicial system. The issues facing this country's regular judicial and prison systems are some of the most pressing in Cambodia today.



Having direct bearing on this issue, in this newsletter we are proud to introduce our new team for the This Life Beyond Bars project – our new initiative which aims to address the educational and human rights of children in prison, and children of prisoners in Siem Reap Prison. Meet the team who will be helping develop sustainable solutions with families affected by the legal justice system in Cambodia.



We also provide updates on our extraordinary and ever-expanding projects, including our School Development Program, Scholarship and other student assistance programs, and we highlight an exciting adventure to Australia by two of our staff.

Enjoy the read!  
**This Life Cambodia**

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## MEET BUNRA AND RITH



My name **Leang Bunra**, and I'm the Projects Officer for This Life Beyond Bars (TLBB) which is This Life Cambodia's new prison program. To break free from poverty, TLC believes in education and sustainable community development. TLBB was created to provide opportunities for

child prisoners and children of prisoners to complete a full education.

Under the Cambodian Constitution and in Cambodian Education Law 2007, all Cambodian citizens have the right to free, high-quality education. Cambodia has pledged "Education for All" to the United Nations and these laws reflect this - but Cambodia has a long way to go to make this a reality. "Education for All" states that all children should have access to this education by 2015.

But what about education for children in prison? Children aged 14 - 18 are held in adult prisons and no formal public education available to them. Informal education is provided by NGOs for one hour a day in some prisons, but this is not sustainable. Children of prisoners in our communities also face additional obstacles to "Education for All", including financial issues and social stigma.

I have a law degree and worked as a human rights monitor for Cambodia's foremost Human Rights organization. My work included assisting families to visit their family member in prison, and ensuring their rights, researching and monitoring the rights of prisoners, as well as a range of other human rights work outside of the prison system. Prior to this, I worked at one of Cambodia's few free community legal representatives for the poor and vulnerable.



My name is **Hol Ritheavy** and I began working with This Life Cambodia in June 2010. In my role as Projects Officer I work across two program areas. I work with Borany in the Lower Secondary School Development program, which aims to create opportunities for the principles of Child

Friendly Schools - safe and healthy schools supported by their communities. I believe that all children should have free, high-quality education - and they have a right to this under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. I have worked in the public education system in Cambodia and am well aware of the challenges it faces.

However, my main program area at the moment is This Life Beyond Bars, working with Bunra and Sophie. Before coming to TLC, I managed a program supporting children in prison in another province - we worked with minor detainees to reduce their stress, increase their capacity to reflect on past behaviors and to plan their future carefully. In my experience, except for a very few cases, all detainees who have participated in activities in prisons have not been repeat offenders. I really believe This Life Beyond Bars will have a positive impact on young people and help them to break free from poverty.

OUR WEBSITE HAS A NEW  
LOOK...CHECK IT OUT AT  
[WWW.THISLIFECAMBODIA.ORG](http://WWW.THISLIFECAMBODIA.ORG)

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## SOPHIE'S BACK!!



Walking back into the TLC office last week after almost three months away, there was a definite buzz in the air. The energy of old and new staff members, expanded teams, and new initiatives bounced off the vibrant, newly painted office that has been decorated with beautiful big

prints of photographs taken by friends and staff. And then came the laughs and I knew this hub of activity was exactly the dynamic workplace I wanted to be in.

I'm Sophie Potter and I am working on the new program, This Life Beyond Bars - Education for All. I am here at TLC as an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD) through the Australian Government's aid agency AusAID.

I am working with the highly skilled and experienced local team to help develop this new program area. We are in turn working closely with communities to enable them to find solutions to some of the issues families face when they come into conflict with the law. I am working alongside local staff in researching how government and other agencies currently address the human rights and educational needs of children in prison and their families, and developing partnerships with key stakeholders. Our aim is to develop sustainable solutions and pathways to education for such children and their families.

My background is primarily in Youth Work and Women's Health, but I have worked across the community sector in Sydney, Australia. Most recently, I worked in advocacy for women in domestic violence going through the legal justice system. I have a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communications and Cultural Studies and a Diploma in Community Welfare.

## LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Lower Secondary School Development Program (LSSDP) has been adopted as a means of creating sustainable solutions for education needs in economically disadvantaged and poorly served communities.

This program is focused on community participation and community-led solutions, and is designed to be long-term sustainable, rather than creating donor-dependency. Activities are based on the shared belief that every child can be educated in safe, clean and orderly schools. It also promotes educational content that is relevant to the lives of the students, adequate books and learning materials, ongoing training and development of teachers, strong school leadership, and parent and community involvement in the education of their children and the running of their schools.

Towards the end of 2009, TLC conducted research at Krabei Riel to assess the effectiveness of the LSSDP in achieving its goals in this commune. We conducted in-depth interviews and community consultation within the village to determine the successes and difficulties. We interviewed parents, teachers and students. We also held community consultations with authorities from the Provincial Education Office, District Education Office, the Commune Chief, Village Chief and the School Director.

Several interviewees mentioned that the students did not have any textbooks, so we assisted the school to source 900 new textbooks. We also observed from our research that many female students were not attending class because they did not have a toilet block. Accordingly, we worked with the community and partner organizations to build a toilet block with 5 rooms, 3 for girls and 2 for boys. When the building was complete, the community became very engaged and held an opening ceremony for the unveiling of the toilet block with approximately 200 people attending including students, teachers and various representatives.

Other construction activities have included working together with the community to make around 50 new desks, and



to build an impressive Life Skills Building where cultural activities can be taught. Also following consultation, we assisted in the land filling of the school area to prevent flooding. We helped by guiding the project, but the funds were raised by the community itself.

Our biggest successes are achieved by working with the School Support Committee – similar to a Parent Teacher Association - and we have assisted with teacher trainings and exchange visits with other schools that are operating with good practice.

This program reflects TLC's core values of community participation and community-led solutions, and we look forward to continuing this work in the coming year.

TLC would like to thank our partners Everest for Apples for funding the LSSDP and World Youth International and all their very special volunteers for working with us to construct the toilet block and Life Skills building. Together we have made a huge difference in providing educational opportunities to communities in Cambodia.

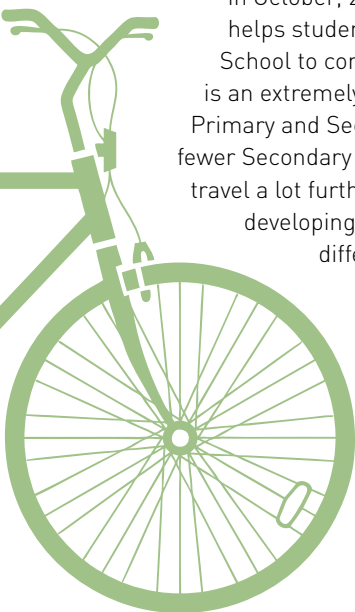
## PEDALLING OUT OF POVERTY

This Life Cambodia's Pedalling Out of Poverty program began in October, 2009. Pedalling Out Of Poverty helps students in Lower Secondary School to continue their education. There is an extremely high dropout rate between Primary and Secondary school as there are fewer Secondary schools so students must travel a lot further. For poor children in developing countries like Cambodia, the difference between getting and not getting an education may be as simple as a second-hand bicycle.

Pedalling Out of Poverty has delivered a much-needed resource to

vulnerable students in Krabei Riel community in Siem Reap province. Talking with the students, they all say they enjoy going to school, and feedback from parents is that the program help the most by reducing expenses. They advised that as well as making it easier to get to school, the bicycle saves valuable time and they encourage their children to attend every day. Over 70% of the parents said that their child would have dropped out of school without the bicycle from TLC. Others said their child would have had to walk long distances or the family would have gone into debt from borrowing money to buy a bicycle.

We are on target to drastically expand the program to provide at least 100 bicycles every year, starting next month! In September we will roll out another 100 bikes as well as repair kits and training on bicycle maintenance. This means that at least 100 vulnerable and disadvantaged students can have the opportunity to continue their education.



## THIS LIFE CAMBODIA'S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

This Life Cambodia's Scholarship Program has just hit its two year anniversary! Thanks to our donors' continued support, we were able to extend the program in 2009/10 and sponsor 31 students in our original community, and judging by the feedback and school results this year the program is still operating very effectively. We have also taken over 35 scholarship students from Schools for Children of Cambodia from two target areas. One in Siem Reap town (Angkor Lower Secondary School and Wat Svay Lower Secondary School) and also in Dan Run commune, Soutre Nikom district - also in Siem Reap province.

In 2009/10 our program had expanded three times over and we had a total of 66 scholars. With the new school year starting in September, we are still looking for donors to sponsor even more students! Please visit our website for more information.

Feedback and evaluation from scholars and their families advises that - all students enrolled in the scholarship program are continuing to have a positive experience and enjoy going to school. All the scholars' parents think that what has helped their family the most about the program is that it reduces expenses. They said their child would have dropped out of school without the support of the program.

TLC believes part of the reason for the success of our program is because we work very closely with the community, the school, families, and community leaders - who are all committed to continued success in these students' lives. We wish to further extend the program every year so that a greater number of vulnerable and disadvantaged students can be given the opportunity to continue their education. On behalf of all of our scholars and their families, we would like to sincerely thank our donors for continuing to support our program.

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## AUSTRALIA - BY TWO VERY SPECIAL TLC STAFF



### SE'S STORY

I had been looking forward to leaving Cambodia for Australia on the 21st May 2010. Yes, it came and we caught a flight from Siem Reap to Kuala Lumpur and from Kuala Lumpur to Melbourne. We arrived at Melbourne at 11:35 PM and Aimee our ex volunteer and her mother, Kaarina, were waiting for us at Melbourne Airport and took us to their home. When I took my first step out of the airport, it was really shocking with freezing cold temperatures. Oh my Buddha! It was 6°C.

We were very lucky that the first week in Melbourne, Amiee's family offered for us to stay with them. We joined her father's 50th birthday party; visited Melbourne city centre and watched a movie in the Village Cinema; and visited the Werribee Open Range Zoo where I saw many different animals and birds - most of them I had seen on TV and in photos. We also went to visit Melbourne Museum, a huge and wonderful museum - I had never seen such things before. There were animals and birds displayed, bones of giant animals, science displays and many other things. Also we met Julie and Paul, the parents of another ex-volunteer, Chantelle, at Safe Search Australia where we had a great opportunity to practice our presentation with their staff, who have supported TLC.

The second week we were in Adelaide. We were participating in the Personal Empowerment Program: the empowerment and inspirational training program to bring about change in one's own life and make a positive contribution to the world. I learned so many things during the training and met old friends (our ex-volunteers) and many other amazing, motivated young people who have been involved with World Youth International Overseas Action Programs. After the training, I felt very empowered and inspired and very positive about my ability to make a difference in my life as well as in the world. It was a best experience in my whole life.

We also had an opportunity to do our presentation at two Rotary Clubs, the Rotary of West Lakes and the Rotary Club of Adelaide. Both presentations went well and I felt very proud of myself, as I was very confident to talk in front of 110 Rotarians.

Our last week of our trip was in Sydney, the busiest city compared to Melbourne and Adelaide. There was another great opportunity to present TLC to Turrumurra Rotary Club and we got a very warm welcome from all the Rotarians. Besides doing presentation in Sydney I went to the Opera house and the Harbour Bridge, Manly Beach, Taronga Zoo, China town and other parts of Sydney and the Blue

Mountains. They were all extremely nice and incredible places that I have never been before.

I would like to thank Amiee's family so much for hosting us in Melbourne. I feel much appreciation for the hospitality Amiee and her family provided. The family always said "help yourself" and it made me feel like I was at home. Many thanks to World Youth International for inviting us to join the Personal Empowerment Program training and many thanks to our ex-volunteers and World Youth International staff for all their support - they were very helpful while we were in Adelaide. Lots of thanks to Zoe for hosting us in Sydney - it was a very nice place and really comfortable. To Rhonda who gave us tickets to the Taronga Zoo, what a great day! I also would like to acknowledge Barbara for guiding myself and Borany on how to do a good presentation; Cindy and Clarissa who were our best drivers and tour guides almost everywhere in Sydney and provided lots and lots of support wherever and whenever needed; Sandra and Gerald who provided the best welcome to their house and a very delicious lunch. The best acknowledgement I have is to the remarkable person, Billy, as I would have never ever had all these incredible opportunities and experiences without all his hard work and support.

By Sen Se - Assistant Director

## BORANY'S STORY

I am Borany, I would like to write this short letter about my first experience in Australia and also my first experience making it abroad. First of all I would to say THANKS to This Life Cambodia and World Youth International for supporting me to join the Personal Empowerment Program and visiting Australia.

We took a flight from Siem Reap airport to Kuala Lumpur. On the plane I felt like I was on the bus or on the boat, it is so hard to describe! I almost had plane sickness but am so lucky that I didn't get it, I just felt a bit dizzy.

We arrived Melbourne at night-time. The city is so beautiful! They have high buildings and beautiful lights everywhere. Amiee and her mum Kaarina picked us up at the airport and brought us to their house.

The first week in Melbourne - when we got up the first morning at our host family's house, Amiee and her mum were preparing for Amiee's father, Andy's birthday. Se and myself helped to decorate for the party. After we decorated we went to the beach and walked along for about 30 minutes. Australians are different to Cambodians, when people join a party they bring some food and soft drink along with them.

The next day we took the train to the city and walked through Melbourne centre and went to wonderful cinema at the Crown building. We visited the beautiful Melbourne Zoo, where we saw lots of wild animals and birds. We saw lots of cute Kangaroo's, which is a sight of the Australian country. We also visited an organization called the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre, which is supporting refugees from around the world who are immigrants to Australia. We went to the wonderful Melbourne Museum, which displays plenty of wild animals, insects and the big bones of dinosaurs, which are no more in this world. We also met with Julie and Paul and



had a great opportunity to practice our presentation with Safe Search Australia staff, who have supported TLC.

The second week, we joined the Personal Empowerment Program training in Adelaide Hills. The training was very empowering and inspiring for all participants. I learnt a lot from the program and met new friends and also old friends who came to Cambodia for the Overseas Action Program. We also had a great opportunity to present our organisation to two Rotary Clubs, the Rotary of West Lakes and the Rotary Club of Adelaide. The presentation went very well as the Rotarians were very interested in TLC programs and also in learning more about the situation in Cambodia.

Sydney was the last City that we visited in the third week. There are lots of beautiful buildings and nice places in the city. We did another presentation to the great people at the Turramurra Rotary Club. We walked to the Opera house and Harbour Bridge, took a ferry to Manly Beach, visited the incredible Taronga Zoo, the Blue Mountains, and China Town.

Finally, I would like to say thank you so much to Amiee and her family for providing us with accommodation, food, and lots of other things and for taking care of us so well. You all made us feel so much at home. Many thanks to Zoe who provided us with a beautiful place and a comfortable room in Sydney. Also I would like to acknowledge Cindy and Clarissa, our beautiful drivers and our tour guides, supporting us in Sydney. Thank you so much to Sandra and her husband Gerald, who warmly welcomed us to their house and offered us such a delicious lunch. Rhonda, thank you for giving us tickets to Taronga Zoo. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge Billy for working so hard and offering Se and myself the wonderful chance to visit Australia.

Wishing you all and your family health and happiness all the time and hope to see you all someday, either in Australia or Cambodia soon.

By Chea Borany - Programs Coordinator



## HOW YOU CAN HELP THIS LIFE CAMBODIA

**1. You can make a one-off donation,** a monthly contribution or sponsor a scholarship student by visiting our website and following the easy steps. Your donations are always welcome, needed and appreciated! Financial support is crucial to what we do at This Life Cambodia. Individual donations allow our projects to move forward and students to continue their education. Any contribution, small or large, can make an extraordinary difference.

**2. Pick up a good read!** In This Life; 21 incredible stories from our first 21 scholars presents an intimate insight into the lives of our scholarship students. Written in their own words, this 60 page book is filled with heartfelt stories of their everyday lives, hopes and dreams. It is with endearing honesty that they share their stories.



*"In This Life is a classy tome.... The stories are insightful and touching"* -The Phnom Penh Post

This book could be yours for only \$20 plus postage if you visit our website!

**3. Fundraise for This Life Cambodia:** We have many fundraising ideas that individuals, groups and organizations can implement at home. These have been effective in the past and are a great way to engage your community. 100% of funds raised will be delivered directly to the project or program with the greatest need. For more information on fundraising, please contact us.

**4. Volunteer with This Life Cambodia:** We are interested in hearing from professionals who want to contribute their skills and time to This Life Cambodia. In the past, we have worked with doctors, writers, photographers, graphic designers and groups of construction workers. We can also help university students receive academic credit for time spent volunteering. If you feel you could help our efforts, please contact us with your ideas. We work directly with skilled volunteers and do not charge a fee.

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## CONTACTING THIS LIFE CAMBODIA

Please visit our [www.thislifecambodia.org](http://www.thislifecambodia.org) for more information about us and the programs we run. You can also find us on facebook!

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We hope you enjoyed this issue of our newsletter. If you would like to share your thoughts on our programs or make suggestions, please send us an email. We'd love to hear from you.

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