

## Updates from The Operation Hope Foundation Ltd April 2008

### Food prices is causing havoc to our budget

Cost of rice has increased 300% from US\$300 to US\$1000 per ton. Amazingly rice has also shot up in Cambodia.

Cambodia is a major rice producing country but it is said that much its rice is sold to Thai and Vietnamese merchants who then re-export the rice. We are now buying rice at three times higher than what we use to pay! And this is despite ! us buying in bulk through a wholesaler. Rumours abound that rice will soon reach 5000 riels a kilogram or S\$2.50 per kilo.



For most families in Singapore, it has affected their budget but we don't eat as much rice as the Khmers. How many kilos of rice do your family consumes in a month? Perhaps it ranges from 10 to 30 kg. Hope Village Prey Veng with its 105 children and 14 staff eats one ton of rice every month. One ton equals 1,000 kg! So our food budget has gone through the roof and I have told Afalina our Singapore manager to take rice out of the budget and we will give her separately the money needed to buy rice.



Food has increased by an average of 24.5%. Pork thigh was 8,508 riels per kilo from Jan 2007 to March 2007. It has increased 56% to 13,287 riels from Dec 2007 to Feb 2008. In the same period, duck eggs have increased 22% from 370 riels per egg to 450 riels. Beef has also increased 22%.

We have a database where the food cost is recorded daily and we are able to extract the above from this database.

Please pray for us as this increase in food cost is indeed wreaking havoc on our budget. If you are feeding a family of four, imagine how much bigger the problem is when you have to feed 120 people!

Pray for the poor especially those with no land to farm or grow their own food. How much more difficult it would be for them.

Inflation has started becoming an issue in Cambodia. With the rise in food cost, salaries have crept up. We will have to adjust our Khmer staff salaries if these rising costs become a permanent feature.

We will explore ways to reduce food cost. We may start a chicken farm at our new Hope Training Centre and rear tilapia fishes for our own consumption. We will also explore the possibility of storing rice, buying them cheaply during the harvest season and then using the store rice regularly until the next harvest. We will have to learn how to dry and store rice and explore buying our own rice milling machines.



We need people to join us to work on these projects. If you know of anyone who is keen on hands-on projects, is willing to travel and stay in Cambodia for a month at a stretch, please ask them to email me at [robert@ohf.org.sg](mailto:robert@ohf.org.sg).

## Khmer New Year

The Khmer New Year falls on the 13 April. Most of our children went home to their relatives. 20 children stayed back at Hope Village either because they did not have a home to return to or their guardians were too poor to come and bring them home.

The celebration of the Khmer New Year was a relatively quiet affair in Prey Veng province with fire crackers being let off sporadically.



While the children were allowed to sing and dance during these nights, it was the presence of the Temasek Polytechnic team that brought much joy to them.

This team led by OHF advisor, Cheah Swee Hock, was there to install the solar panel system at Hope Training Centre. In addition to funding the solar panel project fully, the team graciously sponsored 2 special dinners and organised a cultural night during the New Year festival.

## Solar Panel Installation at Hope Training Centre

On the 10th April 2008, a group of 18 students accompanied by 2 lecturers embarked on their journey to Cambodia. The Overseas Community Project Team organised by Temasek Polytechnic Engineering School, was on a mission to install LED lights at the new Hope Training Centre.

Hope Training Centre is the place where OHF creates jobs for the poor in Prey Veng by setting up income generating projects such as the extraction of chicken antibodies, manufacturing of low cost soap, polymer clay products and sewn items such as bags and other accessories.

As mentioned, the team went beyond their responsibilities to organise activities for the children, donated some clothes and entertained them with dance performances.



*"The credit for the successful journey goes to each one of us and also our helpful lecturers. Not only did we complete our tasks, we also developed a special relationship with the kids at Hope Village.*

*We were always happy to help and accompany the kids with their games and activities. Even though it was difficult communicating with some of them, it did not stop us from forming the special bond. We felt very much welcomed at Hope Village and the 8 days had been a wonderful and unforgettable experience for all of us."*

- Temasek Polytechnic Team

## New Child at Hope Village Prey Veng

The 11 year old boy is Sain Poa. According to his grandaunt, Sain Poa's father died some years ago and his mother is in Phnom Penh. We do not know whether she's still alive as she contracted AIDS years ago and they have since lost contact.

Sain Poa looks quite malnourished and had typhoid some years ago. We found out that he was given only rice and fish sauce for his meals. He would sometimes go to the river looking for flowers to go with his rice. His grandaunt brought him to the doctor and the doctor gave him a blood test and an injection. He has since recovered.



Sain Poa's grandaunt makes a living by cutting up bamboo to desired lengths and shaving the edges away. She does not have a house and lives in her boss' quarters. Her boss allows her to live in his house because she is working for her and she has neither land nor house.

She earns about US \$1 per day and travels to wherever work is available, bringing Sain Poa to work alongside her. Therefore, Sain Poa has never been to school and is illiterate. She would like the boy to be able to study so that he can be a learned person.

## Mongolia Magic Expedition

Period: June 2008 (10 days) / Estimated Cost: S\$2200 plus

Poverty has increased because of the transition to a market economy in the 1990s, after the breakup of the Soviet Union and the collapse of Mongolia's centrally planned economy. Privatization of industry and state farms brought high levels of unemployment. Benefits and assistance dried up. Incomes shrank, inflation devoured purchasing power and people had to bear the cost of health and education services.

Presently, one in three people in Mongolia are poor, and the number of poor people grows as the income gap widens. Poverty is becoming entrenched not only in urban centres but also in rural areas, where about half of the country's poor people live. Bring joy and hope to the rural poor with Robert Kee and Lutheran Church. The team is planning multiple community projects that are very much needed in the poor provinces of Outer Mongolia.

Some of these projects include:

1. Magic Show
2. Dental Care
3. Introducing the use of OHF low-cost Solar Ovens

If you are interested to join this trip, please call us at 68732955 or email [hope@ohf.org.sg](mailto:hope@ohf.org.sg)

This is a combined project between OHF and the Lutheran Church of Singapore. The basic intention is to bless some remote villages by providing entertainment through magic show, health care through the services of a Singapore dentist volunteer and poverty alleviation through the introduction of low cost solar ovens.

Unfortunately the cost is high as the return airfare alone is around S\$1,800. If we have a stop over for a couple of nights in Seoul, Korea, the cost will be higher as we will incur hotel, meals and transportation costs.

## Gifts - in - kind Needed:

- 1) 100 School Uniforms (White shirt / Navy blue pants / Navy blue skirts)
- 2) Installation of CCTV system at Hope Village Prey Veng