

Report on Henk van Zijtveld's visit to our orphanage in Battambang Cambodia, February 2017.

Once again it was a long flight but after 15 hours I landed in Phnom Penh where our local agent Vireak was waiting to meet me. It was great to see her again. We carried on immediately by car (5 hours) to Battambang where our orphanage is located.

Here we met Brian O'Ruairc van Rotaryclub South Surrey Vancouver Canada, Chip Bowes en Dougie Riach van Rotaryclub Bangkok South Bangkok Thailand and Arie Bloed our permanent consultant since the start-up of our foundation. Arie Bloed is also a member of Rotaryclub Bangkok South. Both Rotary clubs are major sponsors of our house and had flown in to see the progress made in the last year. We travelled together during the next few days. After a good night's sleep we went to our orphanage, what we saw there was tremendous.





Firstly the children of course. On arrival there were about 10 children present, the rest were in school. They look very well cared for which already says something positive about the way things are going. They are all friendly, cheerful and exuded an atmosphere of " We feel at home here". Great to see! At dinnertime the other children arrived home from school. In total we have 37 children in our orphanage and they all look happy and well cared for.

Three years ago we appointed a new manager Mrs Nong and everything radiates from her, she runs the house as a good mother. Marvellous!



Our manager Mrs Nong in the middle and our agent Vireak on the right.

Under her leadership further steps have been made in the rest of the organization. The boys building has been completely renovated and transformed from corrugated iron walls and one large room to a stone building with separate sections for the various age groups (up to 6 years, 6 to 12 years, and 12 to 18 years). A piece of land behind our main building has been raised and prepared for growing produce for the orphanage. The first crop of maize has just been harvested and sugar cane will be planted shortly. In the meantime they have quite a number of hens and chicks running around. They have received a pig which they fatten up and sell using the proceeds to buy a piglet which they fatten up again. In this way they can keep 50% of the profits to spend on the children. Mango trees (received from a sponsor) have been planted creating both shade and fruit to eat.

In short a miniature farm is being created with the aim of cutting costs, improving conditions and also providing education for the children.









Maize harvested.

All of this is mainly due to the efforts of our local manager Mrs Nong. I had taken a number of footballs with me, much to the pleasure of the children. Arie Bloed arranged a kids quiz with prizes enjoyed by everyone.



Brian (Rotary Canada), Arie Bloed (our permanent consultant who helped us to set up the project in the first place), Chip en Dougie (both from Rotary Bangkok South)





Finally I had a long talk with Heng Rithy. Heng is studying to be a nurse, financially supported by Henk and Hanneke. The study is going very well and he asked if it would also be possible to study a foreign language. He was told that this would be possible if he continued to get good results.





Furthermore we had scheduled a meeting with Sarin Kunthea studying and being supported by Gradus en Brian. However she had to cancel due to family matters. Her study is going well and according to plan.

Brian (Canada) had a serious meeting with another student due to the fact that the study had been prematurely stopped, although the student still wanted to continue again. Eventually Brian decided to give him another chance but warned him that if there were any other problems support would be stopped.

That evening we jointly discussed the future plans for the orphanage. One issue was the funding of the running costs and also the recommended improvements to be tackled in project form. It was agreed on a joint approach by all concerned.

The next day we had a visit from Retrei, a boy studying to be an architect sponsored by Deirdre and Brian from Canada. He boarded the night bus from Phnom Penh at 4 a.m. to be able to meet us the same morning. His study is going really well and that's great to see.

Overall a very fruitful visit including good discussions with all the students. Steady progress is being made which makes the sponsoring more than worthwhile.



The next day we travelled back to Phnom Penh. In the evening myself and Arie Bloed had dinner with Vireak, Emmerson (her husband) and two of their children. We evaluated what we had seen and reviewed future plans. Conclusion: We will energetically continue with this wonderful project



The next day we met with Arnout Bigare. This is a Frenchman, working for an international company in South-East Asia. As a private person he has taken over the management and sponsorship of CPCDO Phnom Penh (our head organization) from Mr Yuth. This has been a great improvement. He is very active and we were impressed with his contribution and methods. Both orphanages (Phnom Penh and Battambang) have had an official inspection from the government. A number of improvements have been recommended and discussed. These were not serious matters but they still needed attention. For our house the number of staff did not completely match the number of children, leading to the appointment of another staff member. Vireak will follow up on all points. It was a very fruitful meeting.

The same night I went to dinner with SreyNu. She is the first student to graduate under the sponsorship of Henk and Henneke and everything is going great with her. She has a job, a room and now owns a moped. After dinner we went to the night market in the centre of Phnom Penh. We walked together through the market chatting amiably about everything and nothing. Later SreyNu suggested bringing me back to my hotel on her moped. Ok with me, so I jumped on the back and she took me home through the city. Arriving at the hotel I prepared to say goodbye but she wouldn't leave until I was inside the hotel. She wanted to see me safe! Which is quite funny really when you see this small slim girl bringing the old man back to his hotel for safety! But greatly appreciated!



The next day I returned home tired but satisfied with a successful trip.