



Above: Pichey Rangsey Primary School students turn up to school on a DAY OFF! And what a fantastic reception for the Humanitus team. Below: Simon Cowell with one of the Pichey Rangsey students.

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Dear friends and supporters of Humanitus,

We are delighted to be sending out our latest Newsletter with updates from Cambodia. Having personally read through it many times, I must say, to date, it would have to rank as one of our most exceptional Newsletters, and I thank our Media Coordinator, Julie Cordner, for another sterling production.

I had hoped to join our Australian team on their recent trip to Cambodia, however due to other commitments it just wasn't possible on this occasion. As disappointing as this was to me, I farewelled our team happy in the knowledge that they were heading to Cambodia to represent Humanitus, and to spend valuable time with our in-country partners and the children we work with. Yet another wonderful show of commitment from a truly dedicated team!

Having had the privilege of many journeys to Cambodia over the past 10 years, this time around I felt like the archetypal *arm-chair traveller* and *virtual travel companion* on their journey. With the stroke of a send button, emails and photographs arrived at my desk on a daily basis. Whilst I shudder to confess to being an occasional Facebook user, I must admit it proved to be the perfect medium to follow the day-to-day activities of our team and see, almost first-hand, the progress being made in Cambodia.

I trust you will find the information, reportage, and photographs contained herein as fundamentally expansive and illuminative as I have. I'm certain you will all agree that just the photographs alone speak volumes.

I won't delay, with further dialogue, your anticipatory turning of this page and it is in all sincerity that I thank you for your continued enthusiasm, and gracious support, of our work.

Best regards,



Jeffrey R. Richards
Executive Director and Cofounder



Boys at Mkak Primary School take turns reading books to each other...

① MKAK PRIMARY SCHOOL

It seemed to be aeons in the making, but on March 30 this year the Humanitus Australia team of Sally Corder, Simon Cowell, Julie Corder, and our Bright Children Organisation [BCO] partner Piseth Luon (with children, Cameron and Daire) visited the Mkak Primary School near Siem Reap to check on progress. Piseth started the school in 2003 to benefit the local school children, as well as the general community. With a high level of community support, Piseth has been able to work closely with the Chief of the Commune, the Chiefs of the villages, the Chief of Education and other district officials in the planning and implementation of processes, all working together to determine future directions. Piseth grew up in this village during the time of war when education was minimal and when it was dangerous to even attend school. However, he was determined to gain an education; he studied hard and has become a role model for his community.

On the day we arrived at Mkak Primary School, we were a little surprised to find a World Vision group already there, engaging the children in a newly installed water tower (with 2000-gallon storage tank at the top and taps for drinking from and washing hands below) - as a nod to World Water Day [March 22]. We didn't want to disrupt what was already in progress - and, essentially, cleanliness and attention to hygiene are a vital part of the Health Program we are trying to implement at the school...so, "Thank You!", World Vision.

While the kids were otherwise occupied, we were able to have a look at the 'new' classrooms, some of which have not yet been fully completed. Walls, windows and floors need to be finished off, but at least the Humanitus-funded roof is on...an important factor, with the onset of the rainy season only a few months away! Piseth advises that \$US10,000 [\$AU13,000 appx] is required to complete projects already under-way, and it is our earnest hope to do so by the end of this year.

In the classrooms in use, the children were "bright-eyed and bushy-tailed" - and more than happy to engage with us, to try their hands at writing some English-language words on the blackboard, as well as following Sally in a version of 'Kookaburra Sits In An Old Gum Tree'. The youngest class group responded joyously to their new teacher [a local female teacher], and we are happy to have some diversification of sexes within the teachers at the school as well.

GENERALLY: The Library was in full swing also, with children selecting book after book to read through. The new toilet block is being under-utilised, we found, but we do understand that expecting children who have no concept of this type of facility to change their habits 'overnight' is a big ask. This is an issue we are looking to address in the near future so that the children can encourage their own families and community to be more conscious of sanitation and health issues. Unfortunately, the luscious Organic Garden has suffered from a lack of water and ongoing attention - with the 'silver lining' being that the local community has gained by having access to the well!

All in all, it was a great day at Mkak - and very positive for us all to see the advances being made...while realising the ongoing challenges still to be conquered.

Julie Corder
Media Coordinator

(L-R) Mkak Primary School Principal, Me Sakuth; Head Teacher, Lim Heang; Piseth's brother, Ra Luon; Sally Corder; Simon Cowell; Ms Sopheap; Vang Tuok; Piseth Luon and youngest son, Daire





Clockwise from above: Mkak Primary School grounds (very dusty and dry on our visit due to Cambodia being in drought); Old covered play area; New toilet block; Old covered classroom area; New (incomplete) classroom.



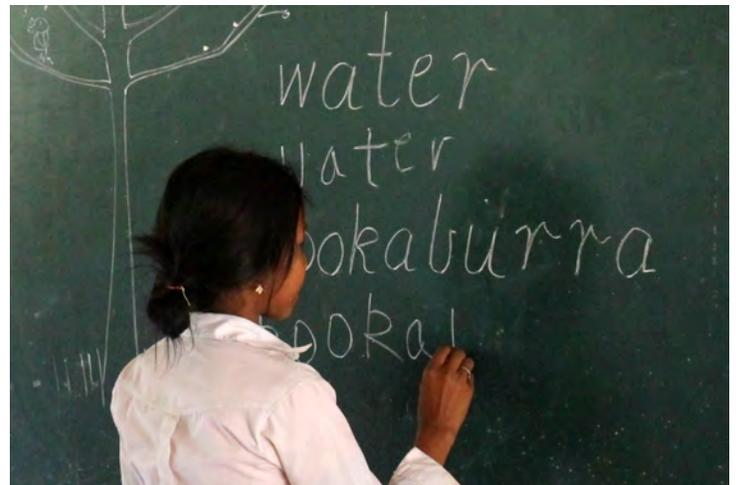
Clockwise from left: Sally greets the children at the front of the school; One shy boy hiding within the trunk of one of the few shade trees in the school grounds; Children awaiting their visitors, with the back wall liberally decorated with colourful drawings; All the children take off their shoes before entering the classrooms and leave them in the baskets outside; Sally shows the children how far Australia is from Cambodia; Simon gets to know some of the Mkak students.





The Library—in full swing...





Above: Activities in the classrooms.

② PICHEY RANGSEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

When in Phnom Penh, we visited the Pichey Rangsey [PR] School with Denzil Sprague (the school's founder), and had the most wonderful day with the students there. It was actually a holiday - but in spite of this, most of the students and teachers came to the school to greet us anyway, which made us feel very humbled. About 700 students ran to our vehicle as we drove in - which overwhelmed us completely - and we spent the morning visiting classroom after classroom, enjoying interacting with the students and chatting with teachers.

The students were smiling, happy, enthusiastic, noisy and engaged. It was truly an enlightening and enriching experience to be there and to know that the funds donated every year from Caulfield Grammar School, Malvern Campus [CGSMC] have contributed to this lively and energetic group of children who are eager to learn and so happy to be at school. We cannot express enough to the CGSMC students, staff and community on behalf of the PR students our gratitude for all they have done.

At the end of the school day we were especially privileged to visit two students' homes. The first was that of Theara Meas, a little girl who has had operations for a cleft palate over the last two years, but still has one more procedure to complete work on her mouth. From a shy and withdrawn child who struggled at school, she has become a child who smiles, has friends, is talking clearly and distinctly, and is engaged. The second child was Tola, who had experienced a debilitating skin disease four years ago while still at the primary school [he is now in secondary school]. He does have some minor residual scarring on his legs, but other than that, has a clean bill of health and seems to have grown centimetres in the process!

Again, we have to pass on our thanks to CGSMC for their contribution to the well-being of these children. When we met the children's families we knew immediately how grateful and happy they were for their now healthy children.

Sally Cordner
School Projects Director





Above: Some of the teachers join with Sally for a group photo.



Above: Sally discusses the children's education with Denzil Sprague and one of the teachers





Denzil Sprague [above right] leads the class in a rendition of 'Mornington Ride'.



Above: The children loved Sally's version of 'Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes', particularly when she kept going faster and faster...! Below left: Simon high-fives one of the Pichey Rangsey girls. Below right: Greetings for the visitors in the traditional Khmer way.





Top left: Two of the Pichey Rangsey teachers.

Top right: Pichey Rangsey's school grounds benefit from the large spreading tree in the centre.

Above left: Exodus at the end of their day off.

Above right and left: Most of the children ride bikes; a couple have a motorised version...

Left: (L-R) Group photo, including the team from Humanitus, Denzil Sprague, the Principal and teachers from Pichey Rangsey school.



The kids of Pichey Rangsey: full of vibrant well-being [thanks to our Health Program] and with some of the best-looking teeth in Cambodia!



③ P/R KIDS' UPDATE

THEARA: In 2014, when her teacher told Denzil Sprague that this young girl was lagging behind because of a cleft palate [below left] which prevented her from speaking clearly, he took her to the Children's Surgical Centre in Phnom Penh. There, Dr Gollogly had Theara admitted immediately, and the next day, after a four-hour operation, her recovery began. A week later, she returned home, and what a change!: before, only her mother could understand her mono-tonal sounds, but after surgery she would burst out into almost perfect speech. Our visit saw a still shy, but eminently more confident girl [right]; while the centre photo shows her on a Dental Day in February 2016.



TOLA: In 2012, Denzil Sprague noticed the Grade 4 boy had a fungal condition on his legs and elbows. He took Tola [and his teacher] to a local doctor, who prescribed anti-fungal cream and antibiotics (penicillin) etc. One week later, the change in the appearance of his skin was amazing. Four YEARS later [March 2016], with regular treatments in the intervening time, we found an older, taller boy (now in secondary school) who was happy to reveal his cleared skin. The results are fantastic...as can be seen from the before and after photos below and at right.



④ SFODA

On our second last day in Cambodia, the Humanitus team of myself, Sally and Julie visited one of our very first project partners. SFODA. SFODA has greatly benefitted from Humanitus over the years, with new lockers, field trips, monthly food donations, and much-needed funds for buildings and beds. This time around we just wanted to drop by and say a big “Hello” from Humanitus, since our main focus [as outlined elsewhere in this Newsletter] will be turned towards the Mkak (primarily) and Pinchey Rangsey schools.

It was so pleasing to be welcomed by name as we arrived, and even more pleasing to see the same children’s faces on this return visit. SFODA appears to be running very smoothly, and although still reliant on donations, the organisation receives regular food drops, volunteer workers, and a great supply of books and stationery. This time around I was also impressed by a thriving vegetable garden, and despite the hottest March on record in Cambodia, there was still fruit on the trees.

Our commitment to SFODA will continue, but on a ‘needs-only’ basis. I am in regular communication with the Orphanage Director, and I encourage you to look them up on Facebook and make a new connection.

Simon Cowell
Education & Learning Director



Above: The SFODA team, plus Orphanage children, and two of the Humanitus team, Simon and Sally. Left: Simon does ‘daddy’ duty. Remaining photos show some of the children currently using SFODA as a home-base.





THE FACILITIES [clockwise from top left]: The Humanitus lockers in the boys' room; 'small' boys' bunk-beds; eating and cooking area; playground; classroom





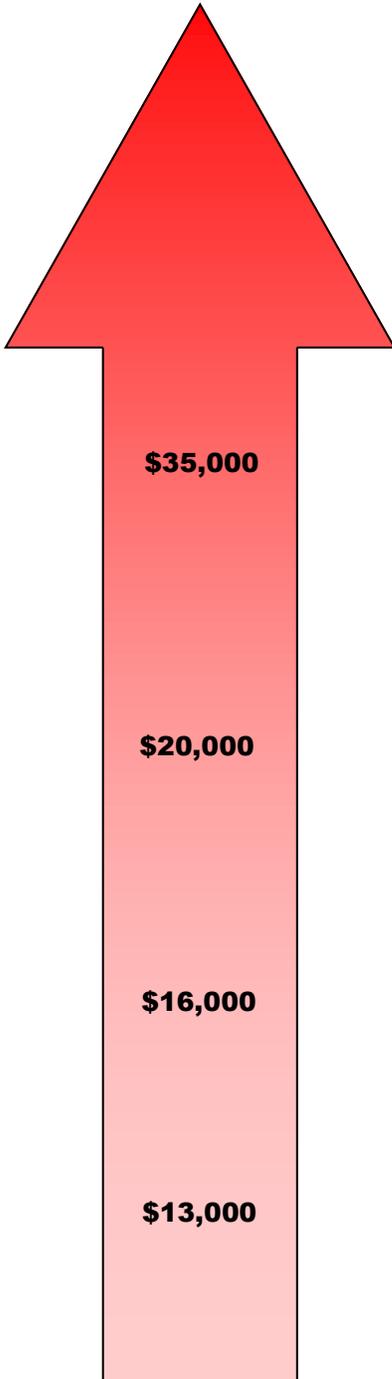
Above: Discussing current requirements for SFODA. Remaining photos show day-to-day activities which the children partake in when they are not at school...including, playing UNO; making LEGO scenes; having a cool rock in a chair; and making colourful bracelets - which each of the Humanitus team received as a "Thank You" gift.



⑤ GOALS



\$AU35,000



Step 4:

Create new playground [along the lines of that at Pichey Rangsey, shown right]

Deadline: 2017/2018

Cost: Appx: \$AU15,000



Step 3:

Create new seating around trees, and purchase new 'remembrance' trees

Deadline: mid-2017

Cost: Appx \$AU4,000



Step 2:

Remove old classroom which has termite infestation

Replace (or repair) flag-pole, and purchase new Cambodian flag

Deadline: end 2016

Cost: Appx: \$AU3,000



Step 1:

Complete classrooms: paint walls; finish floors; add windows

Deadline: end 2016

Cost: Appx \$AU13,000

HUMANITUS MOVIE NIGHT: May 11, 2016



Far left: Simon Cowell and Christine Gilliland
Left: Wendy Patton and Mandy Candlish
Below left: Bridie English, Adrienne English, and Linda Marshall - with Humanitus Director Jeffrey Richards



With very little knowledge of what lay ahead, about 75 Humanitus supporters bravely joined the Aussie team at Palace Dendy Brighton for a showing of the movie 'Mother's Day' on May 11. As coupons for Choc Tops came with the ticket price, some of our guests chose to add a beverage - with the aim of having a laid-back, easy-going time enjoying the movie...which, we admit, caused quite a bit of chatter afterwards. Was this, the latest of director Garry Marshall's 'special event' trilogy [including 'Valentine's Day' and 'New Year's Eve'] the WORST ever?!? Possibly, BUT, the main reason for the evening was to fund-raise for our little school at Mkak in Cambodia...and we are pleased to report that over \$1200 was raised after expenses. So, THANK YOU to all those who attended.

Contact us

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