



*People We Met Along The Way*

JRS CAMBODIA







Dedicated in loving memory of Sr. Marie-Jeanne Ath  
May her kroma keep her forever warm in the embrace of God.





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*People we met along the way*

# *Foreword*

Pedro Arrupe founded JRS in 1981 in response to the crisis which caused people, escaping war, starvation and persecution, to flee from Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos. “Why do we want to love the poor, help the lonely, heal the sick, bring freedom to the oppressed? Simply because this is what God does. Nothing else,” says Adolfo Nicholas, his successor. In 2012 JRS rooted in faith acting for justice with compassion for people on the edge, describes its mission as accompaniment, service and advocacy for forcibly displaced people.

JRS Cambodia began in 1990 with the pioneer team: Jub Phoktavi, Sr. Jeanne-Marie Ath, Br. Noel Oliver and Denise Coghlan. In our hearts, we brought memories of many people we had known in the refugee camps. In the smiling faces, the grace of God shone. In the suffering faces, the passion of Christ wept. In the children’s faces, the power of the Spirit to transform the world hoped. In the volunteers’ faces compassion and the struggle for justice grew.

In the faces and stories that follow, we see some of the moments of the history of JRS in Cambodia from its beginnings to 2012. After many years of genocide and civil war Cambodia signed the Paris Peace Accords in 1991, the Refugee

Convention in 1992 and adopted its national Constitution in 1993.. Many people in Cambodia have accompanied, served and advocated for the JRS team over the twenty two years. We thank them for giving us the opportunity to accompany, serve and defend their rights in return. The book takes us from the days of the refugee camps to the foundation years in Cambodia, the repatriation the JRS networks, the asylum seeker programme, the campaigns against mines and cluster bombs and the Reflection Centre.

The dream that one day there might be a JRS inside Cambodia as refugees safely returned to a peaceful motherland was with Mark Raper sj, JRS regional and later international director from his first trip there in 1984. His regional successors, Fathers Tom Steinbugler, Quentin Dignan, Steve Curtin, Andre Sugiopranato and Bernard H saw the dream become reality. They along with International Directors, Luis Magrina and Peter Balleis, and Jesuit Conference Presidents Ismael Zuloaga, Adolfo Nicholas and Mark Raper have given the work in Cambodia their tireless support, wisdom and encouragement. The Cogregations of the Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of Mercy have also been our constant friends.

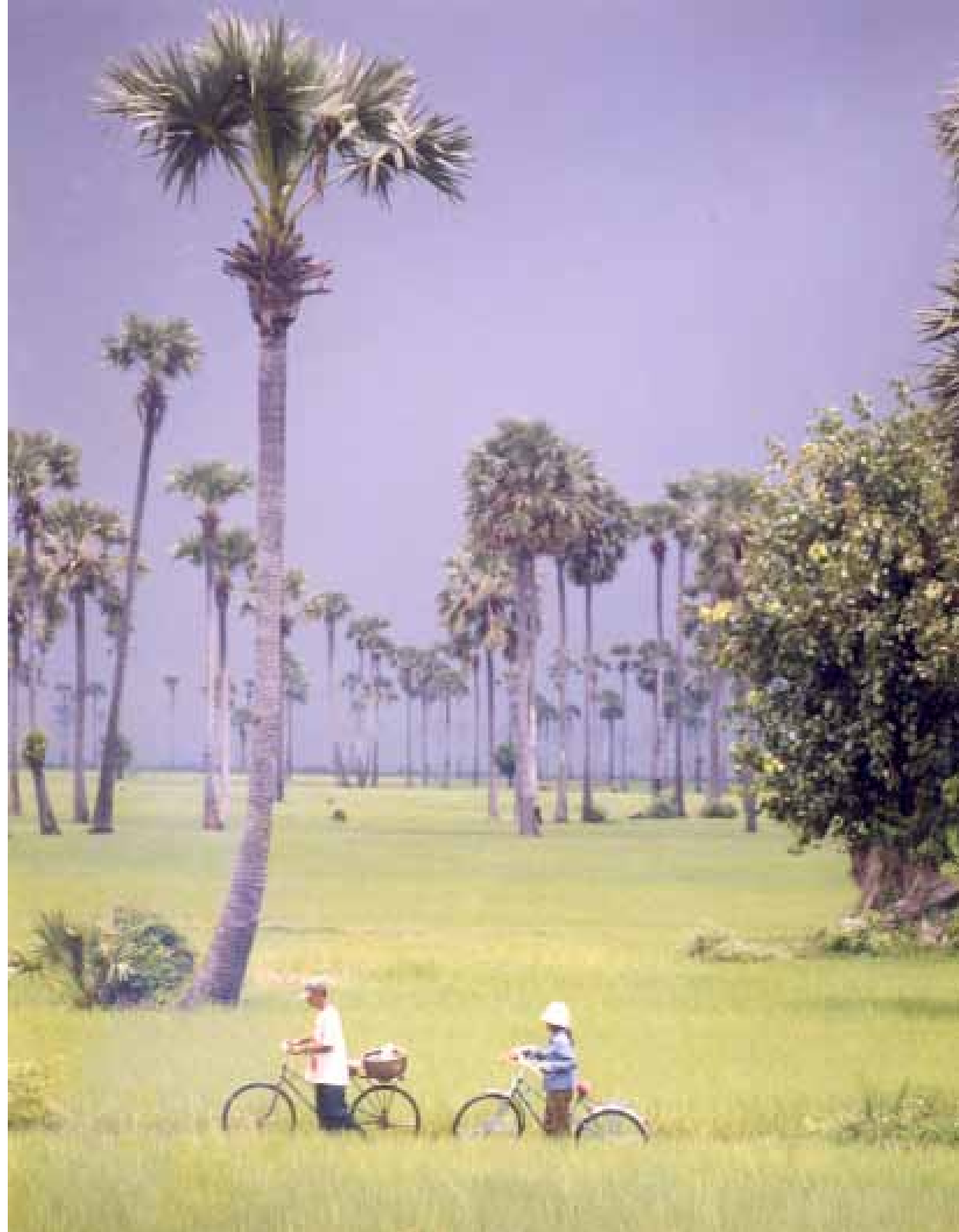


It is impossible to gather all the faces we met in this one book, so beautifully compiled by Tess O'Brien, a JRS volunteer. However we invite you to enter into the stories of the people you meet here and remember with joy and gratitude those who graced our paths and yours. For all who supported us with prayer, donations, friendship and blessings we say thank you from our hearts and pray that you too may meet Christ along your way, often very unexpectedly.



Denise Coghlan , Country Director JRS 2012 .

*The title "People We Met along the Way", is inspired by the song composed by Andrew Hamilton and Christopher Wilcox "Who did you meet along the Way?"*









## WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

JRS Cambodia grew from the pioneering efforts of the people working in the refugee camps along the Thai border. The people we met there are etched in our memories. Many are still friends and colleagues today. Names like Site 2, Kao I Dang, Site 8, Site B, Ampil, Rithysen, Dangiek and Nong Chan recall our past.

## *People we met along the way*



JRS began working in the camps in 1980. For Father Pierre Ceyrac and Father John Bingham, what was initially a six-month mission to Phanat Nikhom, became thirteen years of accompanying the refugees along the border. They were later joined by Sr. Virginia Hasson, Fr. Vincent Dierckx, Sr. Bernadine Evens, Fr. Alfonso de Juan and countless volunteers. Listening to the stories of the people, connecting them to loved ones, pastoral and spiritual care, social work, health services and supporting the education system the 'refugees' were establishing themselves, were part of the daily work of the JRS team.

In 1979 the Khmer Rouge were defeated, the Vietnamese entered Cambodia and many thousands of Cambodians fled to the border of Thailand. The Thai-border camps began and the full horrors of the genocide of 1975 – 1979 under

the Pol Pot regime were revealed. A minority of those who fled were granted refugee status and resettled overseas. The majority however were housed in sites, administered by particular Cambodian political factions, controlled by the Thai military and supported by UNBRO, the United Nations Border Relief Organisation. They were displaced persons with no refugee rights.

Life in the camps was precarious, over-crowded and desperate. Site 2 became the second largest "city" of Cambodians in the world after Phnom Penh. It was a bamboo city with thatched huts, water arriving on trucks, red dust and shelling in the distance.

The UNBRO security code for volunteer workers was:  
Situation 1 – Shelling in the distance





Situation 2 – Get your bags and move out  
 Situation 3 - Move out, leave your things behind  
 Situation 4 – Dive into the nearest ditch  
 By Situation 5 you didn't need to worry, you were already in Heaven.

“*With little means but great effort we fought for human dignity.*”

For the Cambodian people in the campsites, there was no way out. They lived in a prison, where life from 9am-5pm when international workers were present was very different from 5pm – 9am. Food came by rations which young males were refused, in case the food was feeding the ongoing war. In the midst of this unnatural circumstance people found themselves in, babies were born, people married and people died. The cycle of life continued.

The camps where JRS worked were but one part of the Cambodian reality.

First, Cambodia had been a “sideshow” in the war between Vietnam, Russia and the United States. Victims of this proxy war, Cambodia along with Laos, suffered merciless bombing by the U.S., which President Nixon denied at the time. Following this, Cambodia was

grievously harmed by a home-grown ideology that wanted to violently eradicate learning from the capitalist West and replace it with the wisdom of an agrarian society. The result was the murder or starvation to death of two million of its own people, including most of the educated. By allowing the displaced population and its leaders to hold the Cambodia seat at the

*People we met along the way*



United Nations, the international community disenfranchised more than 95% of Cambodians. The civil war between the three displaced factions and the Vietnamese backed faction in power resulted in death, the placing of millions of landmines, sanctions against development aid, internal displacement and a climate of mistrust and antagonism.



By 1988 the winds of political change were blowing fast; movement towards a Peace Accord occurred with Indonesia, Australia and France deeply involved, Eva Mysliwiec wrote a book from the perspective of those inside Cambodia 'Punishing the Poor in Cambodia', Buddhist monks and JRS Bob Maat and Liz Bernstein were initiating reconciliation movements, as was Onesta Carpena inside Cambodia. The Vietnamese army officially withdrew in September 1989, prior to the Peace Accord of 1991. As early as 1984, Father Mark Raper, JRS Asia Pacific Regional Director, had journeyed to Phnom Penh to assess the situation and how JRS might contribute to a peaceful future. Kike Figaredo and Noel Oliver were sent on an exploratory mission in 1988 and Denise Coghlan in 1989.



At the border sites, JRS was discerning its way forward. Bob Maat posed the question "Was JRS presence in the refugee camps promoting peace or prolonging the war?" Father Mark Raper incited Father Howard Gray to facilitate a reflection procession on the way forward for JRS. Views were diverse, but after much prayer, discussion, and further reflection, an integrated approach was decided upon. JRS would contribute to reconciliation and reintegration within Cambodia by commencing a project there in 1990. Simultaneously, they would retain an on-going presence among the Cambodian people in the camps and participate in advocacy and other efforts on behalf of peace and reconciliation in collaboration with the Buddhist monks. These decisions clearly indicated that JRS was not allied to any particular faction or factions inside the camps, but wanted to be in solidarity with all Cambodian people.







“

*To dream the impossible  
dream, to fight the  
unbeatable foe*”

*Don Quijote de la Mancha, Miguel de  
Cervantes.*

One of Fr. Pierre's favourite  
quotes and one that  
was often repeated  
in the camps.











DISCERNING THE

WAY FORWARD



*(from left to right)*

Mark Raper

Tom Steinbugler

Jeanne-Marie Ath

Kike Figaredo

Howard Gray

Therese Caouette

Bob Maat

Trish Franklin

Denise Coghlan

Alfonso de Juan

Jub Phokthavi

Rossi Van Der Borsch

Fr. Vincent Dierckx















## JRS IN CAMBODIA 1990

By February 1990, the pioneering JRS team in Cambodia was named. All had worked in the refugee sites: Br Noel Oliver SJ, a Jesuit from India, Sr Marie-Jeanne Ath (RIP), a Providence Sister from Cambodia, Phongphand Phokthavi (Jub) from Thailand and Denise Coghlan, a Mercy Sister from Australia.



# The Mission Begins

The aim of Jesuit Refugee Service in Cambodia is to help towards reconciliation and peace, human rights, and the full human development of a people hurt by war, oppression, and exile. Love is the motivating force of the organisation, which is a service of faith and justice. The style of service is that of companion. Presence and personal contact with the people, reflecting with them on their situation, fostering self-help and self-determination, finding together creative means to alleviate poverty, ignorance, and injustice, are the ways of proceeding. So we wrote in 1991...

In Feb 1990, the Ministry of Social Action of the Cambodian government, took Fr. Tom Steinbugler, JRS Regional Director, Noel Oliver, Ath and Denise to see a vacant piece of land. They were taken to the property that was called, and still is, 'Banteay Prieb', the Centre of the Dove. Previously, this land had been a communications centre with carrier pigeons for the forces backed by the U.S. in the era of the war in Vietnam. Sr. Denise recalls, "it was amazing for us to have an invitation to work for reconciliation, in the Centre of Peace." It hadn't always been a 'centre of peace'; indeed it had also been a killing field under the Khmer Rouge and a prison later on. In its soil were both land mines and cluster bombs. It was a piece of land that had borne witness to Cambodia's remarkable history.

While the men were inspecting the structures of the building, Sr. Denise and Sr. Ath wandered off to explore. In the surrounding area, they were approached by a woman who was completely blind. Then they came to the poorest house they had ever seen. Inside were a baby and a man who had lost both his legs to a landmine. "Providence, this is our place," said Sr Ath.

Between June 1990 and January 1991 the four pioneers had arrived. Initially all foreigners had to stay in hotels and so the Monorom Hotel room was the first JRS office and welcome centre. Cambodians, Mom, Lot, Seng, Mony and Vinai, came to help set up the first house in street 214. Soon they were joined by the first scholastic Juaquí Salord and first Jesuit priest Godwin Genoveose. Early volunteers included Anucha, Phaiphon, Yong, Michael Kline and Malcolm Ramsey and in March 1992, the office moved to Tuol Kork. The team was joined by newly ordained priests Jean-Marie Birssens, Kike Figaredo, Ashley Evans, veteran Vincent Dierckx and Totet Bayanal.

The first Metta-Karuna group began on September 24 1990, and with it, efforts to build bridges with the authorities, encourage the peace process and prepare for the future repatriation and reintegration of the forcibly displaced from the camps. These efforts included building relationships and networks, teaching english to the Foreign and Social Action Ministries, training interpreters for a future UN presence, building relationships with Social Action staff, being part of the NGO-UN workshop for Peace Accords and hosting meetings for peace and the embryonic human rights



*Opposite page, top left: A blind woman met while exploring the Banteay Prieb site. Second from top: Sith, a desperately poor landmine victim who Sr. Denise and Sr. Ath also met while exploring the site. Trauma had caused him to lose the power of speech. When the JRS team returned a few months later they were informed by the Social Action Ministry "your friend has died." His wife later told JRS staff that he had lost all hope and with it the desire for food. Finally, he gave up his spirit. Third from top: Friends from the Monorom hotel who linked people in the camps to those in Cambodia. Fourth from top: Bernie, became a friend of the JRS team in the early years.*

groups. It also entailed visits to provinces where refugees might return. By 1993, JRS had initiated many village reconciliation, education and development activities with Metta Karuna teams in Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap and the outskirts of Phnom Penh. That same year, Fr. Vincent Dierckx and Fr. Ashley Evans began teaching at the Phnom Penh university.

At the same time, Jub and Br Noel, along with Anucha, Phaiphon, Yong Top Tit, Chreuk Vudtha, Phal and Phat were developing programmes for the Banteay Prieb Vocational Training Centre. The first students were enrolled in September 1991, one month before the Paris Peace Accord was signed. The aim was to establish a place where people disabled by war and poverty could regain their sense of dignity and hope, live in a community and learn a skill that could help them with income generation for their families. In the years between 1991 and 1994, staff and students came from the four different factions and gradually grew to trust one another. Reconciliation began to grow. JRS also established a Wheelchair Workshop Production Centre and Outreach Programme at Banteay Prieb. From late 1994, this work passed from JRS to our sister organisation Jesuit Service. Before this hand-over, JRS had initiated many village reconciliation, education and development activities with Metta Karuna teams in Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap and the outskirts of Phnom Penh.





In January 1991, Sr. Ath had come home to stay. Together with villagers, she began projects to alleviate poverty in the villages of Ang Snoul, close to Banteay Prieb. The integrated approach included helping schools, healthcare, agriculture, farmers solidarity groups and water programmes. Her work for women won the Human Rights Prize from the French Government in 1995.



## *Blessed Ath of Takeo*

Born in Takeo Cambodia in 1943, Ath Long was nurtured by her Buddhist mother and father, both Cambodian, She chuckled a

Vietnamese nurse gave her milk and introduced her to Christianity. She was as close to the children of the nurse as she was to her own siblings. A very clever and musical child, she was sent to be educated by the Providence Sisters in Phnom Penh. As she grew up she thought about being a classical dancer but instead later joined the Novitiate...

Ath reflected on her story with me when she returned first to Phnom Penh in 1990. Together we wept over the desecrated chapel of the Providence Sister where she had made her vows. We sat on the seat in the City Hall, where



she had dangled her legs waiting to meet Bishop Ramonsse before her first communion. We visited Tuol Sleng, the notorious Khmer Rouge prison where she had taught science as a secondary school teacher. We saw the “broken bridge” which was blown up one night in the early seventies, while she and other Sisters hid in the basement of the old Providence Convent, covering their ears from the noise of the blast. We passed the University where she had graduated in Science,

Before Phnom Penh fell, she had been sent to France to study nursing and there she remained until 1987. During this time, she was elected to the Leadership Team of the worldwide congregation, and fought a battle with cancer. When she recovered she requested to join JRS and was asked to learn English which she subsequently spoke fluently, along with French, Thai, Vietnamese, and some Chinese as well as her mother tongue, Khmer.

Ath came to the Thai Cambodian border in 1987 with JRS and set up remarkable programmes for women and children in the refugee camps. On 14 Jan 1991, she returned as one of the pioneers of JRS to Cambodia and began village development work in Ang Snoul. She built up farmers solidarity groups and encouraged the reemergence of Cambodian culture and the traditional virtues of politeness and Metta Karuna. At the same time she worked to ensure Catholic music and liturgy spoke to the culture.

After many years in Ang Snoul she went to Battambang to renew the health programme in the old Providence site, which prior to Pol Pot had been famous for malaria treatment. She was a loved part of the Battambang Prefecture as she had been in the Banteay Prieb community. In 2010 she fell ill again and was transferred to France where she died on December 20. Her mother, a Buddhist nun of 95 years, survives her. A beautiful friend, a champion of the poorest ones in society, blessed with a mischievous sense of humour and innate grace and charm. A person with a heart full of love, I am sure she continues her care for all of JRS and her friends in Cambodia. Along with Buddhist monk Maha Ghosananda, she is a grace filled model for young Cambodians

Written by Denise Coghlan

### Malcolm Ramsey's veterinary allegories



The road to a fertile field is often a long drag...



A difficult task is often best when shared. What's happening? Whom of those pictured is finding this task the most difficult?



Recognising common goals, learning how to sit with each other and accepting our differences... What will happen once the eggs hatch?

*People we met along the way*

*Banteay*

*Prieb*



*1991*



“Previously it was a communications centre, a factory, a scene of Khmer Rouge killings, and a prison. Now it is a place that enables the disabled to tell their own stories, to gather strength and hope from being with one another, and to learn a new skill that enhances a sense of dignity and worth, and provides either a permanent or part time income generating possibility.”

*Top photo: Banteay Prieb landscape at the beginning of the renovations.*

*Current page, bottom left: Anucha.*

*Bottom right: Jub and Tom Steinbugler.*

*Opposite page bottom left: Jean-Marie Birssens and Kike sit with the constructor and 'my sister'.*

*Bottom right: Denise and Simon Gue from Motivation talk with Top Tit about starting a wheelchair shop.*

*Far right: Two of the first students at Banteay Prieb.*









## *Mr Mok*

Mok lay there in his village on an old cart unable to move because of his disabled body. He had lain there all through the Pol Pot time. It was only when another villager, injured himself by a landmine, he realised how terrible it was to have no mobility that things changed a little for ok. Tuch, his friend, made him an old wooden cart and protected his head with a cardboard sign saying 'Danger Mines'. In 1993, JRS met him and introduced him to literacy and drawing pencils. Sovann designed him a special wheelchair cart and Cheatta took him to see Angkor Wat! Next he wanted to play music and sing songs! How beautiful is the 'sound' of those who bring good news.

## *Seng Cheatta*

JRS first met Seng Cheatta when he was only 24 years old in Site 2 camp where he lived for four years. When the refugee camps were closed he and his sister refused to leave, they did not want to return to Cambodia. Eventually, they were forced onto a bus and taken back to Phnom Penh. Soon after, Cheatta reconnected with JRS and began to work with the rural outreach team and as their audiovisual man. He continues to be an invaluable member of the JRS/JS Cambodia family today. "I like to help the poor people in the village. The difference between the people in the city and the people in the villages is as big as the distance between the sky and the earth. I would like it to be the same. Not have poor and not have rich."









From this beginning period, JRS included among its team women and men, refugees and non-refugees, Buddhist and Christian, people with disability, international and national members. The team composition symbolized the JRS hope for **reconciliation.**

















April 30, 1991 JRS call a meeting of people who were interested in Peace. 70 people came to the Street 214 office and we discussed ways to promote the peace talks, which had begun in Indonesia in 1988 (the Peace March was one suggestion). The next morning our house was surrounded by police, many in civil clothes. A discussion at the Foreign Ministry cleared the air but for weeks the four JRS pioneers were followed a very boring occupation for the four men assigned to the team. One night at a CIDSE function one motorbike broke down so Jub moved over to help repair it. Total astonishment greeted the action. "We are supposed to be following you and you are helping us!" Jub, fluent in Khmer chuckled and surveillance stopped from that moment.

The first Peace walk went ahead in early 1992 from Siem Reap to Phnom Penh, led by Maha Ghosananda and supported by Bob Maat and Liz Bernstein. The Banteay Priebe students made the first Peace walk cart. They also made the first hook to help mine clearance. The peace walk of 1993 was joined by thousands of people: refugees and people who remained inside Cambodia, people with disabilities and international guests. All marched in solidarity into Phnom Penh the day before the first elections and millions turned out to vote the next day.

Onesta Carpena was a major supporter from the beginnings and also promoted inter religious dialogue. She arranged for Venerable Tep Vong to meet the Pope in Assisi.



As a child of the mine fields, campaigner against landmines and cluster munitions, and as an activist for peace, I try to follow the steps and advice of our greatest monk, Maha Ghosananda.

He was a Cambodian Buddhist monk who worked tirelessly for peace in our land. His commitment, advice and Dhammayietras for Peace and for Banning Landmines continue to inspire me. Even though he has now gone, his legacy continues. I believe that one day soon we will achieve a mine free world and his great heart will form a part in that achievement.

When I raise awareness, campaign or speak about peace, I always start with his advice. I would like to do the same now. Let us close our eyes and pray together.

*The suffering of Cambodia has been deep.  
From this suffering comes Great Compassion.*

*A peaceful Heart Makes a Peaceful Person.  
A peaceful Person Makes a Peaceful Family.  
A peaceful Family Makes a Peaceful Community.  
A peaceful Community Makes a Peaceful Nation.  
A peaceful Nation Makes a Peaceful World.*

May All Beings Live in Happiness and Peace.

By Song Kosal



## REPATRIATION

After the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement in October 1991, which ended for the most part the years of civil war, plans to repatriate the border camp refugees were implemented. Between March 1992 and May 1993 UNHCR carried out the repatriation of more than 360 000 Cambodian refugees. For these returnees, coming back home was the beginning of a new struggle and a very gradual path to trust.







# THAILAND

Site



Kaao

● Aranyaprathet

Sisophon

Site ●

C





# CAMBODIA

*Opposite page: Closing of Site 2 refugee camp,  
Above, left and right: Refugees return home by train.  
Above, centre: Metta Karuna group prepare to welcome home the  
refugees with welcome banners. From right, Teang, Mom, Sroey,  
Daravy, Lot, Tep Phany and friends (far left).*

*People we met along the way*

# *Hounola Mony*

When the returnees came back from the refugee camps, I remember Ft. Vincent asking Phirum to go to the site and to bring Cheatta and the other returnees to the office. I didn't realize this would be the beginning of some very special friendships and an important time in my life.

At first, we didn't know each other very well. I was working for JRS as a night guard and so I would invite them for dinner together. We didn't understand where we each came from so we just smiled at each other.



I knew that many people had run to the border camps since 1979 - at that time, we would say, "they ran west" - but I didn't know any of them. I didn't understand what they had been through and they didn't understand what it had been like in Cambodia. We heard that some of the refugees had the chance to go to America or Australia and others were still stuck along the border being helped by the international community that had set up the camps. Many Cambodians considered people who ran to the border as the enemy of the government. Sometimes I think the returnees knew some Cambodian people felt this way and they felt ashamed.

Even in my family, some people would tell my mother "go to the border if you want a beautiful life and for your children to study" but my mother refused. She was exhausted after the Pol Pot time and had four children to take care of. She stayed in Phnom Penh city and tried to make enough money to support our family. She didn't want to escape anywhere.

Sister Denise would hold receptions for us to get to know each other and quickly, we became friends. We would watch television together, talk together. We started to understand each other and to know each other. When we changed house to



Tuol Kork, there was much more space and a beautiful garden. Here, I remember Lot's face very well, Mom understood my face very well. Everyone began to know each other and help each other. Soon after we began to visit each others homes. I realized this is life. I think up until that moment, I never understood that life could be enjoyed. Before, life was just life. You are a worker; you just work. You are a monk; you are just a monk. When we were with Metta Karuna, we each realized we were important and that we could be useful.

The atmosphere of the JRS house was very special. We were people from different religions, from different societies, some from university and some not educated at all, some from the camps and not from the camps; it didn't matter. You can smile at each other, know each other and learn from each other.

In society, many people want to be powerful, want to have money, want to be proud in the group. Metta Karuna taught me that this does not make the heart happy, it makes the heart suffer. Sr. Denise and Fr. Juaqui, they are very simple but peaceful people and they work to make this community very peaceful too. They have happy hearts.

Sometimes I close my eyes and reflect on Metta Karuna. I remember us reading, playing, spending time together. I often reflect on the good things I have done with the people; it makes me cry. Thanks a lot for Metta Karuna. The university taught me many things but the Metta Karuna really taught me what is most important. Now, I try to teach my daughter and I hope that she too has Metta Karuna in her heart.



## People we met along the way



In 1992, the JRS team went out to meet the first trainload of refugees to arrive in Phnom Penh with welcome banners stating, "Rejoice because the big family of Cambodia unites again!" Their banners quickly raised suspicion amongst the authorities that the banner holders were starting a new political party, it was just a warm welcome home.

*"Rejoice because the big family of Cambodia unites again!"*

Before leaving the camps, returnees were given the option of three repatriation packages, each of which included rice for 400 days:

1. Option A. Agricultural land (which 3% of families chose)  
The content of the package included up to 2 hectares of agricultural land

per family, a housing plot, wood for construction of a house frame, \$25 for construction materials and a household/agricultural kit.

2. Option B. House (which 11% of families chose)

It included a plot of land for a house, wood for construction of a house frame, \$25 to buy thatch and bamboo and a household/agricultural kit.

3. Option C. Cash. (84% of families chose)  
It included reintegration money - \$50 per adult and \$25 per child under 12, a household/agricultural kit.

Arriving back in Cambodia only marked the beginning of a very long journey





of reintegration and reconciliation with their homeland and neighbours. As one returnee man from Banteay Meanchey stated, it was a process “to build peace and to forgive each other.” Families accepted returnees for the first year because they had food rations but after that time it became difficult to reintegrate and feel accepted inside Cambodia.

In 1999-2000, JRS asked Nani Garcia to research the situation of some people who had returned from the camps. She concluded that 82% of the returnees interviewed were among the poorest 30% of Cambodians. Their basic right to food, housing and affordable healthcare was not met. No access to land was a major contributing factor. The label ‘returnee’ was still prevalent in 2000. (In 2012, it has completely disappeared.) Some of her findings may be helpful for future repatriations eg. from Burma.

- Two subgroups: widows and soldiers families, were significantly more vulnerable than others.
- Pre-return information about the returnees is essential for accepting villages
- Common food for work programmes in villages created a sense of community.
- Healing spaces and processes where people could tell stories of the 1975-1993 period built understanding.
- Schools and simple common sports areas promoted integration.
- “Voluntary” repatriation, as a durable solution, requires monitoring but by whom?

Another piece of research was conducted by Kateena O’Gorman on perceptions of the role of the United Nations during the UNAMIC/UNTAC

# *Srey Mom*

The truck stops at an isolated wooden hut built on stilts. Without any explanation, Srey Mom jumps out of the truck with a plastic shopping bag containing 2kgs of rice, three fresh baguettes and some other groceries. She delivers them to a smiling woman who has quickly appeared from behind her home. They embrace and share a few words. Srey Mom gets back in the truck and drives away to another village and another woman in need. This is the life of Srey Mom.

Srey Mom first came into our lives in Site 2 refugee camp. She had managed to survive the Pol Pot regime with her husband and two baby daughters, working in the Killing Fields. Tears well in her eyes as she recalls making rice soup each day for her family in an attempt to make the most of the pitiful portion of rice they were given to live off. "I think every night, 'When will I have freedom?' 'When will I have enough rice to eat?'" The struggle to find enough food for her family did not end with the fall of the Pol Pot regime in 1979 but continued in the refugee camps where Srey Mom and her family lived for thirteen years from 1979-1992.



Life was a desperate struggle in the camps. Each morning, Srey Mom would go to the Thai market (located outside the camp) and then resell whatever she had bought, sugar, milk, whatever she had been able to buy. She would juggle her time with taking care of her six children. (She had four more children whilst in the camps.) In 1982, she began to work with the church in the camp. Laughing, she admits she did this hoping that the church would be able to help her relocate to another country but "day by day

I listen to the Bible, about life, and I change." In 1983, she asked Sr Ath to become her godmother; she had decided to be baptized. When asked why she chose Sr Ath, Srey Mom's response was simple "because I love her so much. She looked peaceful in her heart." Working alongside Sr Ath in the church, Srey Mom realised she did



not want to be relocated to another country; she wanted to come back to Cambodia and help rebuild her country.

In 1992, Srey Mom and her family left the refugee camps. She recalls, “I had nothing. UNHCR gave me about \$700 and some rice for my entire family.” With the small amount of money they had, they bought a piece of land in Siem Reap and began to build a new life for themselves. Soon after, Srey Mom decided she wanted to work with Sr Ath and JRS to help other returnees re-establish their lives.

She began working with JRS on the 19th June 1993 and has been a valued member of the JRS family ever since. From 1994-1995, her outreach work shifted its focus to helping the physically challenged. Small grants were given to people to help them kick-start their own business or to get their farm going. Some would use the loan to buy a small boat or fishing net, others to buy seeds. In 1995, she began to run the rural development program at the JRS Siem Reap Metta Karuna Centre where she works to this day. Srey Mom and her team began literacy classes for adults, advocacy programs to raise awareness about illnesses, a rice bank and a cow bank among many other things, improving the lives of many villagers, one by one.

When asked what it is that inspires her in her work, she tells me “I always think ‘when I was hungry, you gave me food to eat.’ I love working with the poor people. When I talk with the poor people it makes me happy because I meet with Jesus.”



# *Hem Toeun*

Some of my first memories are of walking to the refugee camps. My family and I ran away from the bombs and the fighting that had begun between the Vietnamese and the Cambodians. I remember the bodies along the way. Some people had been killed by landmines, others by bombs, others had been murdered.

I don't remember the name of the first camp we lived in but I remember the people. There must have been thousands of families. Everyone was just trying to survive. Everyday was a struggle.

We never slept well because of the robbers and thieves. They would steal whatever they could: a pot, a plate, a handful of rice. They didn't care. We would hide and wait for them to leave. We wouldn't try to stop them. However, I was even more scared of the Thai soldiers that wore a black uniform. They would come into the camp and do whatever they wanted, terrible. From time to time they would beat us with their big boots as if we were the robbers. The strong boot of the army is very hard. My mother would hide my brothers and I in a big water jar when they came.

At that time the UN would only provide food for girls. I don't know the reason why they only provided for girls... There were only two girls in my family, the rest were boys, so there was never enough food for everyone. I remember growing my hair and dressing as a girl to try to get another meal ticket for our family. One day, I was successful! As soon as I got the ticket, I ran away. Life got a little bit better in 1989 because they started to supply food for all people. The UN provided a few things but it was still very difficult. We needed more than they provided.





# Sok Eng

In 1975, my life completely changed. My family was forced to leave our home in Phnom Penh city and was sent to Kandal and then to Battambang Province. In Phnom Penh, I had been a student and suddenly I was a farmer... 'slave' we can say. The Khmer Rouge considered people as material, as machines, not as human beings.

We were moved from one place to another until all my family died from starvation except for my sister and myself. Without the support of my sister, I would have also died. I was too weak; too weak to walk, too weak to speak, too weak to live by myself. I never smiled because I was so tired. But she gave me strength.

At one point, people found out that we were educated. We were sent to a village close to the border to be killed. However, in the village, we met good, innocent people. They lived in the forest like in the pre-historic times. Rather than kill us, they decided they wanted to save us.

These people changed my life; they helped me get better and build up my strength. From hopeless, I became hopeful. Once I was strong, I committed myself to help them, to teach them, full of love for them. They saved me more than once. They protected me as I crossed a minefield to get to the border and once I crossed the border and entered the camps, they provided me with food until I registered with UNBRO, saving my life again. Their kindness inspired me to become a Catholic when I entered the refugee camps. Fr. John Bingham quickly became my closest friend in Site 2.

Sometimes people ask me "Why do you love people so much?" Maybe it's because I almost died many times, but I was saved by people's kindness. This is my vocation now: to do unto others as they did to me. This is deep in my heart.



## *People we met along the way*

Repatriation, internal displacement, ongoing conflicts, fleeing to exile, were not one off events. JRS was called to respond when people returned from Galang in 1996, when people were frequently displaced along the roads of Battambang, Banteay Meanchey and Siem Reap Provinces.



## This is the story of *Galang Camp.*



*From the sea:*

But first let me tell you of my experience in the Pol Pot times. I am originally from Battambang but under the Khmer Rouge it was practice to separate families and move people to places they didn't know. Men were sent to one place, women and children to another. I was only a young girl and completely alone. I was saved by my ability to make pretty hats. A senior Khmer Rouge woman saw me making hats one day and then asked me to work for her. In the final years of the Khmer Rouge, I was forced to marry. I don't want to talk about that.

When the Khmer Rouge regime lost power in 1979 I started to look for my family. In 1990, having never found my family and still living in fear that the regime might come back someday, I gave up hope and decided to leave

Cambodia. I wanted to resettle in a third country. I dreamed of Australia. I left Cambodia in a small fishing boat with 171 Khmer people who also shared my dream of a new life in Australia. But after one week on board the boat we arrived in Indonesia and were sent to Galang Refugee Camp where Khmer and other Indochinese refugees had been living since 1979.

Life in Galang was not too bad even though I was alone. I was able to receive extra food supplies because of my part time job of Maternal Child Health Care and Family planning services of Indonesian Red Cross.

In 1996 UNHCR and the Indonesian authorities informed us that they would start a repatriation program soon. We were considered displaced people and as such we all had to go back to Cambodia. After finding this out, two parents ran away abandoning their four children, desperate not to be repatriated. I





heard the children crying and discovered them alone and scared. I began to look after the four children and informed the Indonesian authorities.

In July 1996 we all boarded a big navy ship and were sent back to Cambodia. When we arrived to Kompong Som Port, I saw Sr. Denise, the JRS Cambodia and Metta Karuna group and the Cambodian Red Cross. They asked about the four children that I was taking care of. The children and I were brought to the JRS office with Sr. Denise where they took care of us, gave us food and shelter. Four months later UNHCR found the parents in a forest still inside the camp and sent them to Cambodia to meet their children at the JRS office. The children were returned to their parents. Now, they all live together in Kompong Som province.

*From the land:*

Tang Lay Lee, a JRS lawyer researching in Indonesia contacted Quentin Dignam, JRS Regional Director, and told him that four unaccompanied minors had been deported on this boat. He immediately rang Denise in Cambodia and asked her to go and meet the returning boat. On the shore stood UNHCR, Cambodian Red Cross, the police and the Governor. In turn, each asked the returnees to get off the boat. They refused. Finally, they asked Sister, would she go down and ask and see what she could do. She failed too but in the process met the four children. The woman minding them was probably the leader of the 'don't get off the boat campaign.' However, eventually they gave in and then the government had to decide what to do with the four children. They came and asked JRS to take them and the rest of the story is told above.







## JRS CAMBODIA EXPANDS

From 1990 to 1994, besides its initial work in reconciliation, reintegration of refugees, rural community development, education and training and outreach of people disabled by war, JRS had established bases in Siem Reap and Sisophon began wheelchair manufacture, and advocacy activities for peace development and a ban on landmines. In 1994, after team consultation a decision was made to establish a more permanent Jesuit mission in Cambodia.

Jesuit Service was to be a continuation and creative expansion of the JRS work and an ongoing commitment to the Cambodian people. JRS would retain its presence in Cambodia and links to JRS International in Bangkok and Rome.





# Kike Figaredo



On September 8th 1994, Kike Figaredo SJ became the first local superior of the mission and in 2000 the Apostolic Prefect of Battambang. In 1994, authority for the mission in Cambodia passed to the President of the Jesuit Conference of East Asia and Oceania with Fr. Ishmael Zuloaga as its President. The Regional Director of Bangkok was still responsible for JRS activities.

My journey has been a very lucky one.

The day that I was meant to arrive in Bangkok and begin my work with JRS, I was in the infirmary in Rome to meet Fr. Arrupe. I went there with a lot of devotion and respect.

“I am going to the refugee camps,” I explained.

“You are going to the place I’d like to be. Please, go and replace me, ” and he gave me a blessing. I was very moved by his welcome, the way he spoke with me. In that moment, I felt that he was my heritage, passing on the JRS mission from a grandfather to his grandson. The next time that I went to meet Arrupe, he could not talk anymore.

When I arrived in the refugee camps, I was very afraid. I was only 26, I had no experience, I was coming straight from university, I was going to be working alongside people who already had incredible life experience and it was my first job as a Jesuit. Heng Meth, the leader of the disabled community in the camps, welcomed me. He was taller than me, one of his legs had been amputated, the other leg was very badly damaged and he had only one eye. Despite his disabilities he stood before me with dignity.

‘I heard that you are coming to help us, is it true?’

I nodded.

‘Don’t worry, we will help you and you will know what we need.’

Although I was introduced to him in a foreign language and was in an unknown place, I had never felt so welcomed in my life. Suddenly, I was not afraid. They would help me help them.

We were blessed with our team. It was very international and friendly. We shared everything: housing, vehicles, breakfast before going to the camps each day. For me, everyday was a special learning experience. I had been expecting to see sad, quiet

people but when I arrived there I saw the beauty of life. Despite how difficult the lives of the refugees were, it was not a sad place. In the midst of their struggles and sufferings, their desire for life prevailed. Their strength of spirit brought us to life and invigorated us on our mission. They were golden times.

In 1988, I came to visit Cambodia with the Quakers. It was shocking to see the country, occupied by the Vietnamese and nothing happening here. The country was completely destroyed and yet very little humanitarian aid was coming in. There was very little hope.

‘We have to be on both sides,’ I told Mark.

I was very lucky to have had the experience of being in the camps and when I arrived in Cambodia, to have Denise as coordinator. She didn’t want me to be in Banteay Prieb, she wanted me to go out, to meet the people and bring their needs to Banteay Prieb. Every month, I would go north with the car full of wheelchairs, Sovann, Cheatta and Mony at my side. We would stop in Battambang, Sisophon and Siem Reap. I remember meeting countless people in the villages that remain friends today.

For me, JRS was a school, a very Ignatian and Jesuit school, in which I learnt how to love people over anything else. God is with the very simple and ordinary people who are suffering and so to must we. Our mission is to be close to the people, to accompany, to listen, to inspire hope and to be a friend. Friendship. I think that is our mission. This mission brings us to the heart of the hopes and struggles of people. Also, the priority of JRS is the people that JRS serves - more important than the institution, the name or honour. I hope that JRS will stay the same, close to the people and close to the needs. They will remain in the middle of the struggle and you will never know that they are there or if they are struggling because they are not the priority. They were big lessons that I am grateful for.



“Even though my mother dumped me in a rubbish bin as a baby, now I have dignity and a job as a gardener at Metta Karuna. Please everybody, keep up your hope.”

*Benjie*









## *People we met along the way*

JRS and JS retained close links. Providence Sisters and former JRS workers in the Philippines, Sister Cecile Letiebe and Sister Adelphe Tran, joined the team in 1996 and after an initial period started new programmes.

After some time working with 'Friends for all Children', Sr. Cecile went to Battambang to address the needs of the displaced in mine affected areas, particularly children. Sr. Adelphe began her dream of a 'Light of Mercy' House where children with disabilities could stay and go out to accelerated learning classes.

Two children: Vee and Reaksmei, had been caught begging on the Thai side of the border and placed in Thailand immigration detention centre, there they were befriended by Dr. Dee Garcia. Through requests to Cambodian and Thai authorities, they eventually came home and with permission from their parents stayed at 'Light of Mercy' to continue their schooling at LaValla.

Another programme was the hearing programme, opened by the lady of Galang. A book writing programme for children was implemented by Kol Seap and Pohnika, graduates from Phnom Penh university and former students mentored by Fr. Ashley.

The first schools built by JRS were increased and multiplied over the years. These schools emphasized access to education for the poorest people.

The first university scholarship holders graduated. The very first two, Honoula Mony and Vinai, became an archaeologist and a Catholic priest.

The Metta Karuna activities expanded in Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap, KKK and Kompong Thom.

The Banteay Prieb centre with its wheelchair production and shop expanded and the rural development programme continued to grow.

In 2000, Kike Figaredo became the Bishop of Battambang and more Jesuit priests began to join the team, some of whom had been former scholastics.

Networks and links, both in Cambodia and worldwide, were established. Great interest was taken in our work in Cambodia by all the JRS International and Regional Directors (insert names). and the Presidents of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific. In 2006, the Korean Province was asked to become the authorizing province for the Jesuit Mission in Cambodia.











# *Keo Sovann*

When the Pol Pot regime came to power in 1975, I was stopped from going to school, put in a team and sent away to work hard in the rice field, far away from my relatives and friends. I was a captive in a prison without walls for three years, eight months and twenty days. At the end of 1978, I heard my father was caught and killed by the Khmer Rouge. My mother, my sister and four younger brothers had also died by disease and starvation during 1977.

I ran away when the Vietnamese troops came but I did not know the way home. I followed other people and arrived in Battambang city. At this time in my life, I had no hope. My country was weak from the war and needed people to become soldiers to protect itself. I do not like war and fighting and I wanted to study more. I heard it was possible in the refugee camps, so I crossed the border from Cambodia to Thailand in 1982 and began to live in Rithysen Refugee Camp. It was difficult. UNBRO only gave food to the girls and women. I studied at Look Ta Sok High School in the camp and lived in a hospital where I would help the patients. When I finished high school I decided to become a monk to pray for my parents, sister, brothers and relatives who had passed away and for a peaceful Cambodia. I travelled to Buriram of Thailand and studied to moral of Buddhism and Pali language until 1987.

In 1987, I returned to the refugee camps and began to study physiotherapy. For five years, I worked hard for Handicap International in the pediatrics ward, the emergency ward, the leprosy ward and the tuberculosis ward. I would also visit people with disabilities in their homes and teach them and their family members how to look after themselves. When the repatriation finally began, I would help the disabled people to go home to Cambodia. On 23rd March 1993, I too returned to my homeland to start a new life.

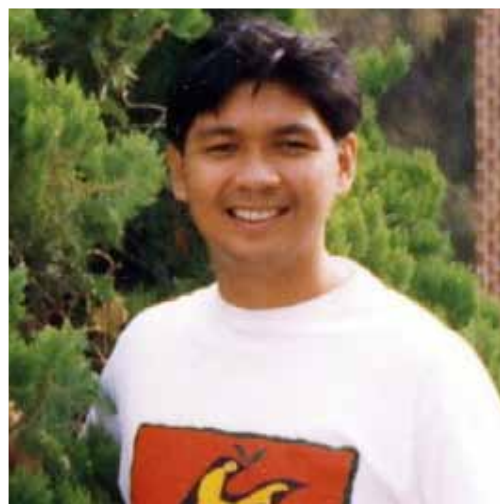


I began working with Jesuit Refugee Service on 1st January 1994, in charge of the Mekong wheelchair distribution for Cambodia, adviser to the wheelchair production workshop and as part of the JRS outreach program with Fr. Kike. We would distribute 500 to 1,000 wheelchairs per year! I was also actively involved in the campaigns against war and the use of landmines. We continue to promote peace and reconciliation for my country today. I hope to see peace and justice flourish in Cambodia, free from war and the land clear of mines. I want to see my countrymen happy and to see a very bright future for the Cambodian children.

I think the way we work is very special; the Catholic Jesuits and Buddhist people work and live together in the same system and try to build a community of life. We are people from different cultures and backgrounds but have come together toward the same effort. These differences enrich our daily lives. I came back to my country as a refugee with the disabled and the poor ones displaced by war. JRS tries to serve them and at the same time keep learning from them and their lives, their hopes and their struggles.

I have had many opportunities and happy memories during my time with JRS. I have already gone to England, Ireland, Spain and Italy. In Italy, I had the unique chance to meet the Pope, an experience that I described as “interesting”. When I first started to work with JRS, I was very happy and hopeful in my life and began to follow a girl who was working in the JRS office. I was interested by her so I tried to ask her many times about our life for the future. One year and 8 months later, she said “YES”. Until now I never forget a word from her heart.









Some of the many scholastics and priests JRS Cambodia has encountered along the way. There are many more.



*Our hope is that refugees and the poor transformed their hearts and contributed to their formation...*





**Mark Raper, SJ**  
Regional Director  
International Director  
JCAP President



**Thomas Steinbugler, SJ**  
Regional Director



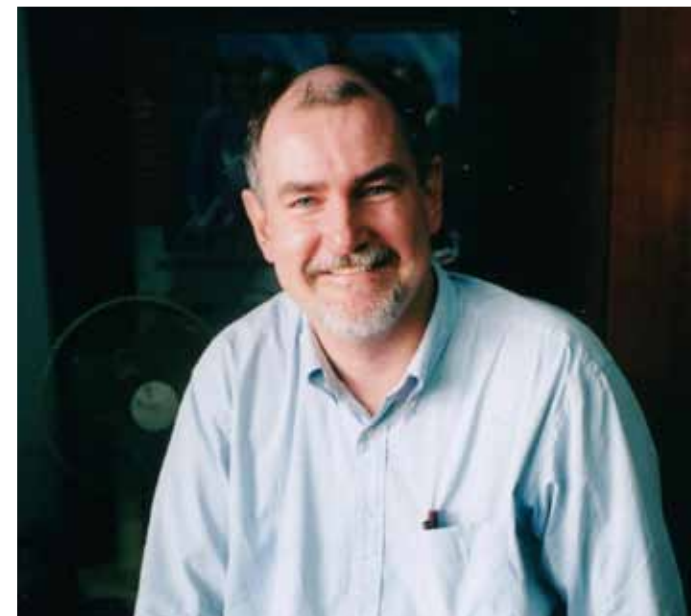
**Quentin Dignam, SJ**  
Regional Director



**Bernard Hyacinth Arputhasamy, SJ**  
Regional Director



**Andre Sugijoprano, SJ**  
Regional Director



**Steve Curtin, SJ**  
Regional Director





**Dieter Schultz, SJ**  
International Director



**Luis Magrina, SJ**  
International Director



**Ismael Zuloaga, SJ**  
JCAP President



**Peter Balleis, SJ**  
International Director



**Adolfo Nicolas, SJ**  
JCAP President







The first logo JRS Cambodia used was the dove designed in Site 2 refugee camp. “Do everything to make peace” in Khmer language is inscribed on its wings. This was in the days before JRS had a distinctive international logo.



The material of this small banner was woven on bamboo looms in Rithysen camp in a project organised by Sr Ath. Embroidery by Man Yung, one of our first Vietnamese asylum seekers in Cambodia, incorporates the first JRS internal logo. The banner was part of the Women Weaving the World Conference in Beijing in 1995.



Chay Saron sculpted the final logo and it now stands in Mindol Metta Karuna, Siem Reap (photographed left). Pilgrims and guests are invited to reflect on displacement in their hearts as well as on refugees, people evicted from their land, trafficked people and forced migration.







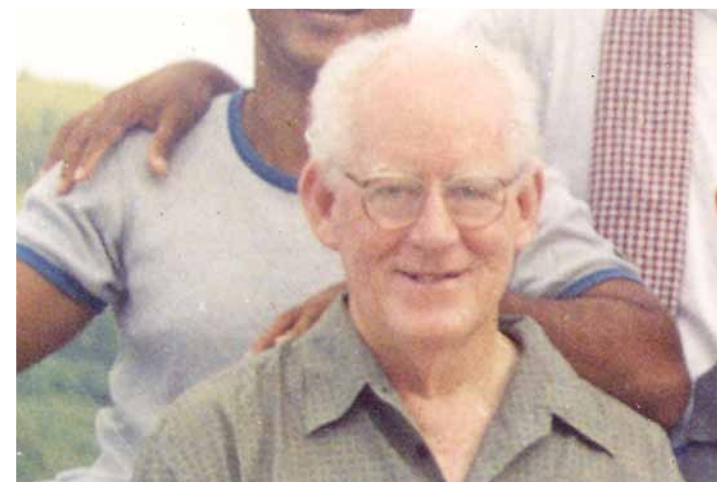
















## ASYLUM SEEKERS SEEK REFUGE IN CAMBODIA

*“To see the face of Christ in every refugee is part of the JRS spiritual journey for each Christian.”  
Sr. Denise Coghlan*

1993 was a milestone year for Cambodia, with a new constitution, an elected parliament and the conclusion of repatriation.

For JRS it was also the year when our service to asylum seekers and refugees who came from foreign and at times distant countries began.









*People we met along the way*

# *Srun Sony*

"I'm a very strong woman because I think I can do anything and go anywhere!" Sony certainly is a strong woman. Born in Phnom Penh in 1972, Sony was born in turbulent times. In 1975, at the young age of three, Sony fled the Khmer Rouge as they captured Phnom Penh and crossed the border with her family into Vietnam. They lived in Ho Chi Minh for a year, struggling to get by selling noodles, until the



family's landlord refused to accept their rent. They were illegal and the police and commune leader told them they must go to the refugee camp. 979B Refugee camp in Thein Giang Province would be Sony's home for the next 10 years of her life.

"It was a hard life in the camp." Sony recalls the difficulties of day-to-day life, the incredible boredom and the shortage of food and drinking water.

"I remember that my family never had food to eat. You can imagine, only one egg for seven people!" Sony remembers their only water source was a lake that ran through the camp, "Very salty...very sour like the lemon."

"I know what it's like to be a refugee. Of course, there is a difference between being a refugee here and a refugee in the camps, but I know how it feels." It is her own refugee experience that motivates Sony in her work as a social worker with Jesuit Refugee Service where she has worked with refugees since 1995.

Initially called in to be an interpreter for Vietnamese refugees, Sony soon began working full time offering social assistance, a smile, advice and counseling. At that time, there were many Afghani refugees that were kept in detention for an extended period of time. Sony laughs as she remembers buying cigarettes for the guards, in return for a safe delivery of food to the refugees, "it was the only way to get the food to the refugees!"

Working with refugees isn't always easy but Sony's patience, warmth and lack of judgment is an inspiration to all of us who work in this field. There have been many challenges and Sony has risen to each of them with grace and a warm smile on her face, something that she is renowned for throughout JRS. "I always say that JRS is in my house. I come here and this is my house and I go home to my house. Both are my house."

Sony is adamant that the one thing that is included in whatever is written about her is how grateful and how inspired she is by Sister Denise Coghlan, JRS Cambodia Country Director. "I don't know how I can say thank you to Sister. She has taught me everything I know."



# Kim Phirum

Before the Khmer Rouge came to power, my father worked for the American military as a helicopter captain. He was warned to take his family and move to the United States but my grandfather did not want to go. We had everything here in Cambodia: a car, land, a boat, and a big house near the Russian market. 'Why would we leave everything we had to live in a different country?' Then the Khmer Rouge came and changed everything. Everything died.

I was separated from my family and moved to Kandal Province. I was a Khmer Rouge child but we did not act like children. We worked hard in the rice fields with no food to eat, no place to sleep. I didn't have any clothes, only a little kroma. For three years, I didn't see my mother, my sister or my brother. I didn't expect to see my grandfather or my father; I knew they had already died.

After 1979, the Vietnamese army came and the Khmer Rouge soldiers ran away. I returned home to Phnom Penh and found my sister and my mother but they looked different. They looked old and sad. I didn't recognize them anymore.

I joined the army in 1984 and was taken to the border forest near Pailin to fight the Khmer Rouge. I spent more than 7 months there in the forest. Then I was sent to Russia to learn how to be a pilot.

I lived in a town called Krasnodar near the black sea. Nothing was the same as in Cambodia. It was very cold and dark. In my group there were people from all over the world: many Russians, Cubans, Nicaraguans, Mozambicans, Mongolians, Czechoslovakians, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Laotians, Yemeni, Vietnamese and Libyan. I was the only Cambodian there.

I learnt how to fly a 21 mink jet. We would fly around the mountains and the black sea. There would always be just two people in the plane, my teacher and I. In the beginning I would sit in the back and watch him fly, what buttons he pressed, how he moved. Soon, I sat in the front seat. It was difficult to learn. We did not have translators, not even a language dictionary. Russian is a very difficult language but everyday I understood a little bit more.

Mink jets are difficult to fly and sometimes it was scary. I think the planes were from World War 2 and they had just replaced the engine with a new one from Czechoslovakia. It was a problem. Many planes crashed and some people died including two of my friends, one from Vietnam and one from Laos. I lived there for three years before the government decided to send me back.

Soon after, I met Sister Denise. I knew the landlord of the JRS office (at that time the office was near the Olympic Stadium). They needed a night guard and I needed to earn some money to pay for my mothers medicine. At that time, Mony was a guard too and we quickly became friends. Lots of people became friends in that house. After that, Sister asked me to work for JRS as a driver and later as a refugee social worker.

I think that refugees are very sad. Most of them did not want to come here. They are bored everyday and worry about the future. They hope to go to another country to live but cannot.

I like working with refugees because I feel that I can help them. Whether it's just driving them to hear their refugee status decision or going to visit them in their home, to say hello to them, to talk many things, tell a good story, make them happy; I think it helps.



*People we met along the way*

# Legal Service

Frank Brennan SJ helped establish the first guidelines for UNHCR/JRS collaboration in the legal service offered to asylum seekers. Eve Lester was our first lawyer and many other magnificent volunteers have followed her.

Gaining refugee status in Cambodia is a long, bureaucratic, legal process perceived by asylum seekers as devoid of the human touch. The JRS

Cambodia legal project helps refugees navigate each of the stages of this process with compassion and sensitivity. A lawyer is available to help refugees prepare their legal claims and guide them through the legal procedure while our social workers, Sony and Phirum, offer personal assistance to the refugees. Careful assistance is needed in finding housing, education, medical care and other basic

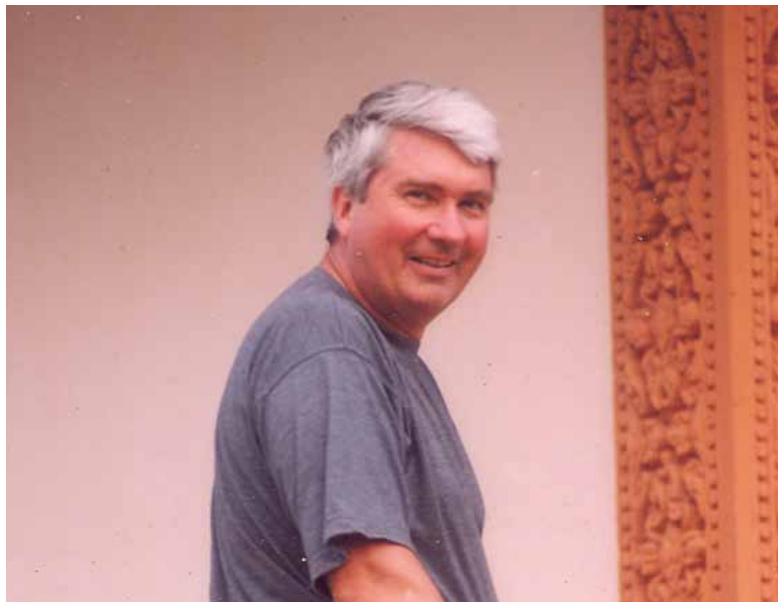
needs. Employment is not easy to find. In addition to this, challenges are also posed in adjusting to local standards of living. These factors heighten anxiety and further fuel the desire to resettle in a third country, a very difficult and unlikely option since UNHCR no longer nominates recognised refugees for resettlement to third countries as a matter of course. A vital role of JRS Cambodia is simply being present during this challenging time: to welcome

them to a new and foreign land, to accompany them on their journey and to be a friendly face.

In recent years the Cambodian Government has made progress towards the establishment of a national refugee framework. In 2008, a Cambodian Refugee Office was established under the Ministry of the Interior. The Cambodian Government grants authority to the Ministry of the Interior to determine refugee status with the assistance of UNHCR. Therein, refugees now notify the Cambodian authorities and register as an asylum seeker upon arrival in the country. The JRS lawyer helps prepare for their interview and also prepares a written submission based on their statement outlining their claims as to why they are a refugee and relevant country of origin information.

Eventually, a decision is reached. If refugee status is not granted, refugees are able to make an appeal which JRS will help them put together. However, if their appeal is rejected they must leave the country within 15 days. If this occurs, refugees often attempt to gain refugee status in another country perhaps they simply join the ever-increasing number of refugees in our world that live without any form of government protection. If refugee status is granted, they are expected to integrate into Cambodian society, a great challenge for an asylum seeker, who usually did not intend to come here in the first place or indeed remain here.

The process is flawed in many ways. Most worryingly, the current framework is not at all transparent. How the Government determines refugee status remains largely a mystery. Furthermore, the personal and long-term needs of the refugees are left unaddressed. The Government does not offer any kind of financial support or social services. One refugee was told, ““We won’t give you anything. All you can do is stay here.” These flaws make the role of the JRS legal project even more important.















*People we met along the way*















*Opposite page: Nguyen Van Hoang, his wife, Nguyen Hoang Thuong, and two children waiting to board their flight to Canada where they were resettled in September 2011. They had arrived in Cambodia in 2007 after having fled political persecution in Vietnam. Above left and right: a Rohingya refugee makes his living by selling roti in the streets of Phnom Penh.*

*People we met along the way*



*Top left: Rattanakiri Province. Temporary UNHCR refugee camp established to support the large numbers of Montagnards crossing the border in Rattanakiri Province. Each family was given a blue plastic sheet to make their own tent. After a few weeks the Montagnards were relocated to a "safe house" in Phnom Penh.*

*Top right: Sony teaching the refugees how to remove lice using the JRS lice bars.*

*Bottom left: Montagnard family photographed in the Phnom Penh safe house. Initially, there were 1000 people living in the house. It was a factory that UNHCR rented near Tuol Sang Ke. At first, UNHCR said that this house would only be operating for a few months. In 2005, 2006 new Montagnards arrived everyday. They were not allowed to leave the safe house. After a few months, UNHCR and JRS established 5 smaller houses that organized the refugees into groups such as 'waiting for interview', 'new arrivals' etc. Some spent only one to two years living in these safe houses however, most of them lived in the safe houses for four or five years. The last of these safe houses was only closed in July 2011.*



# Montagnards



In 1992, UNTAC forces discovered 398 Montagnard resistance fighters living in the forest in Mondolkiri province. These people were all granted permanent residence in the United States where they established the beginnings of a large Montagnard community in North Carolina.

In February 2001, Cambodia received its first large influx of Montagnards following the Vietnamese government's strong clamp down on Montagnard villagers protesting over land rights, religious persecution and ethnic discrimination. More than 900 of those who crossed into Cambodia were recognized *prima facie* as refugees by UNHCR.

At Easter 2004, there were further protests and government reprisals in the Vietnam Highlands. The protests centered on land disputes and religious freedom for the Dega Protestant sect. A steady stream of Montagnards fled into the forests of Cambodia.

On 25 January 2005, the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Royal Government of Cambodia and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed a memorandum of understanding agreeing "on the need to strengthen cooperation and coordination among them, to find a final solution for some 750 Central Highlands ethnic minority people currently in Cambodia's temporary sites".

In 2001, JRS assisted Montagnards to prepare their refugee claims. In 2004, JRS was asked by UNHCR to accompany and address basic needs of the Montagnards in houses in Phnom Penh and continue legal assistance. The vast majority were resettled in the United States, Canada and Sweden. Some chose voluntary deportation. However, on 20 July 2005 at about 6am, Cambodian Police sealed off access to the Site One Facility in Phnom Penh. They then forced 101 persons whose asylum claims had been rejected to board buses for forced repatriation to Vietnam. 94 of these persons were Montagnards who were subsequently delivered to their villages in the Central Highlands. The remaining seven turned out to be Cambodians.

The UN Office for Human Rights was forbidden entry. JRS was present and witnessed the use of excessive force in the deportation of residents who resisted non-violently. It was a very sad day for refugee/asylum seeker protection. JRS staff working in the sites over these turbulent periods included Navuth, Robbie, Wendy, Suzanne Barnes, Bora, Sopheap, Chantha, Fr. In Don, Sr. Denise, Anne Peeters, Thouen, Ponyika, Sony and Phirum.

The last Montagnard house, variously called sites, detention centres or "safe house" finally closed in 2011. The inmates were not permitted to leave these sites and were guarded by both Cambodian and Vietnamese police. The group who resettled in the United States continue to lobby for freedom for their communities in Vietnam.

*People we met along the way*

# Uighurs



“I would prefer to die than be returned to China” is what one Uighur man, who came to be friends with the JRS Cambodia staff, said before they were forcibly returned to China on 19 December 2009. While they were in Cambodia, JRS staff worked with them, trying to protect their right to live safely. Since then, JRS can only assume that these friends have been executed, tortured or imprisoned.

They arrived in Cambodia in small groups between May and October 2009, seeking asylum from the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) and the Cambodian government from the persecution they said that they faced in China. Seeking asylum in a country that is a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, they presumed that they would have access to fair and transparent processing of their claims and that they would be safe from forced return. They were wrong.

On 18 December 2009, they were abducted at gunpoint from a safe-house, jointly managed by the Cambodia authorities and UNHCR, where they had spent one night. The next day, the 20 Uighur asylum seekers, were deported via chartered plane back to China. JRS stood helpless, watching this plane take off in the dark from the Phnom Penh airport. The plane, along with the Uighur people, disappeared into the night.

The following day, the Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping, arrived in Cambodia and signed contracts worth over \$1 billion US dollars. It was noted that “China has thanked the government of Cambodia for assisting in sending back these people.”

We still remember the faces of those returned. There was ‘B’, young and entrepreneurial who could have been the next Steve Jobs if given the chance. Sensitive and intellectual ‘T’ made traditional Uighur food for the staff at JRS. ‘H’ spoke with sadness of the family that he left behind. ‘W’ spoke to JRS about the daily beatings and torture he suffered whilst in a “re-education through labour” camp in China. He was sentenced to one year for minor political offenses.

While in Cambodia some of the men spoke publicly about their persecution in China and for this reason it is likely that upon return many have been executed, imprisoned or again subjected to the horrors of re-education through labour.

Refoulement is truly a worst case scenario and for the Uighur asylum seekers, was likely fatal. Newspapers have reported that four have been executed and fourteen imprisoned, however no official information has been released. Repeated questions to Chinese and UN authorities have brought no answer as to their whereabouts, and almost two years, later our questions as to their well-being remain unanswered.

“I would prefer to die than  
be returned to China.”







*Left: Ainsa sitting below our 'Tears of God' tapestry, reading the Bible in the Metta Karuna chapel during Ramadan.  
Bottom Right: Afia outside the Metta Karuna Centre chapel.*





# Ahmadis



“I cry when I pray.”

I had asked Ainsa and Afia if we could talk about prayer together and this was Afia’s immediate response. I was taken aback by her honesty, abruptness and raw emotion. Not surprisingly, the persecution Ainsa and Afia’s family have endured has taken a heavy emotional toll. They are Ahmadiyya Muslim refugees from Pakistan and were forced to flee to Cambodia one and a half years ago due to religious persecution.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a minority Islamic sect that was founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who claimed divine revelation in restoring a corrupted Islam to a purer form and uniting all religions.

As such, they believe in all religions and their respective prophets. Ainsa explains “we love all religions because we believe in all religions and all prophets”. The birth of the Ahmadiyya movement, particularly the belief in the prophet hood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and other religions, was greeted with cries of horror and rejection from the greater Islamic community and persecution of the Ahmadis has continued unabated ever since.

“In Pakistan, I’m not a Muslim but here I’m Muslim.” Afia tells me smiling, proud of her Muslim identity. I assume her statement stems from a fear of victimization by less tolerant members of society but Afia explains that the religious persecution that her and her community endures is State sanctioned. In fact, they are officially considered by “non-Muslim” by the Pakistani government. In response to anti-Ahmadis riots in 1974 the Pakistani parliament passed a constitutional amendment

that officially pronounced Ahmadis “non-Muslim”. The introduction of Blasphemy laws in the 1980s further fueled religious animosity and persecution of the Ahmadiyya community. Henceforth Ahmadis were prohibited from professing their faith, from speaking or writing Arabic and banned from “indirectly or directly posing as a Muslim.” Indeed belief in the prophet hood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad itself was blasphemous, because it defiled the name of the Prophet Muhammed - a capital crime. In Pakistan, Ahmadis live in perpetual threat of religiously motivated attacks and persecution.

“ I cry when I pray. ”

Despite the rejection of the Ahmadis by the Islamic community, the Ahmadis follow the same Holy Scriptures and teachings as other Muslims and believe in the same ‘Five Pillars of Islam’ and the ‘Six Articles of Faith’. Ainsa and Afia are particularly devout, engaging in prayer five times a day. The month of August has been

a particularly challenging and happy month as it is the holy month of Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting. They explain to me their daily schedule - starting at 3:30am when they wake up for a 45 minute morning prayer and to eat before sunrise. (I’m already impressed by their dedication.) During Ramadan, they are not allowed to eat or drink during sunlight hours, a challenge in the Cambodian heat, rather their days are dedicated entirely to prayer, reflection, reading the Qur’an and funnily enough, reading the Bible. In fact, they both are hoping to have finished reading both the entire Qur’an and the Bible before the end of the month! When asked what she prays for Afia was quick to respond. “For life. For life for all around the world –

*People we met along the way*

# Rohingyas



The Rohingya are an ethnic group from the northern Arakan state of Burma. They are Muslims, culturally closest to those of the south of Bangladesh. They are stateless people who have been excluded from the 1982 Citizenship Act. This Act only recognizes the national ‘races’ that were considered to be settled in Arakan state prior to British colonization in 1823.

Due to the deprivation of legal status that they endure, they have faced oppression from the Burmese government in the form of forced labor, land-grabbing, restrictions to their freedom of movement and freedom to express their Muslim faith through the closures of mosques and madrasas. They are forced to live in destitution as they excluded from government services, and the impediments to them accessing health-care, education and employment are overwhelming.

The diaspora of the Rohingya spans Bangladesh, India, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and in late 2009 they started arriving in Cambodia. The arrivals continued to trickle in through early 2010 – coinciding with the implementation of the new legal framework for refugee status determination to be processed by the Royal Cambodian government. UNHCR, which had traditionally performed the refugee status determination function, now provides technical support, and the competent authority to make determinations is the Ministry of Interior.

The Royal Cambodian government to date has not handed down any decisions regarding Rohingya asylum seekers. For the earliest arrivals, their lives have been in limbo for almost two years. Asylum seekers are not afforded any rights under the new legal framework. They are at the mercy of the government to turn a blind eye as they turn to the informal employment sector to get by day-to-day. Through the support JRS many of the Rohingya have started their own businesses selling roti in mobile food carts, but it is a daily struggle to survive with their profits covering only the basic shelter and food.

“I want the same things for my future as you do.”

For the JRS legal and social workers, we work consistently to counsel the Rohingya on their daily struggles, just waiting for the decisions on their legal status to be handed down. Perhaps the hardest part is knowing even if a positive decision is conferred, there will be little that changes in their daily lives. Trying to manage expectations and encourage them to learn the Khmer language, make friends and learn about Khmer culture is a challenge. There is almost no pathway for them to be resettled to a third country, and they face the reality of trying to locally integrate into Cambodian society, a society that struggles to meet the needs of its own nationals.

Mohammed states “Everyday I am thinking about my future. Everyday I worry about what will happen to me tomorrow. I just want to work and live peacefully and look after my family. “



 <p>រ៉ូតី ធម្មតា ១០០០ ៛</p> <p>Roti Normal (រ៉ូតី) ៛</p>	 <p>រ៉ូតី ចង្កា ១៥០០ ៛</p> <p>Chicken Egg Roti 1500 ៛</p>	 <p>រ៉ូតី ជំនក់ ១៥០០ ៛</p> <p>Roti Jam 1500 ៛</p>	 <p>រ៉ូតី មីឡូ ២០០០ ៛</p> <p>Roti Milo 2000 ៛</p>	 <p>រ៉ូតី ឆ្ការត្រី ២០០០ ៛</p> <p>Special Fish Roti 2000 ៛</p>	 <p>រ៉ូតី ចង្កាខ្ពស់ ២០០០ ៛</p> <p>Special Egg Ombon Roti 2000 ៛</p>
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## LANDMINE CAMPAIGN

*“The consequence of mercy, charity and love is justice. If you are working on an issue such as helping the people that have been injured by landmines, justice demands that you also advocate that the cause of the suffering be stopped; that you ban the use of landmines and call producers to account.”*

*Sr. Denise Coghlan*

JRS Cambodia has been the focal point of the Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines since its inception in 1994, when four young Cambodian men, all former soldiers of different armies and all landmine survivors, wrote a letter begging the world to rid itself of landmines.



They wrote the letter at Banteay Prieb (the Centre of the Dove), a vocational training centre which had been established by JRS in 1991. Not so many years earlier they had laid the mines that had blown off each other's limbs, but now they were united, teaching and learning together in the spirit of reconciliation.



The Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines worked hard campaigning around the country and then, around the world. They visited royal families, Emperors, Governments and countless landmines survivors. One of the authors of the letter went to the Pope to ask for his support. He agreed, as did many others. In 1997, after having finally achieved the Mine Ban Treaty, this same man rode his wheelchair onto the stage in Oslo and received the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the campaign.



The ratification of the Treaty was a historical moment but the work did not stop there. The Landmine Monitor was created in 1999 to ensure that the words of the Treaty became a reality on the ground. It has been published every year since. In 2012, survivors are organizing a quality of life assessment for their peers and focused conversations with village leaders on rights and needs of people with disability



particularly the most vulnerable.

In 2007, the campaign expanded to include a ban on cluster munitions, an equally dangerous weapon of war that haunts many Cambodians. A Treaty banning cluster munitions was passed in 2008 but similarly with the Mine Ban Treaty, the work continues. Monitoring, working with governments on implementation and direct service to the survivors is key to our work on both treaties.

In 2011, Cambodia had the honour of hosting the Eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty (11MSP), an annual meeting in which governments, NGOs and civil society monitor the implementation of the Treaty. An exciting, productive, exhausting and memorable week, the 11MSP was a huge success. It brought many of our campaigners, old and new, together again and reinvigorated our mission to achieve a mine free world.

These next few pages contain faces of campaigners we have met along the way and campaigned alongside of. Let us continue to 'Push for Progress' together.





In 2014, we will have been campaigning for twenty years. These years are very precious years in my life. In that time, our campaign has come along way and so have we.



I remember the very beginning; we wanted to make people aware of the landmine problem and so we asked people to sign petitions. We collected more than one million signatures from around the country, including Prime Minister Hun Sen and King Sihanouk's. Dalma Foldes was with me when we went to ask Prime Minister Hun Sen to sign the petition. They wouldn't allow Cambodians to go very close to him so I pushed her to the front and told her to ask! It was all very quick! Less than one minute! He signed and then he left.

We took all of these signatures to the CCW in Vienna in 1995 and told the people of our mine-ravaged homeland. It was the first time that we campaigned internationally and it opened our eyes to a world beyond the world we had always known. At the meeting, we gave voice to landmine survivors and tried to connect people from the grass roots level to the top level. That is what we did at the CCW in 1995 and that is what we continue to do today.



Although we were unsuccessful that time, people listened to us. People began to have confidence that we could change the lives of the people. Their confidence in us inspired confidence within ourselves. We realized that although we are small, we are important and we have an important message to share. In particular, Sister Denise never stopped believing in us. It is thanks to her



leadership that we now understand that each of us has the power to change the world.

It was not always easy. We have had many successes but there have also been many challenges. I remember one meeting in particular. I went with Sokheurm to the United States where we had the opportunity to speak with a representative of the Vice President. We asked him to please ban landmines but he told us that the United States could not ban landmines because they had to think about the faces of their soldiers in the Korean War. I could see that they had closed their hearts already. They cannot see that landmine victims are more important than their war. They don't see that good, innocent people are the ones that suffer from their actions. They use both hands, one hand to help and the other to kill. They give money for demining, money to relieve the suffering of the people, but then with the other hand, they produce these weapons, they use these weapons. What for? In this understanding, war and peace go together. It does not have to be this way. For us, we choose peace and just peace.

In Cambodia, the four morals that are most valued are represented in the four faces of the Bayon. One is 'metta' - compassion, 'karuna' - no discrimination, 'mutita' - to rejoice in the success of others, and 'upika' - impartiality. We believe the people that have these four morals, have peaceful hearts. Peaceful hearts also mean a peaceful world.

Sok Eng



*People we met along the way*

# *Sokheurm Man*



When I look at that painting I think about my father and my childhood.

I had a landmine accident on national mines awareness day when I was 14 years old. Sister Denise, Father Kike and some JRS staff went to the hospital and saw me there. My mum, dad and sister were crying.

When I went home, my father still made me work in the rice fields. It wasn't easy. I didn't have a prosthetic then; I just used a crutch. Even though it was difficult, I'm happy that he made me work. At that time, a photographer called Hervé Sanchez, he made a book about my story called 'Manos Unidas'.

In 1997, I came to live with the Jesuits in Siem Reap to study and I joined the campaign with Sister. That same year, I went overseas for the first time in my life to Geneva, Switzerland, for the fifth meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty where I met Maha Ghosananda. He is a peaceful person and when he talked it was always very meaningful. We campaigned in many countries and made many friends from around the world. I'm

happy that I could help to make a difference. I hope less children suffer from landmines because of our actions.

The Metta Karuna Centre was my home for the next ten years of my life, at first with Father Indon and then with ... At that time, Reth was also living here. It was very different then. I remember my first year in Siem Reap was a bit hard for me. I remember all of the other children running around and I couldn't run as fast as they could. Sometimes I went to Banteay Prieb where I saw a lot of people with disability like me. They were studying and helping themselves. It inspired me to try to help myself. My Father, Sister Denise and Kike, gave me an idea: live as normal people do. They pushed me.

After three years and four or five operations, I was finally able to get a prosthetic. I tried even harder then to do everything as normal people do; running, playing basketball, everything like the normal people. Now, I live a very normal and happy life. I have a good job in a hotel, I'm married to a beautiful wife and I have a handsome boy; what more could I want?





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*People we met along the way*

# *Emma Leslie*

My husband says one of the things he likes about me is my “can do” attitude. I know that attitude was cultivated under my tutelage with Sister Denise working on the Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines in the JRS office 1997 - 1999. Nothing stands in Denise’s way. She sees the need and she gets busy. It’s infectious and attractive. JRS Cambodia is full of “can do” people. Someone walks through the door in need, they get up out of their chairs and get busy helping them out - political prisoners, asylum seekers, refugees, poor people, the disabled, anyone.

This attitude, combined with their deep connection to the poor, oppressed and victims of the system, means that JRS people often find themselves working with quite unusual characters - generals, de-miners, slightly dubious politicians, Ambassadors and so on. They raise their voices in challenging unjust policies, questioning the status quo, and by painting a picture for those in power on how things might be different if changes were to be made. That is why Cambodia is so on track in terms of mine clearance, victim assistance and destruction of mines (I am sure Denise would say they can do more). I remember when investigating the corruption of the government de-mining agency, Sister got the phone number of a five star general connected to some of the information we

had collected. She did not miss a beat. She called the number and asked if we could meet him later that day. I suspect blind-sided by this rather unexpected call, the general agreed. We had a nice cup of tea in his office, which housed glass cabinets of landmines. Denise did not waste a minute politely explaining the international ban treaty and what he needed to do to comply with it.

One should always be worried when Denise gets an idea. She does not always let you in on the whole picture. The best indicator that an idea is on the way is when she is making a beeline for a piece of scrap paper and a pencil. Then she is busy drafting a press release, a manifesto, or the logistics for some event. After such paper scribbling I have found myself suddenly calling all the journalists we know, visiting the head of the ANZ banks in Phnom Penh, dancing with the disabled on boats on the river, and in lunches with Ambassadors briefing them on the state of play.

I wanted to write here that absolutely nothing slows down the JRS team. But I do vividly remember dropping in a box of Christmas cookies to the JRS office at Christmas 2010 to find a significantly deflated team



with Denise the closest to shattered I have ever seen. She seemed defeated, as the Cambodian government had managed to out do their manoeuvres to protect the Uighur refugees in Cambodia. The grief in that room that night was that of a family who had lost one of their own. They were inconsolable and I was deeply moved by how much they lived by the belief that their life and liberties are tied up with that of the people they accompany. A few days later they were back on the job, but never ever forgetting their Uighur friends.

Just when you think JRS Cambodia has done all that is possible, they go ahead and transform their wheelchair factory, into the most beautiful and reflective interfaith centre in Siem Reap. I have already had the privilege of staying there many times along side Burmese and Pakistan refugees, outspoken Cambodian monks, Kashmiris and South Sudanese. This centre epitomises the JRS spirit of hospitality, generosity and safe spaces for all people. I first experienced this spirit in 1997, when as a poor volunteer I would pop around for a gin and tonic and a bit of cheese at the JRS house, through to today where the same spirit prevails against the odds!



















## MINDOL METTA KARUNA

Mindol Metta Karuna in Siem Reap is a place where people of different faiths, different nationalities, different handicaps of heart and body, refugees and displaced, can meet, reflect, seek sanctuary, experience peace and reconciliation and advocate for a world of justice for all.





# *Finding the spirit in all things...*

Through a series of sculptures, symbols and the natural beauty of the centre, Cambodians and foreigners are invited to spend time reflecting on the challenges of Cambodia through the eyes of the poor. Walking through the centre, one realizes that the challenges facing Cambodia are the same challenges that humanity is faced with at a global level: mass migration, refugee populations, disarmament, sustainable development, environmental challenges, education and ethical governance.

Joaqui Salord was the architect for most of the buildings. Rob Allsop and Hallam Goad landscaped the area and Em Somaly planted most of the gardens along with the Metta Karuna team.

Here, the core values of JRS: compassion, justice, hospitality, solidarity, the dignity of each person, enkindle hope and fostering a world God desires.















*Be not inhospitable to strangers  
lest they be angels in disguise*

Rooted in the JRS spirit of hospitality, everyone is welcome at the centre.



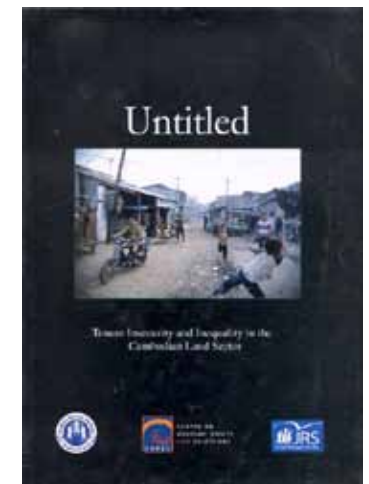
## *People we met along the way*



Visitors to the centre include human rights and peace and reconciliation groups, high school and college groups, monks, advocates, land evictees, people with disability and simply passers by. The interfaith chapel is the centrepiece of the centre where people of all faiths are invited to reflect and pray. Inside the chapel, find the symbols of the centre once again. Quietly find the woman at the well, the refugees, the pots, the peace prayer, “I have no foot to wash”, the labyrinth and the handicapped cross.

Recent visitors have included German Parliamentarians and Kashmiris from both sides of the border working together towards a peaceful future. Among them were Hindu, Muslim and Christian people. A delegation from the world’s newest nation South Sudan came to talk about people suffering from the effects of war, division and landmines.

The Centre is also a home for researchers. In 2012, Madeline Gleeson is conducting research on forced migration issues in Cambodia and Tess O’Brien is engaged in mapping activities on the forced eviction story and identifying gaps where JRS is most needed, particularly in Siem Reap and near Phnom Penh. This is a continuation of research first conducted by JRS lawyer Nick Henderson in 2009. Nick, with partners Bridges Across Borders and CHREC, published a seminal work on land titling called ‘Untitled’ which affected policy of both the World Bank and







donors. At the same time, JRS social workers were engaged in addressing the needs at relocation sites or “dumping grounds”. Forcibly evicted people and imprisoned villagers have sought sanctuary with us and have used the centre as a place where they can work together to solve land disputes legally and non-violently.

A victim assistance book to help government officials and landmine survivor’s work together to uphold rights and meet needs of vulnerable survivors throughout the country was also compiled in 2011 by Sak Sopheak and Adrian Gregorich and Choloe Chapple.

Meanwhile, Nikola Errington has completed ‘The Search’, a guide to protection and asylum space in Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia

and the Philippines, which was first initiated by Taya Hunt.

Another project aimed at fostering reconciliation is currently being undertaken in conjunction with Tilborg University. Related to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and the issue of statelessness, it aims to redress some of the consequences of the genocidal era of 1975-1979. Some Vietnamese living here for generations are de-facto stateless and a claim is being made that their moral reparation for the sufferings they endured during the Khmer Rouge regime should be the granting of full citizenship.

In May 2012, Frank Brennan gave an address on ‘Faith, Justice and Social Policy’ and in 2013, a JRS international seminar on reconciliation is planned.





