

# House Building in Cambodia

November 2012

# Up, up and Away!

- After 12 months spent planning, fund raising and organising teams, flights and accommodation, we were finally on our way to Cambodia to build houses in conjunction with 'Tabitha Cambodia'.
- We spent a couple of days taking in the sights, sounds, tastes.... And smells... of Cambodia, before getting down to business.



# Siem Reap - Cambodia



Local Corner Store



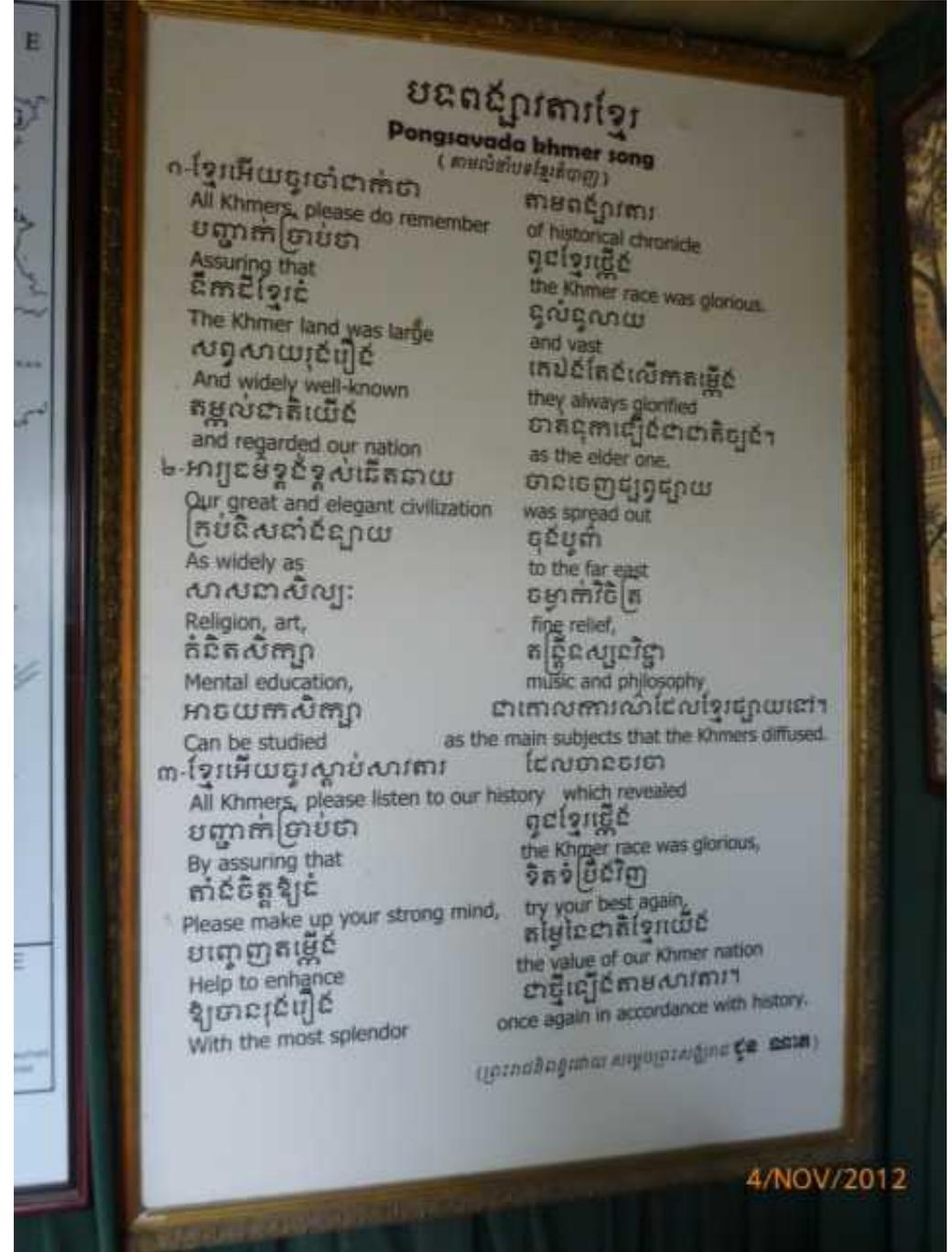
Foot Massage!



School Bus??



# Cambodia – As it Once Was



# 'TABITHA' Headquarters

- First official stop 'Tabitha Foundation' Headquarters.
- Janne Ritskes (Director and founder of Tabitha Cambodia) briefed us on the background and expectations of house building in a Cambodian village and filled in some details of recent Cambodian history, including the reasons for the current desperate poverty of the Cambodian people.
- Handcrafted items are made onsite to fund the administration costs of the foundation and provide employment and regular income for many former 'street' women.
- Following the Tabitha "induction" we were then required to visit the Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek genocide museums.



# Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum

## INTRODUCTION TO THE TUOL SLENG GENOCIDE MUSEUM

In the past "TUOL SLENG" Museum was one of the secondary schools in the capital, called "Tuol Svay Prey" high-school.

After the 17th, April 1975 Pol Pot clique had transformed it into a prison called "S.21" ( Security office 21 ) which was the biggest in Kampuchea Democratic. It was surrounded with the double wall of corrugated iron, surmounted by dense barbed wires.

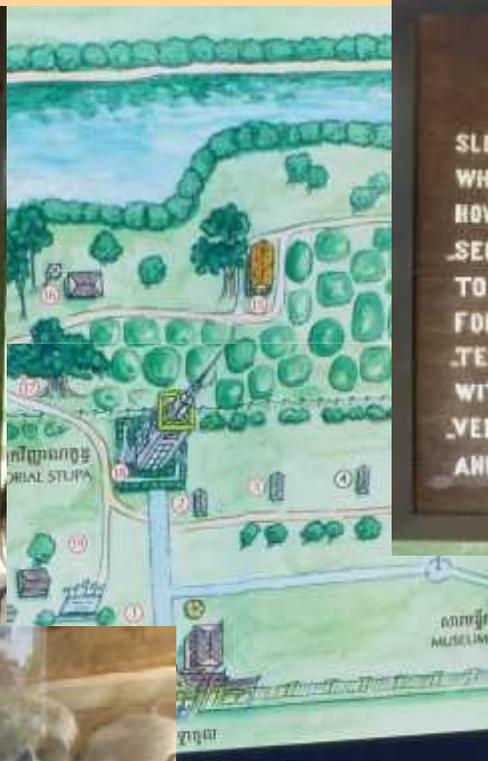
The classrooms on the ground and the first floors were pierced and divided into individual cells, whereas the ones on the second floor used for mass detention



- The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and The Killing Fields are a confronting but necessary experience to help understand how Cambodia went from its position as 'Pearl of the Orient' following WW2, to abject poverty after the Vietnam war.
- Pol Pot's regime killed over 3 million of the then 12 million Cambodian people and destroyed most of the country's infrastructure, wealth and knowledge.
- Of the 20,000+ people who went into the Tuol Sleng prison over the three years from 1975 to 1978 only 200 survived. Most were executed at the Killing fields in the village of Choeung Ek, 15km to the south-West of Phnom Penh.
- We were addressed by one of the few survivors, now 82 years old, he survived his time in the prison because he was the only person who was able to keep the office typewriter in working order. His wife and children didn't survive.

# The Killing Fields of Choeung Ek

**TRUCK STOP**  
HERE, WAS THE PLACE WHERE A TRUCKS TRANSPORTING VICTIMS TO BE EXTERMINATED FROM TUOL SLENG PRISON AND OTHER PLACES IN THE COUNTRY, STOPPED. TRUCKS WOULD ARRIVE 2 OR 3 TIMES A MONTH OR EVERY 3 WEEKS. EACH TRUCK HELD 20 TO 30 FRIGHTENED, BLINDFOLDED AND SILENT PRISONERS.  
WHEN THE TRUCKS ARRIVED, THE VICTIMS WERE LED DIRECTLY TO BE EXECUTED AT THE DITCHES AND PITS OR WERE SENT TO BE DETAINED IN THE DARK AND GLOOMY PRISON NEARBY.  
AFTER JANUARY 07, 1979, ONE TRUCK REMAINED, BUT IT HAS SINCE BEEN TAKEN AWAY.



**THE DARK AND GLOOMY DETENTION**  
HERE, WAS THE PLACE WHERE VICTIMS TRANSPORTED FROM TUOL SLENG AND OTHER PLACES IN THE COUNTRY WERE DETAINED. USUALLY, WHEN THE TRUCK ARRIVED, THE VICTIMS WERE EXECUTED IMMEDIATELY. HOWEVER, AS THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS TO BE EXECUTED WAS INCREASED UP TO OVER 300 PER DAY, EXECUTIONERS FAILED IN ATTEMPT TO KILL THEM WITHIN A DAY. THAT IS WHY THEY WERE DETAINED FOR EXECUTION THE NEXT DAY. THE DETENTION WAS CONSTRUCTED FROM WOOD WITH GALVANIZED STEEL ROOF. ITS WALL WAS BUILT WITH TWO LAYERS OF FLAT WOOD WERE TO DARKEN AND ALSO PREVENT PRISONERS SEEING EACH OTHER. UNFORTUNATELY, THE DARK AND GLOOMY DETENTION WAS BURNED DOWN IN 1980.



# Group Intro and River Cruise



- The induction aspect of the program completed, the 24 of us that were part of this building group then had a sunset cruise along the Mekong river getting an insight into how some of the residents of Phnom Penh live.

# The Work Begins - House Building

- We arrived at Kran Jol village to find the frames up and roofs complete on our 26 houses— just waiting for us to install the bamboo floors and attach the cladding....
- *Easy Peasy!!!*



# *Many hands make light work*



- There were plenty of helpers on hand to hold down wavy bamboo or straighten out bent nails.
- Idle hammers were very soon whisked off and put to work.
- Prospective home owners were keen to ensure that we did a good job and were happy to help us learn to build a house Cambodia style.



With temperatures in the mid 30s and very high humidity, we soon needed a bit of cooling down!



*(Better keep your eyes and mouth closed though; that water looks none too clean!)*

# Builders at work-

Lots of bruised thumbs and sore knees!



***PHEW!!!*** A couple of the completed houses with builders and proud owners.



The people of Kran Jol village have been participating in the Tabitha Foundation savings program for about seven years and their 'prosperity' is beginning to show. Many of the villagers now own livestock and extensive vegetable gardens are thriving throughout the village.



Our team of 24 Australians built 26 houses in Kran Jol village to house 96 children and their families; safe from snakes, vermin and floodwaters. Statistics show that once Cambodian children have safe housing; their health improves, 85% of them will begin to attend school and the family starts to find ways to lift themselves out of the poverty cycle.



The official 'handing over' of the houses, we had two separate handing over ceremonies.

From this.....

To THIS!



It wasn't all work, some took time out of the building schedule to teach the kids the 'Hokey Pokey' and do some skipping.



*...let's do the Hokey Pokey  
and turn right around.....*



Thank you for your generous support-  
*These children are the future of Cambodia!*



....and for 2013 ???

*We intend to continue to participate in the Tabitha House Building Program, **and in addition.....***

*These kids want to go to school but can't, as the current 4-room school already has 580 students and they desperately need more classrooms.*



*We have committed to raising the \$52,000 that is needed for six additional classrooms, 6 toilets and a water bore (currently they have neither of these) Details at [www.directminingservices.com/school-in-cambodia](http://www.directminingservices.com/school-in-cambodia)*