

NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2005

Dear Members and friends

Another year is over and it is again time to look back on what we have done and to look forward to the future and make plans for 2006.



In October, I had the opportunity to travel to Cambodia again to conduct research for AUSTCARE with the aim of developing a victim assistance component for their new integrated mine action project, due to start in early 2006. The project will be implemented in Banteay Meanchey province with funding from AusAID. The research was part of a wider project to provide recommendations to AUSTCARE, CARE Australia, and World Vision, to ensure that mine survivors and other people with disabilities benefit from mine action activities in their community. CARE and World Vision



implement projects in two of the most mine-affected provinces in the country, Battambang and Pailin. Existing programs already assist vulnerable families, including the very poor, but sometimes a conscious effort must be made to ensure that disabled people have access to the same opportunities as their able-bodied peers.



While in Cambodia, I also had the opportunity to start a new project to support disabled people, including mine survivors, and their families. Read on for more details.

Standing Tall Australia continues to receive royalties from a legal commentary on the Mine Ban Treaty. To date we have received almost \$6,150 some of which has been used to support disabled people and their families in Afghanistan, Cambodia

and Nicaragua. The aim is to provide funding for projects implemented by small local non government organizations. More funding will be distributed as worthy projects are identified.

The Annual General Meeting was held in Brisbane on 11 December. The minutes of the meeting are enclosed. Thanks to those who participated and those that sent their proxies.

In February 2006, four members of *Standing Tall* (2 doctors and 2 physiotherapists) will travel to Cambodia for 2-3 weeks to visit mine-affected communities and, where appropriate, provide basic healthcare and advice. They will visit the provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Pursat, and Siem Reap. We look forward to hearing about their trip in the next newsletter.

And finally, Mines Action Canada, our partner in the "101 Great Ideas for the Socio-Economic Reintegration of Mine Survivors" project, used some of the many wonderful photos received of mine survivors at work to produce a calendar for 2006. We are pleased to be able to send you a copy and wish you a happy and prosperous new year.

Thank you for your continued support. If you have any questions or comments we would be pleased to receive them.

Sheree Bailey - Director

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SPECIAL THANK YOUs

Several members have sent donations - totalling \$337 - to support unspecified projects since the last newsletter. Donations ranged from \$10 to \$100. Thanks to each of you.

Two members have each started supporting a family as part the Cambodian Family Support program - US\$100 per family per annum.

Donations of \$2,200 and \$1,000 were received to support the work of DDSP (Disability Development Services Pursat) in Cambodia.

If you would like to support the work of *Standing Tall Australia* or specific projects please contact us for more information.

SUPPORT FOR DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES

In October, *Standing Tall Australia* started a new activity aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty by supporting disadvantaged families, including the families of mine survivors and other people with disabilities, in Cambodia.

Data collected by Jesuit Service Cambodia (JS) as part of its outreach program in 1999 and 2000 revealed that of 1,663 survivors interviewed: 71 percent did not have adequate housing; seven percent had no house at all; 45 percent had to travel more than five minutes to get water for drinking and washing; 89 percent reported food insecurity; 32 percent had no land for housing or cultivation; 28 percent received a government pension; 50 percent had a "job" (including rice farming); and the children of at least 46 percent did not go to school. For many, the situation is unchanged in 2005.

As a result of the survey, mine survivors developed a 12-point plan to address their needs and priorities:

1. The villager has a house that shelters the family from the weather.
2. Villagers have enough food.
3. Villagers have access to water for drinking and cleaning.
4. Children have access to school and adults to learning opportunities.
5. Family has access to primary health services.
6. Survivors have access to income generating possibilities for family expenses.
7. There are no mines left in the housing, farming and recreational areas of the village.
8. Villagers deprived of land due to war and mines receive title to available demined or other land.
9. Disabled survivors have access to prosthetics, wheelchairs, hearing aids, counselling services.
10. Roads to market, with bridges and water control systems, are available to the village.
11. Villagers participate in common projects, social and cultural events, and in decisions that affect their lives.
12. Villagers discuss and solve issues affecting them (mine risk, aids, drugs, trafficking, land).

Standing Tall's new project will attempt to provide the means to address some of the priorities outlined by the 12-point plan. For US\$100 a year it will be possible to start a family on the road to economic independence. Initially we will work in collaboration with JS to identify families with special needs and provide follow-up.

I have met all the families that have received support from us so far, either in October or on previous visits to Cambodia. Some families received US\$100 and the promise of ongoing support and four received US\$50 as a one off grant to help with a specific need. Only 2 families currently have a sponsor. Other funding came from various donations from members. Beneficiaries do not receive cash but rather the money will be used for a specific need or to purchase the means to start an income generating activity.

JS has provided most of these families with a house at a cost of US\$500 which usually covers the materials. Other villagers then help build the house and are given rice for their work. US dollars are used extensively in Cambodia and all values mentioned are either US dollars or the local currency - 4,000 Riel = US\$1. One Australian dollar is about 3,000 Riel.

Now, let me introduce you to the families.

Khay Thy (45 years-old) lost his right leg above the knee when he stepped on a landmine in 1998 while cutting trees to build a house. He was fitted with his 1st prosthesis in August 2005 by the International Committee of the Red Cross.



He has 2 boys - Thy Roth (aged 8) and Thy Tith (aged 2 1/2). They live in Banoy village in Banteay Meanchey province. In April 2004 his wife left him leaving the children



behind. JS built a house for the family on a small piece of land owned by a friend. They don't have any land to grow rice or vegetables so depended on the generosity of neighbours or money Thy could earn weaving baskets - about 12 cents for each basket or up to 50 cents for a large size. He had a dream to open a bicycle repair shop - something he used to do before his accident. The \$100 provided has made that dream a reality. A small workshop cost \$37,



\$31 for tools, \$30 for spare parts, and \$2 left over for a bag of rice!

Loem Houy, a 35-year-old single mother of 2 girls aged 7 and 10, lost her left leg above the knee after stepping on a landmine in 1998. Huy's husband deserted her after the accident. She has a prosthesis but finds it too uncomfortable to wear. The oldest daughter has just started school. They live in Kok Trach village in Siem Reap province. Until this year she was living with her parents. JS built her a house on the parents' land but there isn't enough land to grow rice or vegetables. Every day they walk to the market to buy the day's food - about 2kg of rice. Huy makes an income from weaving sleeping mats which sell for about \$1.25. She also runs a little shop from the house with small food items. Huy has dreams of starting a business to better support her children. The \$100 provided will be used to buy a bicycle so Huy can find other markets for the mats and to send both children to school. We are also looking at the possibility of planting some fruit trees to supply extra food and also fruit to sell.



Haemwanna, aged 37, stepped on a landmine on 7



October 2005 while cutting grass to make thatch. I met him and his wife, Ma Thy aged 35, while in the Mongkol Borei hospital.

They have 5 children aged 18 months to 12 years. The 2 older children go to school. Haemwanna was walking ahead of his wife on a well-trodden path when he stepped on the mine. He lost his right leg above the knee and part of his left foot. His wife received shrapnel injuries to her back and the baby, who she was carrying on her hip, lost some fingers on his left hand. They are very poor but have a small house in Tuol Prasat village in Banteay Meanchey province. They have no land to grow



rice. Before the accident they made about \$1 a day making thatches. Ma Thy thought she could earn enough money to support the family by collecting scrap for sale. For \$50 she was set her up with a bicycle (\$35), and bamboo basket and scales (\$12), to start earning an income. There was \$3 left over to buy food!

I met the Naov family from Botrong village in Siem Reap province in March. Naov Phon, aged 37, lost his left leg below the knee after stepping on a landmine in 1985. Earlier this year he borrowed money to travel to Siem Reap to have his prosthesis replaced thinking that all his costs would be reimbursed. But it was only partially reimbursed so the family is now left with a debt of about \$20. They also borrowed money to buy food. His wife, Chhaun Chanda is 32. They have 4 children aged 2 to 14. The oldest child goes to school. The family is very poor and has no land to grow food. They live by a river and catch fish to eat or look for food in the forest. The family has no regular income but sometimes make 5,000 Riel a day from casual labour or selling fish. *Standing Tall* has provided \$100 for the family to be used to pay their debts and to provide a means for them to earn an income on a regular basis.



Chroek Han, aged 40, is from Kok Kroch village in Siem Reap province. She lost her left leg below



the knee in a landmine explosion in 1985. I haven't met her as she was in the forest looking for food when I visited in March. But I did meet some of her younger children. Her husband died last year after a long illness. She has 6 children aged 6 to 19 years - 5 go to school. The

family is very poor and often do not have enough food to eat. With the \$100, we are looking at ways of enabling the family to earn a regular income to meet their needs.

I met Tun Koes, aged 35, and his wife, Kom Ren aged 28, in November last year in Pres Ko Thmey village in Siem Reap province. They have a one-year-old child. Koes also has a son aged 14 who is in grade 1 at school. After losing both legs above the knee and an arm in a landmine explosion in 1990 he has limited opportunities for earning an income. The family is very poor and has no land for planting food. Kom Ren sometimes earns around 2,500 Riel for casual day labour. *Standing Tall* has provided \$100 for this family and will work with them to see what business activity Kom Ren could undertake to earn a regular income.



Phoek Pe, aged 40, and his family are very poor. They live in Kok Sromor village in Siem Reap province. He lost his left leg after stepping on a landmine in 1987. Pe and his wife, Loek Ong aged 32, have 6 daughters aged between 2 and 14. The 4 older children go to school. They do grow some rice but it only lasts the family for about 3 months. For the rest of the year they sell whatever fish Pe can catch at the market to buy rice - about 2kg of rice a day for the family of 8! The family earns about 3,500 Riel a day. JS provided \$500 for their house but because they live near Siem Reap town the cost of building materials is rising because of all the 5 star hotels that are being built. So the family had to borrow \$25 to finish the house - at 10 percent per month interest! *Standing Tall* provided \$50 to pay off the loan and also to enable Pe to travel to Siem Reap to have his prosthesis replaced (his current one is 10 years old) and to feed the family while he is away.

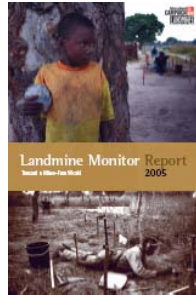


often stolen. She is dependent on others for food. *Standing Tall* provided \$50 for food and medicines.

The needs of many families in Cambodia are immense but it is encouraging to see what a small amount of money can achieve. We hope this program will expand to help many more families.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Release of the *Landmine Monitor Report 2005*



The 1,053-page *Landmine Monitor Report 2005* was released on 22 November. In 2004-2005, new landmine and UXO casualties were reported in 58 countries, with the most casualties recorded in Cambodia, Afghanistan and Colombia. The report found that in too many countries services available to meet the needs of the growing number of survivors are desperately inadequate. The victim assistance-focused release in Medellin (Colombia) included a media tour, led by a mine survivor, to the mine-affected town of San Cristóbal de Medellín to meet with other survivors and visit medical facilities. (For information see www.icbl.org/lm)

Sixth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty (6MSP)

The 6th annual meeting of the Mine Ban Treaty was held in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, from 28 November to 2 December 2005. More than 600 people from about 115 countries attended, representing States Parties, other governments, mine survivors, and international organizations including the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). States

Parties reported on progress in implementing the Nairobi Action Plan, adopted at the First Review Conference of the Treaty in December 2004. In its intervention to the plenary on victim assistance, the Australian delegation mentioned the work of *Standing Tall Australia*. (For more information on the 6MSP see www.gichd.ch)

During the 6MSP, a handicraft market was set up at the conference venue to sell goods made by disabled people

from many countries including Cambodia, Colombia, Tajikistan, and Thailand.



I met Nai Hoy, aged 39, in March in Kok Kroch village in Siem Reap province. She has 2 sons aged 18 and 20. Since 1988 she has been paralysed from the neck down. She spends her life lying on the platform shown in the photo which has to be raised during the wet season so she doesn't drown. Her 2 sons have no education and one has to stay home to look after his mother while the other looks for food. Nai Hoy's mother used to care for her when the children were young but now she is very old and sick. The husband left long ago. *Standing Tall* provided \$50 for a fishing net (they live beside a river) to catch fish for food and to sell, and for rice to feed the family.

I met Pok Phon, aged 38, in November last year in Chong Thnol village in Siem Reap province. Phon has cerebral palsy and has no use of her legs and one hand, and limited use of her other hand. A couple of years ago her mother got very sick and died. She sold their house and land to pay for medical care and the funeral ceremony. Now she lives in what basically is just a small platform with a plastic roof. It leaks during the wet season and this year she has been very sick. She tries making things to sell but the finished products are

