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## FLOODS

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Those of us in town over the last few weeks have been experiencing the worst floods in Cambodia since 2000. They have killed over 200 people across the country and many local people in Siem Reap say the flooding here is the worst they can remember.

Most of our member organisations are supporting people who've been affected by the flood waters, and many of the families faced significant poverty related issues before this added problem. Emergency supplies of rice and other essentials are being distributed, especially to families where the income earner is unable to work due to the flooding, and it

is feared that the rice harvest will be affected, (the Cambodian government reported that flood waters along the Mekong River and other places have damaged 670,000 acres (271,000 hectares) of rice fields, as well as more than 900 schools and 360 Buddhist temples).

If anyone could offer any help at this time to our members it would be greatly appreciated. Contact us on [info@concertcambodia.org](mailto:info@concertcambodia.org) for details of how to help.



Siem Reap, Old Market Area



## NEW VOLUNTEER

Philipp Lee, Meera's replacement under the German government's Weltwärts programme, joined us in the middle of August. Philipp applied for the programme because he wanted to learn more about cultural differences in the world; he feels that it is very difficult to understand and help a society without an appreciation of its culture, and this is especially so in Cambodia with its dramatic historical background. He also hopes to get a deeper understanding of development aid policy. During his year in Siem Reap Philipp hopes to get involved with various issues regarding Cambodia and its people; he wants



to get in contact with as many people as possible and help them in the best way he can.

Philipp quickly established himself as a valuable part of our team; at the office, Philipp talks to visitors

about our member projects, and helps Nari to deliver training sessions to our business members. Together with Marije he is currently designing a system to help us improve our assessment of, and support to, our NGO members. A lot of research work has still to be done and Philipp is enjoying learning new things about NGO working practices. He is contributing some good ideas and his experience is growing day by day. He says he is very pleased to benefit from and contribute to some leading edge research.

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CONTRIBUTORS: MICHAEL HORTON,  
NIKKI BIDDISON, MARIJE BOERHOF,  
RA KOLAP, PHILIPP LEE

CONCERT OFFICE  
GPO BOX 93009  
SIEM REAP ANGKOR  
KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

TEL. +855 63963511  
INFO@CONCERTCAMBODIA.ORG  
OFFICE HOURS: MO.-FR. 9 AM – 5 PM

## BIKES BIKES BIKES ...

ConCERT's efforts at encouraging and coordinating fundraising for bikes continue. With the money raised by Meera and betterplace, the display at the Victoria Hotel, and a few smaller donations, we have enough funds for almost 30 more bikes. The price seems to be

creeping up so we're unsure yet of the final exact number we'll be able to buy. Buying and distributing them has been delayed because of the Pchum Ben holidays and the flooding, and we'll report the handover in the next newsletter.





## ANJALI HOUSE COMMUNITY SAVINGS SCHEME

In our previous newsletter we mentioned that we share the concerns of bodies such as UNICEF, Save the Children, Friends International and others, that the practice of tourism supporting private orphanages in Cambodia is diverting funds and attention away from more appropriate community support based solutions.

The Community Savings Scheme introduced by Anjali House earlier this year is a good example of the holistic approach to family support that community based solutions can provide. Anjali House and its programmes support over 100 former street children in Siem Reap, (the very children who can often end up in “orphanages”). These children are supported to stay with their families, and the families in turn are offered help with the aim of their being able to support themselves without the need for the children to be out on the streets earning money.



Anjali House management realised it was time to improve the overall sustainability of the Anjali project. A fundamental change in the system of family support has been implemented, which moves away from free, donor-based support, with the aims of:

- reducing dependency on ‘hand outs’ to the families
- improving family participation in operations and programmes available to their children
- encouraging small scale savings
- providing access to loans not currently available through traditional micro-finance models
- providing funds for external income-generating training programmes

Under the scheme a contribution is required from families for all services and programmes that Anjali provides.

The core idea is the implementation of a committee of family representatives to determine the value of services and programmes provided, based on a democratic system of worth. Each family nominates a family representative to attend committee meetings, with each representative having an equal

vote on decisions facing the community, with a majority vote formalising all decisions. A chairman and secretary are selected, who are held responsible for directing meetings and ensuring proper conduct and consideration by all parties.

All representatives are issued with a family savings book to record all savings and loans. Savings are generated by purchasing subsidised rice through the organisation. This system replaces the previous programme of free weekly rice donation to families who have students attending the Anjali House project. The subsidised rate was set by the committee at 500 riel per kilo (approximately 1/3 of the retail price). Payments for rice are recorded in the savings book of each family by the secretary and signed by the chairman.

Families can apply for loans through the savings scheme, replacing loans traditionally provided through the organisation, and can be for a variety of purposes, e.g. educational resources and administration fees for public school, healthcare for family members and students over 15 years old who are not covered through the Angkor Hospital for



Children, house building/repair or business start-up and development. Loan applications are reviewed by the chairman and secretary who then convene a family committee meeting; the committee votes whether to sanction or decline the loan. Any savings already held by a family can be used as a deposit towards the loan, reducing the monthly interest payments.

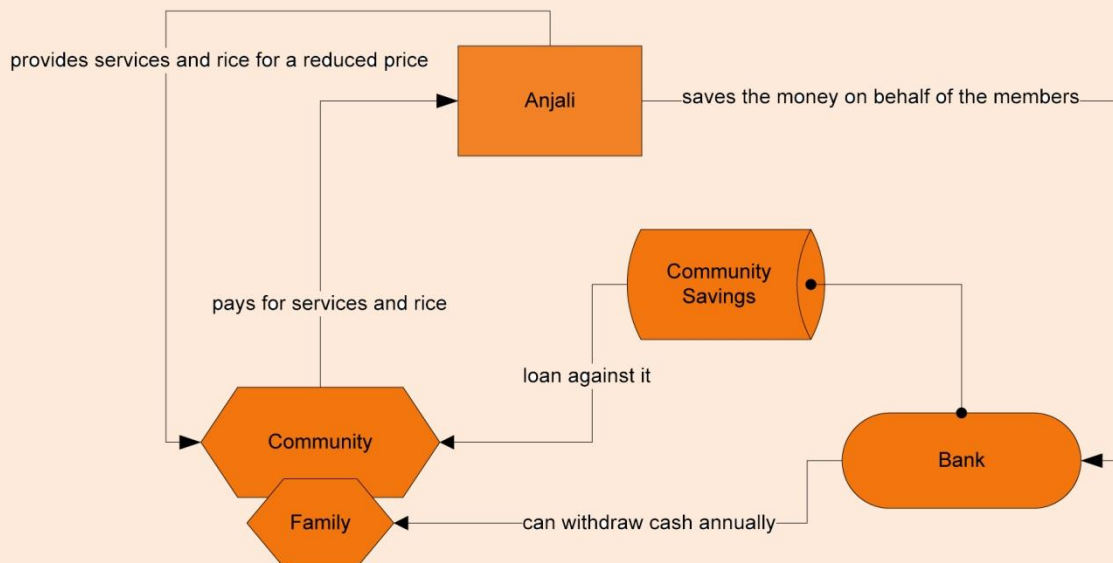
Income generation training workshops in the two core areas of agriculture and home textiles are also included in the scheme. Courses are provided at a fee set by the committee based on the perceived value and potential of them to increase the income of the families, (10,000 riel per person), with these fees being re-invested into the savings scheme. Workshops provide the skills training and all materials necessary

for the family to implement the project at home, with support provided through pilot projects based at Anjali House. Families then have new income sources to stabilise monthly incomes and prevent their children being forced back to work to help support family living costs. The loans programme also reduces the need for students to drop out of school and work during times when families are faced with one-off health or funeral expenses.

Community savings schemes operating in other countries report very low default rates as it is the families' own savings that are being put at risk and there is a strong feeling of collective responsibility and responsible lending. By implementing the community savings scheme, Anjali hopes to help families to move away from a culture of

dependency and empower them to make important decisions about their futures. Families will also become accustomed to saving and the benefit that this can bring in the medium to long term.

Money generated through the savings scheme enables a much wider range of training opportunities than previously available as well as more loans to a larger proportion of Anjali supported families. It also marks an important step forward in their effort to improve the overall sustainability of the organisation and ensure the long term viability of their programmes and services.





# ConCERT..

## BUSINESS MEMBER STAFF

### TRAINING

ConCERT offers its business members with regular staff training sessions twice a year. The training is delivered in English and Khmer, either at the business premises or at the ConCERT office, by Nari and our long term volunteer. In many ways it is better to train the staff at the ConCERT office because it is easier to show what ConCERT does, and to explain about our partner NGOs.

First, we start with a general overview: What “ConCERT” means. Who is involved in tourism in Siem Reap? What responsible tourism means. How ConCERT works in partnership with their business. How they can play their part in helping their guests to support the people of Cambodia, and how this in turn benefits their guests, the local communities, their businesses, and the staff themselves. We also talk about the importance of protecting the Cambodian environment and cultural. This part of the training is

held in English, with Nari translating as required.

We then move to giving more detail about how we work: what we do and don’t do; how we are funded etc. We encourage this to be a question and answer session, which is led by Nari in Khmer. This has proved very effective and ensures everyone has a clear understanding of what is often a new concept.

Regular staff training is very important because staff members continually change, and because people generally need refresher training. Staff should know how to respond properly to guests, who want to help the people of Cambodia and ask them for advice.



Nari during a training session in the office

## IMPROVING CONCERT’S MATERIALS AND SERVICES

Following the improvements in our promotional materials

mentioned in the last newsletter, we have continued to update our leaflets, member organisation posters, and the way we display member organisation information in the office.

Our existing “Other Ways You Can Help” leaflet has been expanded to include several more innovative activities to give back to the local community. Additionally a map has been added and the two-sided leaflet has become a booklet



for visitors to take away; it makes it easy to find where to get involved for people who only have limited time during their holiday.

To help to increase the support given to our business partners, we have produced a separate leaflet called “Support the Businesses that Support our Work”. This contains all of our members that are not hotels or guesthouses: restaurants; souvenir shops; tour operators; other businesses, all of whom support their community and which visitors can frequent during their stay in Siem Reap.

Additionally, as a bit of a late spring cleaning, we took a look around the office in order to find a way to better maximise our space as well as improve the organisation of

information about our members. A complete overall of our lobby area included re-organising our member posters into similar categories such as environment, community

support and vocational training. Posters have been updated and the displays simplified making it much easier for visitors to find information about our members.



## MARIJE

During my holidays in Cambodia my friend, who worked for SNV and had been working with ConCERT during her work, introduced me to Michael.

Having a background in sustainable tourism and international development studies, I was impressed by the unique approach ConCERT takes. People who are willing to help are often lost in



deciding how they can genuinely help ConCERT helps them in doing so.

Within ConCERT I focus on monitoring and evaluation, increasing the number of business members who support us and finding other ways of funding. Having done international development research and work in South America and Africa I now am keen on learning more about South East Asia. ConCERT gives me the opportunity to do so while I am looking for work opportunities.



## AND FINALLY ...

We were reflecting the other day on the wide variety of situations where people come to ConCERT for our help, or sometimes just for our thoughts on some subject or other.

We are increasingly contacted by universities, including visiting student groups, researchers, and professors, to talk to them about Cambodia, its issues, and how they can best offer their help. The owners of one of our business members, Babel Guesthouse, has helped develop some groundbreaking courses in responsible tourism in partnership with Stavanger University in Norway whereby the students spend one term of their studies in Siem Reap. We went and talked to them when they arrived and will be doing further sessions during their 3 month stay. We also helped them to link up with some local organisations. We have also spoken to groups from Singapore, Hong Kong, USA, and Australia in the past 3 months.

We often get asked for advice from people wanting to start an organisation, or from people running organisations and who are facing difficulties, and we have written several pieces for responsible tourism magazines.

Hotel members are using us more and more to help them connect with their local communities in



*Michael at Raffles handing over 1 tonne of rice*

positive ways including how best to respond to the flooding crisis, linking with local charities, or developing services for their guests who want to make a contribution to Cambodia.

There is a government orphanage in Siem Reap which is home for around 30 young people. We were asked to visit and meet the staff to see if there was some way that help could be given from tourism. The buildings are good but it's a pretty bleak and depressing place. The level of care is very basic with virtually no recreational activities of any kind. The centre currently gets no attention from the tourists and we certainly don't want to start yet another venue for orphanage tourism. We are however on the look out for some specialist practitioners with a bit of time on their hands, and who could go and work with the staff to

develop their pastoral care skills.

We have been approached to help deliver some child sexual abuse awareness training for Cambodian staff who work in their communities, to help them spot the danger signals and take the appropriate action. This promises to be quite revolutionary as it's aimed at Cambodian abusers rather than travelling foreign paedophiles and we'll keep you informed of developments in future newsletters.

All of the above come down to ConCERT having developed a certain level of trust, which is both gratifying and humbling. It's also often pretty serious stuff; we're fairly sure that, through our interventions, (largely just taking time to sit down and talk with the individuals), we've helped to prevent 2 young people from being trafficked out of Cambodia.