



School desk Newsletter #1

Great success - RM 12,875 (USD 3,961)

The fundraising for the school desks for Cambodia has been a tremendous success. Thank you all!! During our first visit to Cambodia back in February this year the school needed 60 school desks. Honestly we had doubts whether that could be achieved. We started promoting our project - sometimes in a very blunt manner (sorry for that, but it is for a good cause ;-)) - on July 16. Today, one and a half month later, we have collected RM 12,875 (USD 3,961) for 103 school desks! You -

70 people from 14 countries - have supported our project with your generous contributions. Thank you very very much!!

Many colleagues of T-Systems and Shell and many friends and relatives inside and outside of Malaysia have donated. Before we realized, our appeal was posted on PhotoMalaysia.com, the largest photo community in Malaysia.

We are even approached by the Rotary Club of Bukit Kiara Sunrise who are interested to help. On Sept 4th we presented to them the school desk project and they responded enthusiastic about sponsoring a future project.

What we learned from this that there are many warm hearted people that are willing to help the children of Cambodia.

60+40+3=103 school desks

We found another school in desperate need for desks in Phum Steung village, half an hour from Siem Reap. The state of their desks is even worse than the school in Srah Srang, so the school principal was very happy that we offered to help them with 40 new school desks.

When we arrived back in Malaysia we found 3 more sponsors in our email willing to help.

So we will order another 3 desks for this school in addition.



Helping along the way

As we were also looking for a future project, we went to Tual Bandauy village to meet the 'village officer'. Native Americans back in the 19th century would call him 'Chief'.



The 'village officer' told us their school - a straight forward building with 3 class rooms - was built with funds raised by a Japanese organization. Unfortunately during the construction the organization started to suffer from shortage of cash and the school could not be finished fully.

One of the problems was that the dividing walls between the three class rooms were not built up until the roof. A big gap was left through which the noise of 60 children per class vented through to the other class rooms. A quick calculation with the help of a local constructor learned that the cost of material + wage would be USD 248.

As we saved USD 210 since the school desk suppliers provided us a slightly lower rate, it was a quick decision to pull the remaining USD 38 from the wallet. The contractor will start with the work soon. So you all sponsored some bricks and cement as well! Sometimes it is so easy to help.

Visiting the schools

At this time of year the schools in Cambodia are closed due to summer holidays. But the head teacher of Srah Srang School was aware that we were coming and had asked the children to come to school on Friday morning.

The children had lots of joy in giving us flowers that they plucked from the plants around the school. For them it was a great opportunity to practice their English, albeit only

the courageous ones stepped up.

The classrooms were locked, but luckily we could go in through the windows to take some pictures of the interior and to see ourselves the state of the school desks.

The rest of the interior is in no better shape than the desks. It will take many years and many (foreign) USD until it will reach an acceptable level.



The contracts

Doing "business" in Cambodia is different than we are used to. We usually setup a detailed contract and pay lots of attention to terms and conditions. In Cambodia you just take a piece of paper, write down what you agreed, put your thumbprint on it and there you go. Does the supplier need a copy? No not necessary. And for the second contract - where the supplier did ask for a copy - it doesn't matter that it is written in English and you are Khmer and your English vocabulary is about 'hello' and 'goodbye'. Easy peasy, lemon squeezy.

With one supplier close to Srah Srang school we ordered 60 desks.

The second supplier is located close to the Phum Steung village. He will build 40 desks and we will order another 3 more. Both suppliers will hire extra workers to construct the desks. At least a few local families will also benefit from the project this way.

We paid both suppliers a deposit that is sufficient for buying the wood and to pay the wages of the extra workers, together USD 1,765. Upon completion

we will pay the outstanding balance of USD 1,725 + USD 102 for the 3 additional desks. The rest (USD 159) will be spent on the project as well.



Why sponsoring school desks



Throughout the country you can see same style simple buildings with simple classrooms and basic "infrastructure". School desks are standard sized, 'one size fits all' and provide space for two students. Sometimes they are occupied by three depending if there are more children living in the area than the capacity of the school.

Most of the desks have a separate bench, while the more "sophisticated" type now comes with a bench and desk in one construction. The built quality is basic and not up

to our standards. Many of the desks are in poor state and need repair or replacement.

The government - in an attempt to develop the general level of education - has recognized that the desks for the smaller children should be of smaller size. So the government has announced regulations to the Cambodian schools that the younger children need smaller school desks.

Unfortunately that statement did not come with money nor other hints how the schools are supposed to manage that. So the schools need to replace part of their desks to fulfill the governmental regulations and to replace the broken desks.

This gave birth to our project.

Let us refresh your mind a bit as to the purpose of the project. The schools in the rural areas of Cambodia are very basic. Often foreign organizations sponsor the constructions of schools since the Cambodian government has little resources.

Next steps

The suppliers need about two months to finish the desks. Once completed (November) we will go back to Cambodia to collect the 60 desks for the Srah Srang School. The other desks will already be delivered by then to the school in Phum Steung since the school starts end of

September and the 40 desks are needed to fill two empty classrooms.

We will visit both schools to mount the name plates and to pay the outstanding balance. Next newsletter will tell how the project has closed.

Results

- RM 12,875 (USD 3,751 for desks USD 210 for building up walls)
- 103 school desks will be made
- 70 sponsors of 14 countries
- 2 carpenter families have income for a few months