

Title: **Wat Norea
Peaceful Childrens
Home II Solar
Pump Project**

Letter from Cambodia



A Documentation of Darlene Grant's Adventures in the U.S. Peace Corps 2009-2011

Solar Pump Project for Cambodian Orphanage: Project Description



Sunday, 14 November, 2010

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Special points of interest:

- * Studies by various NGOs suggest that up to 74% of all deaths in Cambodia comes from water borne diseases. www.rdic.org/waterstart.htm
- * Water purification, arsenic testing, rain harvesting, pumps, and latrines coupled with education are just a few ways to address these shocking statistics.
- * One of the most pressing resource issues facing rural villagers in Cambodia is access to clean drinking water and related health practices.
- * Water is abundant during the rainy season in particular, but rarely is it clean. Further, standing water invites mosquitoes, and malaria is another vexing problem in Cambodia
- * **Appropriateprojects.com** works with Peace Corps Volunteers throughout the world, who assist people and organizations in or near the communities where they live or work to identify, implement, manage, and evaluate the projects. Each project has an immediate and high impact, resulting in clean water and effective sanitation for individuals, families, and communities.

Proposal to AppropriateProjects.com

This program is an initiative of Water Charity: "we do small but critical water and sanitation projects worldwide using appropriate technology." Darlene's proposal is for full amount: \$500

Location of Community Where Peace Corps Volunteer in Charge of this Project Lives:

I live in the Battambang provincial capital, Battambang City. It is the second largest city in Cambodia and is located 291 kilometers north of Phnom Penh. Situated in the north west region of Cambodia, Battambang has the main highway (National Road 5) linking Phnom Penh and Thailand.

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Darlene's completion of Peace Corps Service Date:
August 2011

Peace Corps Staff Contacts:
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Location of Project:

The Wat Norea Peaceful Children's Home II orphanage, is located approximately 7 kilometers East of Battambang City proper, at Odambang 2 Commune, Sangker District, Battambang Province. It is on Kravat Krung Chamkar Daung Road.



Solar Pump Project for Cambodian Orphanage: Project Description continued



Description of the Project Community:

Embedded in the rural, predominately subsistence living agricultural community of Odambang Commune II, in 1992, Buddhist Monk, Venerable Muny Van Saveth, established the Wat Norea Peaceful Children's Home II. The home was a monk's religiously grounded and community based reconstruction response to the devastating aftermath of war and following the Oct. 23, 1991 signing of the Paris Agreements settling the Cambodia Conflict, and introduction of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTACT) to in-part, oversee peaceful democratic voting processes. Originally focused on sheltering and supporting HIV/AIDS children, the orphanage grew to include children who are victims of trafficking, extreme poverty, abandonment, -- the living casualties of decades of warfare in Battambang Province, a place long considered the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge,

where gorilla activity took place long after the fall of the regime. One of Battambang Province's 13 districts, the Sangker District includes communes with large numbers of returnees from the Thailand border war refugee camps, considered to make many communities, including Odambang 2 Commune, vulnerable to numerous psycho-social and cultural challenges. Just as in 1992, it continues today that the residents of the orphanage experience public discrimination and fear as HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, and extreme poverty continue to be misunderstood and demonized problems in this predominately Buddhist society still suffering post-war PTSD in many respects.

Description of Project:

A little over a month ago, at the height of Cambodia's rainy (monsoon) season, the solar-energy powered water pump connected to a 48 meter deep well servicing the Wat Norea Peaceful Children's Home II orphanage broke. Fifty-four children and seven staff were suddenly left in a precarious potable water situation. Luckily, they had what they hoped was a short-term solution, an antiquated shallow well and rusted and broken hand pump. They soon learned that the solar-energy pump was broken beyond repair and would cost \$750 U.S. to replace—an unbelievable and not easily attainable sum. Until such time in the future that the pump could be replaced, the children and staff have all changed their daily living routine to include three water-pumping and carrying sessions. Water collection begins at 4:30 a.m. every morning with the older children helping the younger as even a 3-year old has a small bucket containing a cup or two of water that he also carries as he insists on being a part of the special activity. The stronger residents carry large buckets of water from 2 or 3 to 60 meters from the pump to supply the kitchen, 6 small outdoor toilet/bathroom stalls, and the guesthouse bathroom. The 2 blue colored 2,000 liter water holding tanks have long been emptied as the orphanage historically uses approximately 2,000 liter of water per day. They must complete a daily second and third shift of pumping carrying and pouring the water. After over a month of this activity it is clear that the activity is wearing the children out, as they must still take care of all their other chores and responsibilities and go to school, many bicycling more than 7 kilometers to their school. The goal of this Water Charity project is to contribute to replacing the broken solar-powered water pump. In discussing the water situation at the orphanage during a visit on Saturday, November 13, 2010, a sense of urgency is evident in the voice of Mr. Chum Veuk, General Manager of the orphanage <veuk79@hotmail.com>. The water in the shallow well is finite and should only be counted on for short-term emergency use. He assures me that if we can secure a \$500 Appropriate Projects grant from Water Charity, he will have the other \$250 and an installation crew on site and the new 3 to 5 kilogram water pump installed within one to two days. As Mr. Chum and Mr. Ouk, the house manager showed me the site of the broken well and the currently dilapidated hand operated pump stand-in, along with a growing troop of curious child residents of the orphanage, their hope that this project can become a reality is written on their faces and their joy at the possibility of an expedient solution is barely concealed.

Numbers of people affected by this project:

Most immediately affected are the 54 children ages 3 to 17, and 7 adult staff in residence (and the small families of several staff members). Further, affected are the infrequent volunteer guests at the orphanage, who offer services that include painting, English lessons, music lessons, sewing lessons, religious training, and health and dental care. On December 22 and 23, 2010, for example, a team of doctors from Canada will be offering free medical check-ups and general non-surgical treatment to all of the orphans and poor children throughout the Sangker District. They estimate that over 1,000 poor youth and adults will be treated in those two days. This is how I will spend my Christmas. While the visit of this medical team will tax the orphanage's water supply, the staff are looking forward to a few extra hands for pumping and carrying the water, so as to give the children a much needed break. A second team of volunteer Dentists will be offering free dental diagnoses, cleaning and non-surgical procedures in February, with a similar turn out from the general community expected.



Did I tell you I'm with the United States Peace Corps? We can find a solution to this problem...together.

The above described project was approved on Nov. 24, 2010, by Appropriate Projects staff, and a project page was established at the website at <http://appropriateprojects.com/node/446>. Project Contact: Averill J. Strasser [mail@watercharity.org].

Installation Completed....With Help from U.S. Donors, the Orphanage Has Running Water!!!

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Sunday, 28, 2010. Ten days after submitting the proposal, I called Veuk, the general manager of the orphanage with the good news that the solar-powered well project funding was approved. Having experience with international donors he anticipated that the funds would take up to 6 months to reach the orphanage and asked if I would mind if the orphanage took out a loan to cover the costs of immediate ordering and purchase of the solar-pump..."the children are exhausted from this emergency routine and pumping less and less water every day." I shared with him how Water Charity's Appropriate Project funding works. They essentially "pre-fund," the \$500 which they then hope that the Peace Corps Volunteer is able to raise from family and friends back in the U.S., by writing a compelling proposal, and directing them to the link where they could make a donation. I assured Veuk, who himself was raised at the orphanage and had his college education funded through a supporting foundation, that the \$500 was scheduled via Money Gram to arrive within the next week. The pump arrived in Phnom Penh on Saturday Nov. 27, was transported 5 1/2 hours to Battambang by bus with the installer, and the installation began by 7 a.m. on Sun. Nov. 28.

Peace Corps, the greatest job you'll ever love.

At 8:30 a.m., I held the new solar-powered EC Drive 600 HR Motor pump, purchased from Kamworks Ltd in Phnom Penh, in my hands, amazed at it's small size yet hefty weight. My new friend and shadow, 3-year-old Keung stood with me. He's also the charmer who carries the little blue bucket holding a cup or two of water in my other photos. "JUST PRECIOUS!" About a year ago, a local Buddhist Nun brought tiny and frail Keung and 2 older siblings to the orphanage after they were left at a Pagoda (Wat) by their mother who said she could no longer adequately provide or care for them. Keung was so small and weak, he couldn't walk or talk. With no birth certificates (common even today in Cambodia), and siblings too young to accurately know their little brother's age, Keung's age is a guesstimate from doctors who work with the orphanage. During the installation of the pump, he ran around and chatted away with everyone he encountered...throwing off his clothes to take a "muey tuck" or bath, once he saw the water flowing from the pipes for the first time in a long time. It took about an hour and the work of all the male residents of the orphanage, helping the installer, Mr. Sok Sarin (see photo far right). It was a hot day! (When isn't it in my Letters from Cambodia?). Mr. Veuk was the first to bend to touch the water newly flowing from the pipes. He stood and walked to me, tears standing in his eyes...it was his home for many years and now he was able to help, in collaboration with a Peace Corps Volunteer, who in turn had help from friends in the U.S. He shook my hand for a long time, giving thanks for the wonder of water and relief from hard daily labor for the children. I jumped and yelled with all the children. Holding the wet hand of Keung, with my heart full to bursting, I had the distinct thought: "My cup runneth over."



My Cup Runneth Over



Thank You for Your Donations and Well Wishes!

The children and staff of Wat Norea Peaceful Childrens Home II, and I thank the following donors for their contribution to this very important endeavor. **Donors:** Nancy Luna-Walker, Douglas Bolin, Yolanda Padilla, Martha F. Hilley, Namkee Choi, Hyun-Sun Park, Terry Newman, Dennis Haynes, Lana Pettit, Jason McCrory, Barbara White, Mary Steinhardt, Charles Forkey, Scott Seidel, Wesley Harris, Marla Boye, Liz Nowicki, Meg Goodman, Michele Murphy-Smith, Susan Bradshaw, Forrest Novy, Johnathan Bumgarner, Ellen Spiro, Katy Cronkite, Mechele Dickerson, Susan Steele, Darlene Lewis, Deana Williams, Terri Givens, John Dollard, Dorothy Van Soest.



While visiting the orphanage for a rousing game of "who can tag Darlene and run away giggling the loudest," on Sunday, Dec. 12th, I was blessed with the small hand of Chum Leeit (see photo above left) in my hand for a short walk, serenaded by his sing-song repetition of "Hello, hello, hello...." He's much braver now, as is Keung—able to walk up and engage with me without prompting or coercion (smile). Today, the kids are alright. My presence is directly correlated with relief from very hard work, thus I get smiles and cheers upon my arrival. It's amazing. I miss my precious angels back home, and these guys are great for nurturing the Auntie in me!

