

# Ratanak International

Ratanak was an eleven month old girl who died in 1989 because no medical supplies were available in Cambodia. In response, this charity is devoted to serving Cambodia's vulnerable and exploited.

## One Pursuit – Redeeming Love

Christmas 2014

This year we've been honoured to both begin and come alongside so many new and diverse initiatives. The bond that holds them all together is our love for Cambodia and our pursuit to break the cycles of poverty, vulnerability and abuse for the Khmer people.

### *A Look Back at 2014*

#### **MUCH NEEDED AMBULANCE SYSTEM**

This Fall we were able to purchase two ambulances in Poipet for the hospital already built with Ratanak funds. Before this project, patients suffering serious injuries or diseases had to make their way to the nearest hospital by begging a ride from any vehicle driving along the 70 km road.



#### **PREY ROMEAS OUTREACH PROGRAM**

In September we completed construction on a community centre in Prey Romeas. The Ratanak-funded building is a long-term endeavor with a local church, equipping locals to transform their community into a place of hope and safety. Through this project, we can serve not only village residents, but also hundreds of vulnerable young women who flock to nearby garment factories for work, where conditions are often very poor.



#### **EMERGENCY ON THE BORDER**

In June, 220,000 Cambodian migrant workers began fleeing Thailand after being forced out of the country. Many had to leave all their belongings behind, causing mass arrival on the Cambodian border without access to food, water or a way to get home. We had to respond quickly. Our partner NGO, funded by Ratanak, organized rapid distribution of water, food, and sanitary kits to the migrant workers. We are thankful to God that disaster was averted and there were no major medical emergencies in what could easily have been a catastrophic event!



#### **INFANT FORMULA DISTRIBUTION**

Although the Ratanak Medical Program has been assisting those struggling with HIV/AIDS for many years, we were excited this year to begin supporting mothers with HIV by offering formula distribution. This program is a key measure preventing the spread of the disease from mother to child that can result from breastfeeding, and is such an important part of breaking the cycles of disease and poverty.

#### **IN THIS ISSUE...**

- ◆ A Look Back at 2014
- ◆ The Gift of Life
- ◆ The Real Cost

- ◆ News in Brief  
*Redeeming Love*  
*25th Anniversary*  
*Thanksgiving*  
*Tax Receipts*

## CANADIAN PROSTITUTION LEGISLATION

As of November, Canadian Bill C-36 has passed and is now parliamentary law. It states that it is now illegal to purchase sex in Canada while decriminalizing its sale to protect those who are being exploited by others. Brian McConaghy was asked to testify before the House of Commons and Senate committees dealing with this legislation. While not directly Cambodia-related, this centres on the heart of what Ratanak cares about most: protecting the vulnerable from exploitation.

## THE GIFT OF LIFE *By Brian McConaghy*

Since starting Ratanak almost twenty-five years ago, I've been continually inspired by the tenacity and resilience of Cambodians who have overcome much tragedy. Their stories of survival are extraordinary. Over the years, I have had many remarkable (at times miraculous) encounters that were clearly orchestrated by God. He knows that the result of these meetings will be nothing short of life-changing – both for me, and for people in need in Cambodia! My meeting with Sothear years ago was one such encounter. It was not in my plan, but it was certainly in God's!

Like so many Cambodians, he experienced horrifying devastation as a child during the Khmer Rouge regime. During the regime, he lost his whole family. Today, these painful memories remain etched in his mind. But in the difficult years that followed, Sothear found peace and healing as he encountered a God of compassion who changed his heart. His life was transformed, and since then he has been sharing Christ's love with churches, rural communities and community leaders.

His experience made him the perfect fit for one of our newest projects that we launched at the beginning of the year – the Church Education Program. It was started in response to a great need within the Cambodian church for more training and education on current issues Cambodians face in society, such as domestic violence, pornography, sexual abuse, alcoholism and human trafficking. The issues are overwhelming and complex – 46% of Cambodian women believe it is okay for a husband to beat his wife under certain circumstances. Among 376 men surveyed, 47.4% said they would be willing to engage in sexual intercourse without their partner's consent on Valentine's Day. Cambodian churches are ill-equipped to deal with these problems. In addition, the strong stigma surrounding survivors of trafficking or abuse makes it difficult for them to find acceptance in Cambodian society, even within the church. The Church Education Program provides solid teaching, mentorship and

## INVESTIGATION IN CAMBODIA



*Brian McConaghy with the RCMP investigative team in Cambodia.*

In October, Brian McConaghy was honoured to assist with an RCMP investigation in Cambodia. The investigation was very successful!

## RATANAK INTERNATIONAL USA

We're excited that Ratanak USA has now formed as the newest member of the Ratanak family. We are still awaiting our official American charity status, and thus cannot issue tax receipts yet, but we will keep you posted. We are thrilled to see the amazing things that your latest country office will accomplish!

encouragement to local churches so that they can become agents of change, hope and freedom within their own communities.

Ratanak seeks to help people in all sorts of tragedies. While we never force the gospel on anyone, we are unambiguously Christian. Our faith motivates us to show unconditional love to as many Cambodians as possible. We are respectful and are always looking for ways to support the local church as it struggles to deal with issues that plague Cambodian society. We are also culturally sensitive, seeking to assist Cambodians where they need help most. Unlike in the West, they are frequently very open and ask for spiritual guidance and hope. We are happy to share our hope and what drives us. This new program is about serving the Cambodian church in this way.

Throughout the course of the year, Sothear has met with youth groups, Christian leaders and pastors, teaching them about the biblical response to these issues and how they can model this for their church members. In August, he travelled to a rural province and was also able to share the gospel with an indigenous community. 44 people requested prayer, and 33 made the decision to accept Christ! God has been using him to speak truth into lives broken by alcoholism and addiction, and healing to those scarred by physical, emotional and mental abuse.

Sothear recently shared with us the miraculous story of Chivy (not her real name), which also demonstrates the seriousness of gender violence and domestic abuse in Cambodia. Sothear met Chivy through her sister, who had experienced such hope and joy when she found Jesus and wanted so much for her sister to come to know Him too. At first, Chivy was not interested. She was a Buddhist, following in the traditions of her parents, and an alcoholic. If she became a Christian, she thought she would have to stop drinking. “Why do you drink so much?” Sothear asked Chivy. “Because I need to.” Chivy replied. “I drink to relieve my stress. I drink to forget that my husband has other women.”

Sothear took out his Bible, and shared about God’s unconditional love, His boundless grace, His awesome power, and His merciful forgiveness – paid with the ultimate sacrifice on the Cross. With shaking hands and tears streaming down her face, she prayed and accepted Jesus into her life.

She didn’t know how her husband would react. He came home that night after a day of fishing, and as usual, looked for wine. As they sat down for dinner, he was drinking, and he casually asked about her day. He had heard from their neighbor that Chivy’s sister had come for a visit. She shared about what she had learned from Sothear, and proceeded to tell him that she had accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. “I am going to follow Jesus,” she firmly told him.

As she saw the rage build up in his eyes, she held her breath, waiting for his reaction. “How can we believe in two different gods?” He angrily shouted. “It doesn’t matter that I believe in Jesus and you do not,” she replied, “We’re still husband and wife.” After dinner, he asked for some money for a trip to see his parents. She said no. He was still furious with her for becoming a Christian, and that pushed him over the edge. He was so angry, he wrapped his hands around her neck and strangled her. She struggled to free herself from him. She had been holding her cell phone and tried to call for help, but it fell to the ground. She



gasped for air, but couldn’t breathe. Then everything went black.

Chivy’s husband assumed he had killed her. He carried her body to their bed and covered her with a blanket. He took some money, gold, and medicine and ran away.

While unconscious, Chivy had a dream of God waking her up and moving her body, urging her to get up. Slowly, she regained consciousness. It was morning. Her neck was in excruciating pain, but she was alive. She picked up her cell phone and called her sister who immediately came with Sothear. Chivy was so grateful for a second chance at life. She threw away the idols in her home and joyfully shared her story with everyone around her.

Chivy was given a miraculous gift this year. She received the gift of life – not only physical life, but also spiritual life. This Christmas season, we celebrate the birth of a Savior who paid the ultimate price so that we could receive His gift of life. The miraculous birth of Jesus made hope and new life possible for Chivy, and possible for you and I. It is our desire to see every life affected by trafficking and abuse transformed and renewed. We hope to equip the Cambodian church through this program to handle these issues of injustice and understand how to foster a safe and nurturing environment for them. We appreciate your prayers and support as Sothear travels around Cambodia sharing God’s word and truth to churches and leaders around the country.

## THE REAL COST

Often when we purchase a piece of clothing, we hardly glance at the tag to see what it’s made of or where it’s made in. Our thoughts are more likely to be centred on its design and appearance. We ask ourselves whether it looks appealing on us, or on the person we’re hoping to give it to. We don’t think about the young woman working excessive hours, hunched over a sewing machine,



*Chivy and her family after she accepted Christ.*

making barely enough to support her family's basic needs.

The garment industry in Cambodia employs over 500,000 workers and is a \$5 billion dollar export industry. Thousands of young women travel from rural villages to garment



*Garment workers packed onto their daily commute.*

factories, working in poor conditions for 70 hours a week so that they can earn enough to support their parents, siblings, and even grandparents. Most make only a little over \$3 a day. Financial desperation makes them easy targets for traffickers and others seeking to exploit them.

Scores of large garment factories, producing clothes for brand names most of us would be familiar with, surround the village of Prey Romeas where we have recently completed the construction of our community centre. Many of the families in the area are in the grip of poverty and are desperate for a way out. With the increase in factories around these villages, teenagers are taken out of school and sent to work making clothes so that they can help support their families. The community centre will encourage education and host classes to give students the skills they need to gain higher paying jobs. It is also taking a long-term approach to vulnerability and poverty in Prey Romeas – offering quality education for children and young adults so that they will go on to become part of a long-term solution.

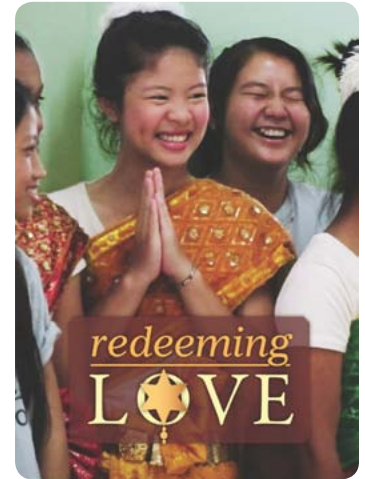
Even though the centre has not officially opened, English and Computer classes are already taking place, serving over 100 students a week! The opening ceremony will be held in the beginning of December, and they are inviting over 1,000 people from the nine surrounding villages to the event.

We can make a difference here at home as well as in Cambodia by being informed consumers. By making ethical shopping decisions, consumers have the power to change corporate practices. There are some helpful resources online that provide ratings for products, companies and brands. They can tell you where your products are coming from and how they are being sourced. You can also directly support vulnerable communities like Prey Romeas by giving a gift of love this Christmas and donating in honor of a friend or family member!

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Redeeming Love – Christmas Campaign

This Christmas, give a gift of redeeming love in Cambodia by donating on behalf of a friend. Donate \$25 or more by December 10, and your friend will receive an ornament made by a survivor of human trafficking. To participate visit [ratanak.org/redeeming-love](http://ratanak.org/redeeming-love).



### 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

2015 marks our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of service in Cambodia! We have some very exciting things up our sleeves for next year that we can't tell you about yet, but stay tuned for more details in the new year!



### End of Year Thanksgiving

This year, we were blown away by the creativity and dedication of our supporters who took the initiative to host events in support of Ratanak, such as BANK (Buy Art Not Kids) and Be The Change. We are so grateful for these events as well as the many other fundraisers that cumulatively contribute to the changing of lives in Cambodia.

### Tax Receipts

Thank you for your generosity and support! Donation receipts for the 2014 year will be issued and mailed before February 28, 2015.

*It's hard to believe another new year is almost here! Thank you for journeying with us through 2014, and for your continued encouragement and support.*

*Wishing you every blessing this Christmas season!*

**Brian McConaghy**  
Founder & Executive Director