

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.

Responding to the Call

Summer 2013

PREVENTION - SUCCESS BEHIND THE SCENES

Much of our attention is focused on the rehabilitation of children sold into slavery in Cambodia. This is both natural and appropriate. However, there are other projects, less dramatic but equally important, that are having a huge impact. This is very true of the Trafficking Prevention Program which seeks to prevent the selling of kids into the sex trade in the first place. This program has been running for many years and is one of those quiet but highly influential programs working to protect families from the lies of human traffickers.

Ratanak has partnered with a training team from Chab Dai (another NGO) that moves from village to village teaching the value of children before God and the danger of believing the promises made by the traffickers.

Local church pastors are often the first to be trained and they, in turn, influence others in the community to join in protecting local children. As a result



Above: A child holds a Trafficking Emergency Call Card, which offers hotline numbers to reach out to for help.

local village chiefs, government workers and teachers all join in the training. This serves not only to protect the children, but also allows Christian pastors to gain respect and become an integral part of each community, where before

they were viewed as socially irrelevant, if not ostracized, in the largely Buddhist/animist villages.



A poster illustration used by the Prevention program, showing unity amongst communities to prevent trafficking.

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Above: The Prevention program has developed courses geared towards children in the community, as well as parents and community leaders.

Tackling such issues in a community context is difficult. The traffickers are powerful adversaries. They have influence and standing up to them can be dangerous. Previously the traffickers often had the local police paid off. Police officers would come to the prevention training meetings to record names, to intimidate and to threaten. However the training teams have demonstrated great skill in working with all levels of government and are now largely respected by those in authority. As a consequence we have seen many communities request the training. Even the police now attend and actually assist in teaching!

The training has been done in hundreds of villages within 19 of Cambodia's 23 provinces. 1,514 volunteer trainers are now at work in the villages and at last count 35,725 villagers had completed the course and are now in a far better position to protect the children in their villages.

The comments of those taking the training tell us much about the quality of the Christian trainers and their care for the communities they seek to serve. Just a few comments from several provinces...

"I am a commune chief. Well, it is very importance through three days of the training. I would say thank you to trainer team that is coming to trained us. We are in their heart – that's why they come train us and educated to aware about the issue."

"I am a pastor. I would like to express my appreciation to the trainers. I can make the commitment that I will hold onto these lessons to share with the community and also to promote protection and mobilize our church in these areas."

"I am a commune police chief. First of all I would like to thank the team for providing us this useful training. I have learned a lot from this training and I will use these lessons to educate the community that I am working for."

"I am a commune chief. First of all I am profoundly thankful for this workshop. I am proud to be here in this training. I will continue to spread what I have learned in order to protect women and children from trafficking, sexual abuse and any forms of exploitation in my community."



Okay, so the comments are nice and polite, but are they real? Is the training really accepted? The short answer is a resounding – yes! The training is received with enthusiasm and it is applied.

A recent participant from local a Government agency attended the training workshop and took home some brochures, posters, phone cards etc. When the training team came back for follow up they discovered she had taught workshops in 11 villages with 1,153 participants! The numbers are unusually high but such enthusiasm is the norm.

While it is easy to focus on the drama of the rescued child (and very necessary it is) we should not lose sight of the huge impact of such low key prevention programs.

One of the tools handed out in the prevention workshops are the emergency call cards for children at risk. Many thousands are distributed all across Cambodia. Hundreds of calls are now coming in from kids at risk of being trafficked. The Police, Social Services, Churches and NGOs are now starting to respond in ways we could not have dreamed of ten years ago. It actually seems to be working!

Calls have even been received from as far away as Malaysia from kids who have been trafficked but managed to hang on to the cards. Such phone calls have lead to diplomatic and police action and the repatriation of the kids back to Cambodia.

Ratanak is privileged to be a major part of an ongoing movement to protect Cambodian kids. There are still lots of problems, but we are seeing success.

Enclosed find one of the emergency cards – please put it on your fridge and remember to pray for the kids that are calling for help every day.

Speaking of calling for help...

RESPONDING TO THE CALL

Recently I watched the TV show Hawaii Five-0 with my son Ian. It was a typical fictitious and overdone Hollywood style show. But the subject matter was powerful. It depicted the serial kidnapping of young girls who were imprisoned in a home for 10 years plus. It was a visual and emotional depiction of girls in chains – an issue that has become very, very real to me over the past few years.

As I watched the show images of small rooms in Cambodian brothels were vivid in my memory. Faces of many women and young children, now rescued from sex slavery, flooded my mind. In that context I remember thinking how privileged we are to participate in the real life drama of restoring such lives.

The next morning I woke to the news out of Cleveland, USA where three girls (now young women) had been kidnapped, imprisoned and horribly abused in a local house. A neighbour described the screams of a frantic woman trying to get out of the house. He ran over and assisted in her escape.

Amanda Berry, kidnapped, and long thought dead, escaped the home where she and two other girls had been imprisoned for over 10 years! I listened, stunned, to the 911 call. For me the ‘slave being set free’ scenario resonates! There was something about the call that represented my deepest longings for so many young girls sold into slavery. North American crime and our



work in Cambodia seemed to collide as I listened to Amanda's plea. "Help me, I'm Amanda Berry. I need police. I've been kidnapped, and I've been missing for 10 years. And I'm here. I'm free now." The operator clearly did not understand the gravity of the situation and responds with the usual procedure. "OK, stay there with those neighbors and talk to the police when they get there." Amanda: "Okay, are they on their way right now? I need them now." Operator: "We're gonna send them as soon as we get a car open". Amanda: "No, I need them now...before he gets back."

The fear and irritation in Amanda's voice was clear. She had waited 10 years for this chance to be free. Waiting for the next available car was not going to do it. While I don't fault the operator, (they deal with hundreds of calls and could not be expected to grasp the context of what was really happening in a matter of seconds) I was struck by the disconnect between the procedural response from 911 and the panicked reality of Amanda standing in the sun light for the first time in a decade hoping her predator would not return.

It made me think about Ratanak and the ministry we have been called to. The freeing of girls from sex slavery is no less dramatic, no less urgent, no less pressing. The question put by Amanda is clear "Okay, are they on their way right now?" Are we on our way right now? My prayer is that we, as Ratanak, we, as Christians, do not respond with the next available car. Our job is to act as if they were our own daughters.

The desire for hope and freedom has driven Ratanak for 23 years. From civil war and fear of genocide to the Cambodian sex trade of today. May we as Christians respond "right now" to the gravity of the situations we confront. That we too would know the joy of hearing "I've been missing for 10 years. And I'm here. I'm free now!" Thanks so much for supporting and encouraging Ratanak as we do our best to respond to Cambodians...right now!

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Girls at RAP Settling In

The Ratanak Achievement Program home has now been open for six months. It has been a very challenging period working with the post-trauma issues of the girls as they adjust to a new phase of life. There have been days when, despite our extensive planning, it was near chaos. However, we are now seeing stability and routine in the home and in most of their lives. Please pray for the few that still struggle. Adjusting to freedom and the reintegration back into society after so many years in intensive rehab is challenging for all of them.

Several Cambodian Staff Sick

Please pray for the Ratanak Staff. Currently three are ill. Two with typhoid and one undiagnosed. Pray for healing for them and for energy for the rest who now have an increased workload to compensate. Continue to pray for the ever-constant issue of fatigue.

Brian Grounded

Speaking of fatigue, Brian has been grounded by the Ratanak Board! Board members were in the office at the beginning of the year and were shocked by Brian's calendar. He was clearly exhausted by an overwhelming speaking/travel schedule. So the Board instructed Brian that he could not travel on Ratanak business or take public speaking engagements for four months – between April 30th and Sept 1st. Brian will still be in the office working but is thrilled to be in one time zone, have some measure of routine and spend much needed time with family. Pray for rest and renewed energy.

While writing about the Prevention program I was struck by how it seemed clinical, statistical and not very dramatic. However, on reflection, it seems clear that most of life, and much of the work of Ratanak is not dramatic, but is actually a long discipline of uncelebrated incremental change. Thanks to all of you who so diligently support and encourage us, not only in the times of drama, but also in the long determined process of small changes that ultimately lead to transformation.

Blessings,

Brian McConaghy



Ratanak



International

BRINGING LIFE TO THE KILLING FIELDS OF CAMBODIA

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