



SUMMER 2015

# Hope Changes the Story

**COMING HOME** – She was finally allowing herself to dream. At 22 years old, it seemed like her dreams could actually become reality. She could leave behind the rice fields, the poverty, and the daily struggles for food. The friendly lady who had come to visit talked about a job – a real city job! Everyday, she saw how the heavy burdens of life weighed down her weary mother. She wanted to help, and this seemed like the perfect way.

The lady said the salary would be high. They would cover all her travelling expenses, her visa, and insurance. She could also talk to her family whenever she wanted. It sounded like she would be well taken care of. She agreed, as did her mom. She boarded a plane for the first time in her life. Her heart wouldn't stop pounding. Would her employers be nice? Would she like working in the city? "Of course she would!" she assured herself. Besides, she would finally have the chance to work in the city!

But when she arrived, something didn't seem right. They took away her passport "for safekeeping". Then they introduced her to an old man. Her employer, she assumed. But he would be more than that. He would be her husband. She was alone and trapped, with no way home.

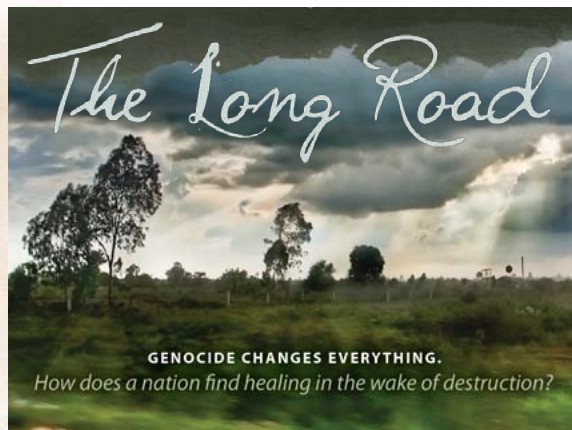
Unfortunately, this story (based on true events) is all too common. More and more young adults are moving away from their villages in search of jobs. It starts with a simple conversation; a seed of possibility planted by a neighbour, a friend, a random stranger met on the way to the market, or even a family member. Traffickers feed on desperation and naivety.

Our Community Hero – Prevention Program seeks to create change by teaching entire villages about the dangers of believing false promises made by these traffickers. The program distributes thousands of emergency call cards, which offer hotline numbers for victims to reach out to for help. The hotline has received calls not only from Cambodia, but also from countries all over the world.



## IN THIS EDITION

- Coming Home.....1
- Increasing Impact.....3
- News in Brief.....4



Our new documentary is now available on DVD or as a free digital download!

See back for details



*Another example of a foreigner with wealth exploiting one without – an all too common scene.*

But even once they reach out for help, it can be difficult to bring victims home. Our latest program seeks to respond to these pleas for help. We're a small charity, and yet we've recently been trusted with the privilege of helping even more Cambodians in need of rescue around the world. A few months ago, the United Nations and IOM (International Organization for Migration) asked Ratanak to participate in this new initiative to help Cambodians who have been trafficked overseas. Ratanak is working together with an NGO in Cambodia called Chab Dai. Our new repatriation program seeks to help victims of exploitation by :

1. Training local police and authorities on how to effectively intervene and rescue victims
2. Collaborating with other NGOs, embassies and international law enforcement to bring trafficked Cambodians home
3. Extending a hand of compassion through emotional and legal counseling to help repatriated survivors who have experienced trauma, and their families

This program is about recovering Cambodians who are lost, sold, shamed and marginalized – Cambodians who feel like there is no hope for them. In the process, we have the opportunity to demonstrate God's love for them, and often bring them home to a God who deeply cares for them. It reminds us of the beautiful promise God gives the Israelites in Zephaniah 3:20, *"At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home."*

We love how collaboration is central to this program. It isn't about one organization. It's about working together with law enforcement, governments, other NGOs and being a Christian influence at such tables. By playing to one another's strengths, we can more effectively create long-lasting change. This increased cooperation with the Anti-Trafficking Police has been nothing short of miraculous. We are building bridges with an infamous police force that is often despised as corrupt, and we are seeing progress! By recognizing their strengths and working together, they get to participate with us in blessing their country. Since January, seven brokers have been arrested and are awaiting trial!

We have been working in Cambodia for 25 years, thus we have been given the unique opportunity to build trusted relationships with police and law enforcement. The Police General personally wrote Brian, our Executive Director, an email a while ago in association with a police case: *"My Dear Brother,"* he writes, *"I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you profoundly on behalf of the Cambodian people, the victims and their families, and as well as the Cambodian law enforcement for your firm commitment and great dedication to continuing working hard for the best interests of the Cambodian people, especially young children who are very vulnerable to sexual exploitation and those who easily fall prey to child predators, both locals and foreigners alike."* How amazing it is that we can work



*Anti-Trafficking Police apprehend and detain two traffickers.*

together with them for hope!

Thankfully, there's more to the story of the girl that was sold for marriage: *The young woman, already overseas, refused to marry the old man. As she came to the realization that she was being sold, she suddenly remembered the help card stuck onto the wall of her home in Cambodia. Her younger brother had received it at a trafficking awareness class at his school. She managed to call home and asked her father to call the hotline. Project staff worked together with the Anti-Trafficking Police to arrest the traffickers, and they are now in the process of bringing the young woman home.*



Hope changes the story – thank you for being a part of that story! Please pray for this program and for the many Cambodians who are trapped all around the world. Pray that God will open up doors as we seek to work together with government officials to bring them back home and be a witness to all in the process.

## INCREASING IMPACT

Last year we shared with you the transformation of Prey Romeas, a community with a difficult history that extends all the way back to the mid 1990s. Poverty and desperation have made the youth in this area vulnerable to criminal activity, drugs and alcoholism. However, through the loving example of Pastor Sophea, young adults and families are seeing firsthand the hope Christ's love offers. Together we constructed a community center that would house an outreach program and build on the newfound openness for Christianity in the community.

The outreach center opened in December. It includes an office-skills training school and library, as well as sports programs and church activities. The training school already has 189 students!

Fifteen-year-old Thea (name has been changed) shared with us the impact studying at the center has made on her life: *I am so happy when I study English there because I have made some new friends and my teachers are good. As I have studied English there, I have noticed that my English skills have improved and also I have grown spiritually. Before I started coming to the center, I hated studying. I liked to skip school very often and I lied to my parents and used their money to go hang out with my friends. But when I attended the Prey Romeas center, I saw my character begin to change. It makes me feel happy when I am studying because my teachers always encourage me to study hard, and now I can read and write and even speak English with foreigners too. I hope that in the future I can use my skills to help my brothers and sisters and the next generation to have the same opportunities to develop their lives as me.*

*I have found that since I have attended this school I have learned more about God. I am now a young Christian. I thank God that He always helps me to use my gifts in the children's program and other areas. I really want to see this school help and reach out to more students in the next and following generations. Through this school, I believe many lives will be changed.*

Thea's right! We believe that so many more lives will be transformed! Another goal of the center is to reach out to the young women working at the growing number of garment factories that surround the community. Already, a number of them are coming to our computer classes and even inviting their friends. This community center, in its beginning stages, is already pre-positioned to encourage and protect women who are vulnerable to exploitation because of

their low wages and hard labour. We hope that as you read about the increasing impact of programs like the community center in Prey Romeas, you will also be blessed.



*Thea at the Prey Romeas Center, helping in the children's program.*

# News in Brief



**RATANAK INTERNATIONAL (USA)** – We're thrilled to share with you that our USA office recently obtained its 501(c)(3) status and is now recognized as an official charity in the USA! We're so excited that we can invite more people to share our vision of seeing Cambodia restored. For more information or to get involved, visit [ratanak.org/usa](http://ratanak.org/usa) and contact our Country Director in the USA, Mark Cushman.

**AWARD TO RATANAK** – Brian McConaghy was honored to assist with a RCMP investigation in Cambodia last year. The investigation was successful, and the RCMP presented Ratanak International with a Certificate of Appreciation for our contribution and support.

**MAKING AN IMPACT!** – We are so amazed at the different ways people (young and old!) strive to make a difference in the lives of Cambodians. Richmond Christian School's graduating class of 2015 in Richmond, BC, organized a car wash in April to raise money for our projects in Cambodia. They raised \$2300 and it was matched by a generous donor, making the total raised \$4600!



**DO YOU HAVE A HEART FOR CAMBODIA?** – Would you like to organize your own event to help Cambodians in need? There are many ways we can use our gifts and talents to contribute to change. For ideas or to let us know about an event you're interested in hosting, visit [ratanak.org/events](http://ratanak.org/events)



Thank you to everyone who came out to a screening of "The Long Road" documentary! We were thrilled to share the film with over 1200 people in screenings across Canada. If you weren't able to attend the screening, **a complimentary digital version\* of the film is now available.** Visit our

website at [ratanak.org/thelongroad](http://ratanak.org/thelongroad) to download the documentary and for free resources to host your own screening. If you would like a DVD of the documentary please notify us by phone, email or mail. We would be happy to send you a copy!

*\*Please note that an e-mail subscription is required.*

I'm so grateful for your persistent partnership in this journey of serving Cambodia. You have been such a blessing to us. May 1<sup>st</sup> marked the anniversary of 25 years since I stepped into Cambodia. I'm excited for what God has planned for us next!

With Thankfulness,



Brian McConaghy  
Founding & Executive Director

**Renew hope. Restore Cambodia.**