

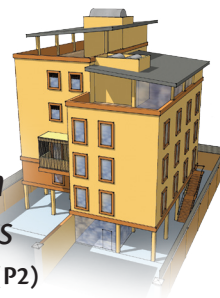


Space for Hope

EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE – I remember going down to the waterfront in Phnom Penh last year in February. The traffic was crazy, and the sidewalks were packed. There were families, kids running around and food hawkers selling their grilled insects. Thousands of couples in tuk tuks and motorbikes packed the streets with bouquets of flowers, both real and paper, and bundles of balloons trailed behind the girls. It was the chaos of Valentine’s Day – Cambodia style. It’s also reportedly the most dangerous day in Cambodia. Why? Because of date rape, with many young women losing their virginity.

According to research by the UN, one in five Cambodian men admit to raping a woman at least once. Half of those men had committed a rape by the time they were 20 years of age, and nearly two-thirds said they had raped their partner. Cultural beliefs about the inferiority of women are deeply ingrained. Victims are often left unprotected in a society that is seeking to rebuild without the stability of the social and legal structures you and I take for granted. This, along with Cambodia’s rapidly developing economy, has brought many new challenges. Human trafficking, the exploitation of factory workers, and the systemic abuse of many vulnerable women are now commonplace – from businesses acting as fronts for exploitation, such as massage parlors and karaoke bars, to inside the home...the very place you would hope to find refuge and safety.

“...we’re planning a purpose-built Space for Hope. We want to reach even more victims of exploitation...” (P2)



The effects of the repeated deception, abuse and exploitation are devastating for survivors of trafficking. Our staff members at the RAP (Ratanak Achievement Program) Community Home have to cope with their share of outbursts, violent behavior and suicide attempts as they seek to minister to the young women in the program. The hurt runs deep, but our staff seek to minister to each layer of trauma, responding in love even when they themselves are hurt in the process. The journey towards finding psychological and emotional healing is long and challenging – sometimes it feels like our young women are taking two steps forward and one step back. But then we see true signs of healing and realize they are indeed moving forward! As we see them overcome obstacles, one by one, we are reminded of how God can bring beauty out of deep brokenness.



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This was especially evident this year for Valentine's Day when I visited Cambodia. The RAP Home decided to celebrate the holiday... but with a different focus! The afternoon was filled with many expressions of God's love. The young women and our staff shared how they were experiencing God's love through their time at RAP and through their relationships with each other.

One survivor said, *"I am speechless by all the love I have received since I came to RAP. I have never received such love before. Thank you to all the staff and especially our 'maks' (house moms) who care for us and check up on us to see if we are late in returning home."*

Another said, *"I experience joy when I stay at RAP. Even though I make mistakes, mak loves me and when I have a problem I can go to the staff and they give me good advice. I feel that I receive advice that I never had before. I want to give thanks that I get to know God and experience the true love from God."*

One of the most touching moments for me was when our young women had the opportunity to bless their house moms and thank them for their love and care. They gave them a gift, and apologized if they had hurt them in any way. I don't think there was a dry eye in the room. The house moms hugged and prayed with the young women, encouraging them with love and blessings. That day, despite the tragic cultural context of Valentine's Day, the words of 1 Corinthians 13:7-8 were tangibly seen at RAP: *"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."*

A NEW BUILDING, A NEW SPACE FOR HOPE – RAP is a home for young women in need of care, counseling, job skills and education. Our staff members are there, at every step, to assist them in their journey from exploitation to hope, dignity and freedom. But the current building is rented and far from ideal given the many diverse needs of the young women and the staff. There have been challenges with security, ever-increasing rental rates, lack of space, and less than ideal functionality – to name a few. That's why we're planning a purpose-built Space for Hope. We want to reach even more victims of exploitation who have suffered trauma and hopelessness.

PREVENTION

Addressing the root causes of human trafficking through awareness training and by equipping survivors with educational opportunities and life skills training.

REHABILITATION

Walking alongside survivors on their journey from brokenness to wholeness by providing trauma-informed care through biblical counseling, group therapy and art therapy.

REINTEGRATION

Empowering survivors through individual achievement plans that encourage them to discover their uniqueness, passions and dreams, equipping them not just to survive, but to thrive.

SPACE

— for Hope —

TRAINING

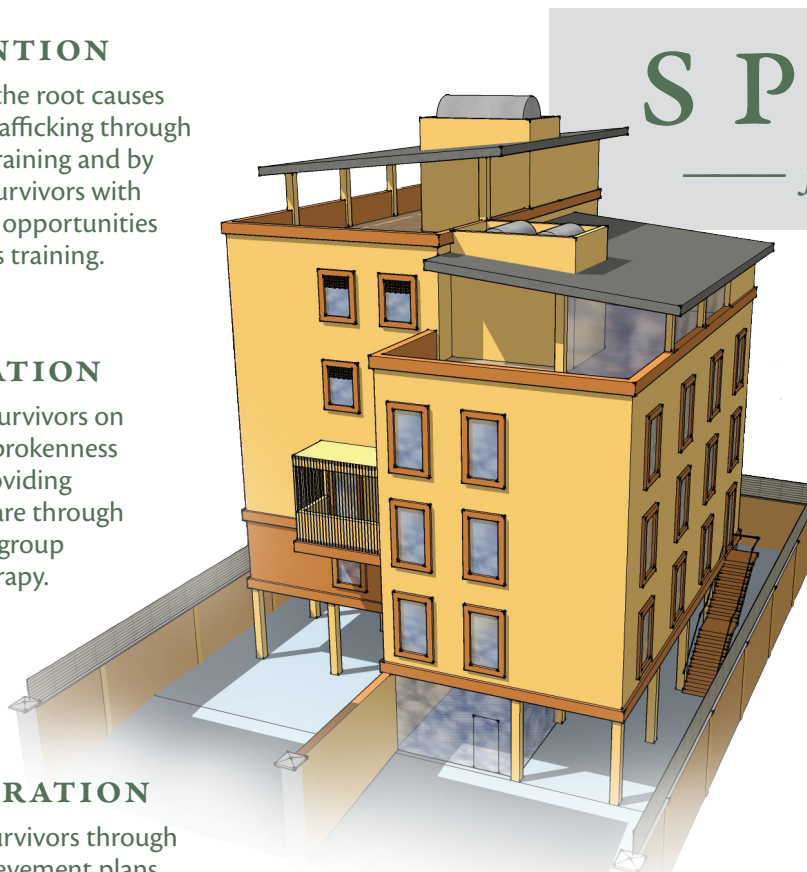
Expanding the capacities of our staff and the staff of other NGOs so that they can be a continual blessing to those entrusted to their care.

COLLABORATION

Facilitating cooperation between organizations, government, and law enforcement to create greater impact as we seek justice on behalf of the oppressed.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Creating opportunities for survivors to grow in their faith, identity and value in Christ through daily Bible reflections, weekly church services and outreach opportunities.





After 25 years of service to Cambodia, it is time! We are moving from our somewhat nomadic existence to establish our own permanent space, a Space for Hope where we can provide the security, stability and care for these young women so desperately in need. And so we are embarking on a journey of faith and launching a new project to build a safe and loving home for those who have been exploited – an ideal space to nurture love and restore the dreams of lives once marked by hopelessness. This Space for Hope will help us increase our reach and empower more Cambodians to be agents of change. It will not just be a building for Ratanak programs, but also a centre of training and excellence for both our staff and the staff of many other organizations. Together, we believe we can change the face of trafficking in real and tangible ways.

This dedicated centre will be the first and only one of its kind in Cambodia, providing space to minister to the exploited while also addressing the systems that exploit them. We are currently working on building plans and anticipate construction of the centre through to 2018. We hope you will join us as we walk alongside survivors on their journey from brokenness to wholeness.

Learn more about this Space for Hope on our website at www.ratanak.org/hope

A REFINED CALL – Twenty-six years ago I was introduced to Cambodia, a country of wonderful beauty but also profound torment. At that time the genocide was over, but civil war raged on as this abandoned society struggled to survive. The threat of the Khmer Rouge taking over the country again and re-instituting the Killing Fields was very real. Fear and hopelessness ruled in a context where no western embassies existed, no international trade or diplomatic agreements were in place, the borders were sealed (except to Vietnam, which was also embargoed), and Cambodia wasn't even allowed a seat in the UN.

Only a tiny handful of organizations were 'foolish' enough to cross over those forbidden borders and assist Cambodia in whatever way they could. Ratanak is proud to be numbered among those few.

Everywhere we turned there was a combination of terror and hopelessness. Cambodians capable of rebuilding the country were long dead and no one was coming to help. The needs were overwhelming. Ratanak set about assisting in any way

it could through projects of medical and emergency relief. These developed into diverse programs of medical, agricultural, educational and social services development. There were days we felt like we were involved in everything... and we needed to be!



The Cambodia of today is a much different place. Since the signing of the Paris Peace Accords and the coming of the UN in the 90s, Cambodia has thrown open its borders and many charities and non-government organizations (NGOs) have rushed to assist. Throughout this period Ratanak has maintained a very diverse range of programs to minister to those desperate and poverty stricken. While many organizations are now in Cambodia and great strides have been made in rebuilding, there remains a dark legacy of abuse. Its roots trace back to the dismantling of all moral and humane principles

during the genocide. It is into these areas of profound abuse that God continues to call Ratanak. Other organizations are now available to specialize in areas of medical development, educational training and the building of infrastructure. Ratanak's call remains to serve those most vulnerable in Cambodia.

Through the years God has been preparing and refining us to work in the darkest of areas. This has been evident in how he's equipped us to serve those sold into sexual slavery and those trafficked – people who have had every dignity stripped from them, who have been reduced to a “product” to be consumed and thrown away.

Ratanak has developed a unique skill set in being able to both cope with and minister to those abused, exploited, trafficked and enslaved. This is not work for the faint of heart but it is what we feel strongly we are both called and equipped to do.

You will notice the emphasis of Ratanak programs shifting more and more towards ministry to those horribly exploited. This is an active and prayerful decision. We have developed expertise in confronting human trafficking and exploitation, and have chosen to follow the Lord's leading deeper into these areas. We are confident, as in the past and despite feeling somewhat overwhelmed, that we will continue to see both light and hope born in the darkest of places. Please continue to join us on this journey as Ratanak seeks to refine our call and travel deeper into some of the darkest issues confronting Cambodians.



With Thankfulness,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian McConaghy'.

Brian McConaghy
Founding & Executive Director

News in Brief

WORKING TOGETHER TO CONFRONT HUMAN TRAFFICKING! – Earlier last month Nary (our RAP Program Director) and Lisa (our Cambodia Country Director) had the privilege of meeting with Nepalese government officials to share about our work helping Cambodian women who have been trafficked to China for forced marriage.

We, alongside our colleagues from UN-ACT (United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons), and other local NGOs were not only able to share about our work, but also learn about how the Nepalese government is confronting human trafficking. They too are reporting more and more Nepalese women being trafficked to China for forced marriage. These meetings on cross-border trafficking are vital in helping us all continue to learn about emerging trafficking trends and strategies. It provides a platform for discovering ways we can work together to create long-term, sustainable transformation!

PATRONS FOR PROVISION – We are constantly inspired by the creative ways supporters like you are using their talents and gifts to make a difference in the lives of Cambodians in need! A group of artists from an organization called "Patrons for Provision" have created artwork representing Cambodians we serve and love. They can be purchased on their website at <http://patronsforprovision.com> with a portion of the proceeds going directly towards Ratanak programs helping Cambodians trapped in situations of poverty, abuse and exploitation.



Painting by Liz Beard

GRADUATION – Some of our Khmer staff have been studying English and recently graduated from their English program! We are so proud of them as they have been going to school to further their understanding of English in the midst of their busy and stressful workload. We appreciate their commitment and dedication to building up their skills, and are grateful for the privilege of encouraging them in their studies as we invest in developing their capacity as staff members. We congratulate them on their graduation!

Renew hope. Restore Cambodia.