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“A humanitarian crisis loomed across Cambodia on Sunday as aid agencies struggled to reach people in remote parts of the country.....” From The Phnom Penh Post, Monday 5/10/09



*“Oxfam estimates as many as 50,000 hectares of rice crops may have been destroyed.....**This could trigger serious long-term food shortages.***”

Typhoon Ketsana slams into Cambodia

The last week and a half has seen Asia suffer some terrible disasters. Indonesia, Samoa, the Philippines and Vietnam have all been devastated by natural disasters.

Unfortunately, Cambodia also was not spared. The same typhoon that caused the destruction in the Philippines and Vietnam also struck Cambodia.

On Wednesday, 30 September 2009, Typhoon Ketsana slammed into Cambodia. It was the worst storm in living memory and caused widespread flooding across the country.

- Over 60,000 people have been affected.
- Vast stretches of the country are still cut off.
- As many as 50,000 hectares of rice paddies may have been destroyed.
- The damage to the rice crops could trigger serious long-term food shortages.
- The official death toll is 17, though authorities and emergency workers struggle to penetrate the most remote areas.



Left: Flooded homes along the Siem Reap river. This photo was taken before the river reached its peak.

Right: Downtown Siem Reap after the river burst its banks.



“The deadly floodwaters that laid waste to Cambodia when Typhoon Ketsana struck finally began to recede on Monday, leaving behind them a country slick with mud and desperately battling to prevent the spread of disease.” From The Phnom Penh Post, Tuesday 6/10/09



Fortunately, my place, which is also the Helping Hands office, is on the second floor. Some of the staff took refuge here when they couldn't get home.

The five villages where we work (which are about 30 kms from Siem Reap were completely cut off.) It was a full week before we could get back into the villages to assess the situation.

Chanty and Thea set off on Wednesday to see if they could get into the villages. They had to leave the motorbike behind and go in on foot. They actually swam part of the way.



Fortunately, there doesn't seem to be too much damage to the rice crops in our area. As usual though, the poorest people will suffer the most as they have such small plots, meaning that even small losses could be devastating.

The poorest families are the ones with the smallest plots of land. Usually people from this type of household ride their bicycles into Siem Reap to work as labourers on the construction sites. Because of the economic crisis and downturn in tourism, construction work has been harder to find. Now the floods have cut them off meaning they can't even get into Siem Reap to go to work.

These families are telling Chanty they are very worried about the situation they find themselves in.

The Commune Leader told Chanty and Thea that virtually every road has sustained major damage. Over the past year and a half we have built many roads within the five villages (in conjunction with our work



for a bike programme). All of them now require major repairs.



The Commune Leader is also concerned that because of all the damaged roads that children cannot get to school. His immediate priority is to find a way to make some makeshift bridges.

Chanty says people in the villages were telling him how powerful the storm was – some people in their 50's and 60's saying they had never experienced anything like it in their lives.



Chanty's family and neighbours outside his flooded house.

Thanks to Chanty, Thea, Diana and Anne-marie for the flood photos.

OUR RESPONSE:

It's still too early to really assess the damage, but our initial response will be to help get the roads passable again. This won't be able to happen for a while until things dry out more.

Our initial plan will be to get the villagers to rebuild the roads and we will pay them in rice, thereby providing for them in the short term.

As for the long-term affects, it will be some time before we can assess how bad the impact of the storm is on the poorer families.



Now for some good news. Helping Hands has now given out more than 1,250 bicycles!



Our very successful "Work for a Bicycle" programme continues and we've now given out more than 1,250 bikes. The programme aims to equip every household in a village with a bicycle in return for a member of that household doing 5 days labour on either repairing, or building a new road, within their village. A bicycle is an invaluable item of family equipment. It provides members enhanced access to jobs, school, medical care and economic opportunities. Another valuable benefit of having a bike is the time saved walking from place to place, allowing people to spend their time more effectively.



By ensuring the villagers earn their bike in return for their labour we are



ensuring they maintain their dignity and a sense of being able to help themselves. The success and value of this approach has been recently highlighted in the village of Doun Keo, where we are currently implementing this programme. After completing 5 days work, which entitled them to a bike, the people were so pleased with the results of their efforts that they decided to work on another road. At the time of writing they have **all completed 13 days of work (instead of the usual 5)** and have built four roads. Our only input is the provision of concrete pipes, bricks, cement, etc, to enable them to build small bridges and causeways. We are more than happy to provide them with these materials.

Of course, now many of those roads are now in desperate need of repair, but fortunately all of our bridges and causeways held up well in the floods.

Melbourne fundraising event...

Peter Hales is hosting a TRIVIA NIGHT to raise money for the Helping Hands eye programme.

If you only go out one night a year – this should be the night! Peter promises a hotly contested, fun and entertaining night.

Where: St Benedict's Primary School hall,
Central Avenue Burwood

When: Saturday, 24 October 2009

Time: 7:30 pm

Cost: \$15 per head with all proceeds going to Helping Hands.

Peter suggests you BYO food and drink to keep your energy levels up (you are gonna need it!).

There will be fantastic prizes for the winners, so get a table together or just contact Peter and he will arrange for you to be placed into a team.



Please book tickets through Peter. He can be contacted on mobile 0423 799 933 or at peter.hales@optus.com.au

Profile of an eye patient

Mr Lun Cheok is a 64 year old widow living in the village of L'berk. He suffers from pterygiums and cataracts and has been blind in his left eye and only had very limited vision in his right eye since he was 15 years old.

Unfortunately, nothing could be done for his left eye but his right eye was able to be operated on for both the cataract and pterygium and he has regained quite good sight in that eye. He finds that bright sunlight bothers his right eye now so we have provided him with a pair of sunglasses.



By attending the trivia night you are enabling us to help more people like Mr Lun.

(Hey Peter, thanks a million for your support!)

Thanks Larissa, for the great article in *The Age*, and other newspapers. You can click on this link if you would like to see the article:

<http://www.theage.com.au/small-business/entrepreneur/a-ticket-to-somewhere-20090908-ffj1.html>

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This newsletter has been written by Deborah Groves.

HOW TO MAKE DONATIONS

The work that Helping Hands does is only made possible by the generous financial support of our donors.

There are a number of ways you can make a donation.

1. Deposit directly into our Australian St George Bank account.
2. Via Paypal.
3. Through the organisation we partner with in Australia and America – Global Development Group. This partnership enables us to offer tax deductibility to Australians and Americans.
4. By cheque or money order to our P.O. box in Australia.

1. Australian bank account details:

With these details you can go directly into your own bank, to a St George bank or, if you do online banking, transfer via the internet.

Bank: St George
Account Name: Helping Hands Cambodia
BSB No: 114-879
Acct No: 419 526 714

2. Paypal is Ebay's online payment system.

This method allows you to send money to an email address. Just go to www.paypal.com The relevant email address to send the payment to is: grovesphotography@yahoo.com.au

3. Global Development Group

IMPORTANT NOTE: When making a donation via Global Development Group you must make sure you mention that it is for project J213.

Global Development Group is an umbrella organisation that we have partnered with in order to be able to issue tax deductible receipts to Australians and Americans. There are several options for making tax deductible donations via Global Development Group:

- A. By credit card online at www.globaldevelopment.org.au.
- B. By cheque or credit card. Post to 56 Goorari Street, Eight Mile Plains, Qld, 4113.
- C. By direct deposit to Global Development Group's bank account:

Account Name:	Global Development Group
Account number:	10200094
Bank:	Commonwealth Bank of Australia
BSB:	064-118

4. Postal orders/cheques.

You can send a postal order or cheque, made out to Helping Hands Cambodia, to
PO Box 3870
Caloundra D.C., Qld, 4551,
Australia.

Tax deductible giving

Helping Hands is now able to issue receipts for tax deductibility to both Australians and Americans. This is done through Global Development Group. You can donate directly to them or simply let me know via email when you make a donation if you would like a tax deductible receipt sent to you.

Thank you for caring!