



Changing lives for victims of trafficking in Cambodia

Newsletter: January – March 2008

Headlines:

More than 35 girls have now joined Daughters full time, having left their life in the sex industry to find a new life of freedom, hope and peace. Since January 08, more than 18 new girls have joined. We have 15 brothel living kids in our kids programme, and around 15 staff! Daughters is growing fast!

We had a very special Easter Sunday in March, when 14 of our girls were baptized. It was very moving seeing them make this public declaration of their new lives as Christians.

Summary of activities:

1. Small Businesses

Cakes business launched

In February we commenced commercial production of our cakes business (which is called Divine Inspiration!), with supply to 2 café outlets on Valentines Day, plus Daughters own stall at the nightmarket, and one corporate order. Some successes, some failures; the corporate order was well received, the café outlets sold some and the nightmarket sales were low (we realise it is the wrong venue for our products as people are looking for bargains). For us it is a learning curve, and our plan is to have our own cakes shop this year in order to market the cakes as the special occasion cakes they are. Watch this space!..... There are around 12 girls in this business scheme.

Sewn Products

We despatched 3 large orders overseas to the US and Australia, and are continually busy filling new orders, so it's becoming a thriving business. We are developing 2 or 3 new commissioned products which are in the design stages currently. We have more than 25 girls working in this business.

2. News and special events

We have had lots of special events and fun activities this quarter, which we like to include regularly as a way providing a wholistic approach and to celebrate together the new life the girls have chosen.

On Easter Sunday (23rd March) 14 of our girls will be baptised; we are partnering with Elim Church Cambodia for this.

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We were blessed to have a jewellery designer from Brisbane (Jane) who came via Khmer Creations to teach jewellery for a week. Jane had raised funds to bring beautiful beads with her and taught some wonderful skills. We had Jinah from Sydney teach seamstress skills for 2 days; in addition to learning many useful skills, the girls learned to make another design of baby sling and Ruth gleaned ideas about the use of organic cottons and natural colours. Ruth L from Australia taught the 4th cake-making school in February, building the girls' competency up to near perfection! Nicole our intern continued her valiant daily morning teaching sessions with the kids in our kids programme, and took 12 kids on a day trip to the zoo in January which was a very special treat for them.

Parties & special events! We held a special afternoon of entertainment in late January, when we welcomed a clowning/balooning act from Brisbane Australia (Julie Newey and family). This was a delightful afternoon of fun for the girls and kids. On January 1st we welcomed the New Year in with a celebration staff lunch for Daughters 1st Anniversary. It was great to celebrate together and look back on the last amazing year. For the girls, we held 5 parties this quarter, as we find this is a great way to bond together and celebrate special occasions; 2 birthday parties, 2 leaving parties, and a Valentines Day party. Games, fun and of course **cakes!**

We were also especially glad to welcome the visit of Leanne Park, our business and communications manager in Daughters Australia, who was visiting us for the first time and was able to see first hand the programmes and the girls she has been working so hard for.

Kids programme

We discovered one of our girls aged 10 was being sexually abused in recent weeks we moved to a partner's beautiful children's shelter where she can live in safety and freedom. We moved another girl aged 12 there at the same time for similar reasons. We are trying to open a night shelter for these kids in the near future, in order to provide safety and nurture, as many of them are increasingly being exposed to abuse living in the brothels. Funds for the nightshelter are currently being sought.

The kids programme has expanded to include morning sessions led by Nicole, in addition to afternoon sessions. The kids are doing very well with literacy and numeracy, and we are hoping to place them in a good day school at the start of the new academic year. The average daily attendance is 11. The age range is 3 to 12 years.

Church attendance

Daughters Church is held every Friday and is the highlight of the week. We worship together, have bible teaching and a time of ministry, and most girls attend every week plus one or two brothel owners have attended as we are trying to reach them too with the life-changing power of Jesus. Fourteen girls have just been baptised on Easter Sunday, which was a very special celebration!

'Caring for Myself' workshops

P.O. Box 1219, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Email: daughterscam.bodia@gmail.com www.daughterscam.bodia.org



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These important weekly workshops have covered recent topics including: anatomy and reproduction education workshops; relationship and conflict resolution skills (several educational sessions, still on-going); and a First Aid in a session led by Evonne Bowden from Sydney who works for St John's Ambulance - many thanks to Evonne.

Staffing

Some girls have attended external trainings in workplace skills, as we are beginning to give positions of responsibility in the business scheme to those girls who have shown potential. Penn has been promoted to stock controller (cakes), Dah and Malah to deliveries (cakes), Seylak and Halle to peer supervisors/social work assistants (sewing).

We have 3 new counselling staff; Chantrea, Samchet and Elisabeth from Switzerland (who is with OMF), it is great to have them on the team. We have hired one new literacy teacher, Bun Thoern.

Two precious overseas volunteers left to return home; Laura our textiles designer from England (who came with SAO), who was such a fantastic help to us in the sewing programme, and who will be greatly missed. And Nicole our intern from Samaritan's Purse left us at the end of March to return home to California; she has been dedicated to making a difference to the lives of the brothel-living children; it was her lobbying that has spurred us to start up our kids night shelter, which is currently in the planning stages.

Medical Treatment

An average of 61 girls each month were treated by Ruth H, our medic from England. In addition to this, we also held a special clinic with US team of doctors; 35 people were treated (sex workers or their family members).

Plus, one girl gave birth to a healthy baby boy in early March. He doesn't have a name yet!

Drop in Programmes

All girls learned First Aid in a session led by Evonne Bowden from Sydney who works for St John's Ambulance. Many thanks to Evonne, these are very needed skills. Our most popular drop-in programme is still our hair & beauty class! We had a new contract teacher come to teach a few sessions of massage to girls as a drop-in activity, as we are looking to increase our range of activities offered. The girls were all fantastic at it and didn't need much coaching.

Needs:

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- Admin & secretarial assistant desperately needed to ease the load.
- Funds for night shelter
- An additional funder to cover our remaining running costs
- The cakes shop start up – a good, inexpensive premises and a business manager
- A jewellery teacher (part-time) is sought in addition (in-country or one who can come over to teach every 3 months).

Prayer Needs:

- Protection for staff, girls and the centre spiritually, emotionally and physically.
- That the word would continue to fall on 'good ground', to take root, grow and flourish in our girls lives so that they experience in depth and truth the life-changing impact of the gospel of Jesus.
- Growth and success for our programmes and businesses.
- New partners/people to come on board for business, staffing, and skill trainers.
- All of the above needs

Appendices Following...

1. Client Stories



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Client Stories, March 2008

Interviews & report by Nicole

Penn

Penn, was 5 months pregnant and still working as a sex worker. For the last seven years, her life was lived in the brothels. She was desperate for a way out. She owed money to the brothel owner and was obliged to continue working there as a result, but she knew that her unborn child deserved a better life. She knew there had to be a way out. "I didn't want my baby to grow up in all that confusion. It wasn't a good environment," she says, looking back on her past as she holds her beautiful baby boy in her arms.

Thinking that there would be no way out, Penn almost decided to abort the unborn child. That was until one of her neighbors that told her about Daughters. Penn said that she heard about the center, but didn't believe it was real until she saw it with her own eyes. She had never thought that there would be a way to make money without sex. Daughters redeemed her debt and she was free; she joined Daughters that day and has been the most dedicated and reliable participant ever since that day.

"I am thankful for Daughters, because I don't have to work in the brothels for money," she says with a smile. "it has given me a hope for my future, and people don't look down on me here. My life has changed completely."

Sitting across from Penn, it is easy to see why a lot of the girls look up to her. She has taken on the "mother hen" role amongst all the girls. It may be that way because she possess a certain maturity and peace about her. She is gentle and firm with a confidence so few possess.

Penn has been at Daughters since August 07, working in the cakes business. She has been extremely reliable, responsible and conscientious and was promoted to the position of stock controller a few weeks ago. Her beautiful son, Caleb, was the first baby to be born at Daughters, and he is loved by everyone. "It is a good business to know because it is new to Cambodia. I can one day start a small cake business at my home," says Penn. Daughters has given her a skill that will keep her out of the sex trade for life, and for that, she is truly grateful.

It was also at the center, that Penn accepted Jesus Christ as her personal savior. She recounts stories where God has revealed himself to her in real and practical ways. When she prays, she knows Jesus is real because he answers. She is learning more and more about the Lord through church on Fridays at Daughters. This March, she has made the decision to be baptized in front of her peers.

Nak

"Everyone has a broken heart- that's why it's so important to love each other." The profound words stunned me as I sat across from Nak. During my time with her, I came to see that although she is has experienced immense pain in her life, she exhibits maturity and grace beyond her years. Her faith and trust in the Lord are solid and it seems that she has come to learn a lot during her time at Daughters.

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Nak says that she loves Daughters for three main reasons; the first being that it is an easier life than before. As a sex worker, she was forced to work until the point of exhaustion every night. Sick days were not allowed like they are here at the center. She says that she feels healthier since joining the staff at Daughters, because she is not pushed to the edge all the time.

Second thing she loves about Daughters is that she can live without shame or condemnation. Before, she was ashamed of her profession, always judged by the community. Now, she feels that she can live a free life; free from all the disgrace and guilt of her past.

The third reason she loves Daughters, is the positive environment that Ruth Elliott creates. "Ruth is loving and kind," Nak says with a smile, "she never yells and she is always encouraging us." At the brothels, her boss was abusive and filled with anger and she never felt safe, the way she does now. She expresses her gratitude over and over by saying how much she loves Ruth, and all that she has done for the girls.

Nak became a Christian at the center, after hearing about Jesus in the church service which is held on Fridays. She tells me that although her family persecutes her for being a Christian, she will not go back to Buddhism.

"My husband used to use drugs. He would steal all my money when I slept. I didn't know what to do, so I prayed to God and asked him to help." She says with tears in her eyes, "And God heard my prayers because now my husband has changed. He watched my life change and started listening to me. He doesn't use drugs any more and he is making money for the family."

Nak tells me once more how thankful she is for Daughters. She says that her prayer is that the center will be around for a long time to come. As we wrap up our time together, it is evident that God has taken her broken heart, and begun to mend it back together.

Seynak

Seynak has been at the center for just one month, but her talent in sewing makes it appear she has been here a lot longer. Her diligent work ethic and positive attitude have really paid off.

"It's a good job," Seynak says, "I can study sewing and get paid. It is honest work. I have learned so much during my time here." Daughters has not only helped her by giving her sewing skills, but has also given her spiritual encouragement.

Although life still has troubles, Seynak chooses to trust God and stay disciplined in walking with Him. It is her responsibility to financially support her family, and at times it is still a struggle to make ends meet; but she will never go back to her life before.

Daughters has given her a life of freedom and she will never be the same. "Church has taught me to be patient and loving," states Seynak with a smile, "I decide to continue being a Christian, because my life is so much better than before." She is constantly learning new things about the Lord and is excited to continue this growth process.

Seynak has been a great asset to the Daughters team, because her dedication, hard work, and grateful attitude encourage people around her. Her prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless the center and that it will grow bigger as the years pass. "Daughters is a good NGO, because it gives sex workers a chance to escape their horrible lives. I would like to ask the donors to keep helping us, because without them, we would still be back there."

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Sinah

From my very first day at Daughters, there has been one girl who consistently makes me feel welcomed and accepted. Her name is Sinah, she is a 17 year old beauty with a feisty personality and a fierce confidence. Although her English is limited to the basics like, “Hello” and “How are you?”, she is constantly struggling to communicate with myself and other English speakers that come to the center.

Upon meeting Sinah, one might see a normal teenage girl who is well adjusted and light hearted; but as I get to know her better, I find that there is more than meets the eye.

Sinah used to work as a sex worker in a bar. One day, her mother fell ill and she had to go to the province to care for her. She spent 15 days nursing her back to health, only to come back to the city and find that they had kicked her out of the brothel. Alone and not knowing what to do, Sinah decided to take her cousin’s advice and check out the NGO called Daughters of Cambodia. When she did, she knew her life would never be the same.

“Everything is better than before,” she tells me with a smile, “It is honest work, I can take care of my mother in the province, and I am free from guilt.” It is here at the center that Sinah has found the true freedom in Christ. “I used to live in the darkness, but now I live in the light.”

Although Sinah has found peace and joy in her new life here at Daughters, she finds herself battling Satan’s lies on a daily basis. “I am free and I threw everything from my old life away, but I am still broken hearted,” she whispers quietly. The conversation has shifted and I am beginning to see another side of this precious girl.

She begins to pour out her heart, revealing the tragic reality, that at times the pain is so strong and so intense, her whole body goes numb. “Sometimes when I go numb, I will sew right through my finger and not even notice. I can’t even feel the pain,” Sinah tells me with tears in her eyes. When I look down, I notice she has a brace around her ankle; my heart begins to ache.

And then, she says something that both surprises and humbles me, “But that is how I know God loves me so much. He watches over me and keeps me safe when I cannot do it myself. He has to take care of me.”

Sinah’s faith in the Lord is becoming stronger and stronger every day. Although the people in her life do not understand her decision to follow Christ, she will not turn back to her old life.

“Sometimes it feels like I am the enemy of Cambodia. Everyone calls me crazy and a bad Buddhist,” she stares blankly out the window before turning back to say, “So I ask God, “If I know you and it is right- Why do all these people hate me? Is it right?”” Then, after a long pause filled with careful consideration she says, “But I know I’m not crazy, because now I live in the light. I am free with Christ- so I will continue to choose Him. He has led me here and I am thankful.”

As our time together comes to an end, I find myself amazed at the wisdom this young woman possesses. She trusts Jesus with everything she is. She knows that no matter what happens in this life, she will remain a follower of Jesus. “I am thankful for Daughters, because it gave me a new life and told me about God,” Sinah makes her final statement and quietly goes back to work.

Naly

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After being sold by her parents into a relationship with a Chinese businessman, Naly was forced to leave her home in Cambodia and migrate to China. Her life would never be the same. When she returned from China, her parents tried to sell her once again, but this time to a Korean man. That was when she learned about Daughters of Cambodia.

“I knew that I had to make money to support my parents, but I didn’t want to go back to that life,” Naly calmly states. She had heard about Daughters through a friend and began working the first day she came to the center.

When she talks, Naly speaks with elegance and poise; always composed, she exudes strength. But when talking about Daughters, her new friends, and Ruth (her boss), she seems to lose that composure that makes her so untouchable. “My life is so much better than before,” she says as her eyes get misty, “I have learned so much, while supporting my family at the same time.”

Naly has a very keen mind and has learned skills quickly, making her a valuable asset to the Daughters businesses. She loves to learn new things and always enjoys sewing, making jewellery, and making art.

It was also at the Daughters center that she came to know the Lord for the first time. “I didn’t believe in Jesus when I heard about him at the center, until one night before I went to sleep, I prayed a prayer to him. I said, “God, if you are God, please help me.” Naly had been going through some hardships and was struggling to find comfort in the midst of her sadness. “That night when I went to sleep, I was filled with peace. That was how I knew that Jesus was real.”

As Naly continues to excel in her position here at Daughters, she prays that the Lord will continue to bless the center. She emphasized the importance of having the center, “This NGO is so good, because it gives sex workers a way out of prostitution. It saved my life and I would like to thank all of our donors.”

(Names have been changed to protect identities)